Introduction

The modern advancement in communications and mobile computing has provided users and providers alike, with plethora of opportunities. One of them is content and information sharing to and between devices in close proximity. One good example is Tweedback, a platform for live feed back between students and lecturers. This platform, developed at the University of Rostock, highlights the emphasis of indentifying devices in close proximity. This emphasis raises the need to focus on two aspects of services, localization and communication. With these two services, we can imagine a number of use cases. A good example would be the ability of two or more devices to identify their proximity and the fact that they are attending the same lecture. Another similar scenario would be for the devices to indentify the lecture room they are in and provide the user with the right content relevant to the ongoing lecture. Modern devices are equipped with resources to help them identify their location, and at the top of the list is the ubiquitous GPS service. Though, an unchallenged leader in the outdoor location service, the accuracy of GPS when used in indoor applications falls short (Chen & Kotz, 2000) of the needed accuracy for indentifying devices in a small group, like in a typical lecture room scenarios used in Tweedback. There are a number of indoor location solutions available these days, and in this thesis we discover on ways to discover devices and communicate crucial information between them. And particularly we focus on using the inaudible sound wave spectrum as a medium of communication for our system.

Motivation

Technology has reached a point where we rely on our hand held devices in almost everything we do when it comes to information. Whether they are laptops, tablets, or smartphone, they give us access to any kind of content through the Internet or any other content sharing networks. In doing so, the need to interact with your environment, not just virtual environment, but also physical environment, is becoming increasingly important. Inerraction with our physical environment means having information on the availability of services we have in our close proximity and also the ability to interact with devices in the same vicinity. As mentioned in the introduction, GPS remains the main way for outdoor interaction, but when it comes to indoor activities, we have to rely on other emerging technologies. There are a number of indoor navigational and discovery solution available currently, and whether Wi-Fi, Magnetic location service, or NFC, they have their own pros and cons in giving the user a smoother interaction. In our in-depth research, we look in to ultrasound medium as a way to communicate small but valuable information and room discovery system.

Background and Related Work

The need for location based services has many facets of benefits. A system with a feature to recognize its geographical location, users present in that location and the services available to it is appealing in any sense. These services, called LBS (Location Based Services), have been associated with a number of ground breaking applications in recent advancement of mobile computing. From health applications to marketing services, they all depend on the availability of location giving resources. Any given LBS has five basic components (2), this components projected in to our use case, the lecture room Scenario, would be listed as follows.

**The Mobile Device**: The concerned device

**Communication component**: In our scenario, the device needs access to a communication channel to get the information regarding the location and also a channel to get the actual service and content that’s relevant to the location.

**Positioning component**: A system for indentifying the location.

**Service and Application Provider**: A system for giving the service and application based on the computed location.

**Data and content provider**: For providing the actual content based on the indentified service and content.

Of those five components mentioned above, the Communication and the Positioning component are what we are concerned in our work, since the others are more or less independent of the type of LBS we use.

GPS (global positioning services) has been the core service of these advancements when it comes to outdoor usage. But GPS falls short of the accuracy needed when used in indoor applications, and in this section we’ll talk about different categories of indoor LBS, specifically designed to address the shortcoming of GPS.

The basic concept behind the design of any location indentifying system is to exploit the change in the value of network parameters relative to space. The more acute the change in those parameters, the better the accuracy is for the system in identifying its position. And those different systems, which are mentioned shortly, exploit different types of fields in one way or another. Electromagnetic, Magnetic and Acoustic fields are the three main categories of physical fields used in currently available indoor positioning systems. Under the Electromagnetic based systems we have Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and GPS. And the new “indoorAtlas” is categorized under the Magnetic field based systems. And finally we have the sound wave based systems, in which our system is based. In the next section we’ll walk through those different systems by addressing their pros and cons.

GPS

GPS (global positioning system) is a navigational system based on satellites. It is the widely used system from the so called satellite based navigational systems, the other being GLONAS and GALLILIO.

The GPS positioning and timing service for civilians is made up of three components. The satellite, control system and user side. The satellites are orbiting the earth in their numbers, 24 of them in the current constellation. Those 24 satellites continuously send one way positioning and timing signal. The control side monitors and maintains them in their orbits. And finally, the user side in the civilian case, receives the signals from at least four satellites at time and based on the signals received calculates the current position of the receiver.(5)

The civilian case has only one frequency used per satellite and with the current system, preventing signal degradation using techniques like Ionospheric correction (needs a good reference). Unlike the military receivers which are provided a second signal to do the correction, the civilian receivers suffer greatly in the accuracy when used indoors. The signal power from GPS statellites can drop up to 100,000 times when used indoors, and with it the horizontal accuracy drops to hundreds of meters.

Though the great availability of GPS signals can never be doubted, the accuracy, even at its best of 3 meters, is far from the level needed in in-door localization, which is less than 2 meters in the very least. And with all the signal degradation when used in our case scenario, the signals can be unusable. (6)

Wi-Fi

The abundance in the availability of Wi-Fi hot spots is getting high by the day. A recent research has found that there are 150 Wi-Fi hot spots per person in the world, and if you consider developed countries like UK, the number goes down to 11 per person (8). This abundance and the majority of them being available indoors is the prime driving factors in researches of Wi-Fi based indoor navigational systems.

Bluetooth

Ambient Magnetic

Ultra Sound

Localization and Communication Using Inaudible Acoustic Signals

Acoustic Signals

Sound waves propagate through matter by vibrating it. We humans are created to receive an air propagated acoustic signal, but sound waves actually travel in different speeds through different materials. In air, sound waves travel at a speed of …… We humans are able to perceive sound waves from 20 Hz to 20Khz, theoretically. But in reality the sensitivity of human ear decreases with age and higher frequencies are rarely audible in adult human ear. A good chart, inspired by (3), gives a good hint in to audibility of acoustic signals with age.

Just like Electromagnetic waves, sound waves also exhibit reflection, reverberation, refraction and absorption. And this is what makes acoustic signals attractive for applications that need to be restricted in a physical barrier, in our scenario that would be a lecture room. With this unique nature of acoustic signals, our signals would be restricted regardless of the power of transmission we use, and they are effectively room accurate in the very least.

Acoustic communication

Acoustic communication follows the same principles as any wireless communication. The basic communication building blocks ,as depicted in the following figure, apply to acoustic signals as well.

Localization using Acoustic signals

1. <http://www.sigecom.org/exchanges/volume_3_(02)/3.4-Zeimpekis.pdf>
2. lbs\_lecturenotes\_steinigeretal2006.pdf
3. https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/woot14/woot14-deshotels.pdf
4. <http://www.edu-observatory.org/gps/gps.html>
5. <http://www.gps.gov/systems/gps/>
6. <http://www.iposi.com/tech-talk/the-technology>
7. <http://spreo.co/indoor-navigation-challenges-series-chapter-1-finding-an-accurate-location-indoors/>
8. <http://www.ipass.com/wifi-growth-map/>