

week 2 :: intelligence augmentation

Maes, P., Schneiderman, B., "Direct Manipulation vs. Interface Agents: a Debate." *Interactions*, 4 Number 6, ACM Press, 1997

The Wearable Remembrance Agent: A system for augmented memory, Rhodes

Although a wearable computing device may be hands-free and mobile, how much of an attention and cognitive load would it feed on throughout everyday usage? Is the compromise of intermediated social interaction and heightened distractibility worth the constant at-hand accessibility of relevant information?

I agree with Pattie that the agents are best suited for non-critical tasks, such as personal recommendations and relevant highlights, rather than suggestions for the next step in a highly complex emergency situation. Examples given are websites, books/movies/media, matchmaking, auctioning, and writings. Cues may be ignored or overlooked. However, how formal a situation could an agent behave suitably and helpfully? Suggesting routes via specific trains, schedules, and stations? Strongly enforcing a deadline (e.g. won't allow you to play a game if you haven't completed an assignment that's due in two hours)? Scheduling and prescribing medications?

The two papers didn't mention the consideration of a multiple-user interface. What if, instead of just connecting two people who shared something in common, it would link entire defined groups such as kerry supporters, yoga buffs, or technology firms? Or, through the wearable device, members could pull up relevant info from someone else in your trusted circle (i.e. mobile google without all the inappropriate or unrelated links). It would be quite interesting to see how communities develop while acquiring and using a collective augmented intelligence.

Shneiderman argues that optimized user performance ("rapid performance, low error rates") is the primary, if not sole, standard to judge the success of a system or interface. However, I wonder if there are more flexible modes of evaluation that includes variables such as emotional satisfaction, user happiness, and individual connection. The experience of manipulating a program should be efficient as well as enjoyable. Even if a system gets perfect marks for user performance, who would want to use it if it were boring, unresponsive, or impersonal?