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Comments for Week 4
Beating some Common Sense into Interactive Applications link

The bibliography of this paper is a good starting point for further searches about common sense computing, and it provides a good overview of what we can and cannot do right now with these systems. However, my commentary on this paper will be somewhat brief, in part because I have "spent" a lot of the reactions that I would normally have in extended discussions about this in the group, and with Hugo as well. However, I will make a point of the "expectation problem" that seems to exist today. In particular, when we speak of "common sense" reasoning, users actually expect real common sense responses from the computer. This is in part, of course, due to the portrayal of common sense reasoning by the initial investigators in the field such as Lenat, as the paper points out. Perhaps the hardest problems are in fact the goals of the research, but as I mentioned at the end of my scenarios paper, there is a tension between vision and reality of what we can do at any given instance. In this case, it is almost the case that the vision is obscuring the real possibilities.

Additionally, there is another interesting point to take home near the end: computer systems as they stand in fact act as dumb as microprocessors ("a computer does exactly what you tell it to do") in many cases. They really don't have to be that way anymore, and even a marginal improvement in terms of the underlying science can provide leaps in terms of user experience. Moreover, more input and constraints are not necessarily bad, especially when the input is fail soft and the constraints circumventable. While we can't really use common sense reasoning to hold a conversation about out daily lives with a computer yet, the integration of this knowledge can bring a lot of benefits that marginally add up to make a real difference.