

# Key Information

Team Name: Torchers

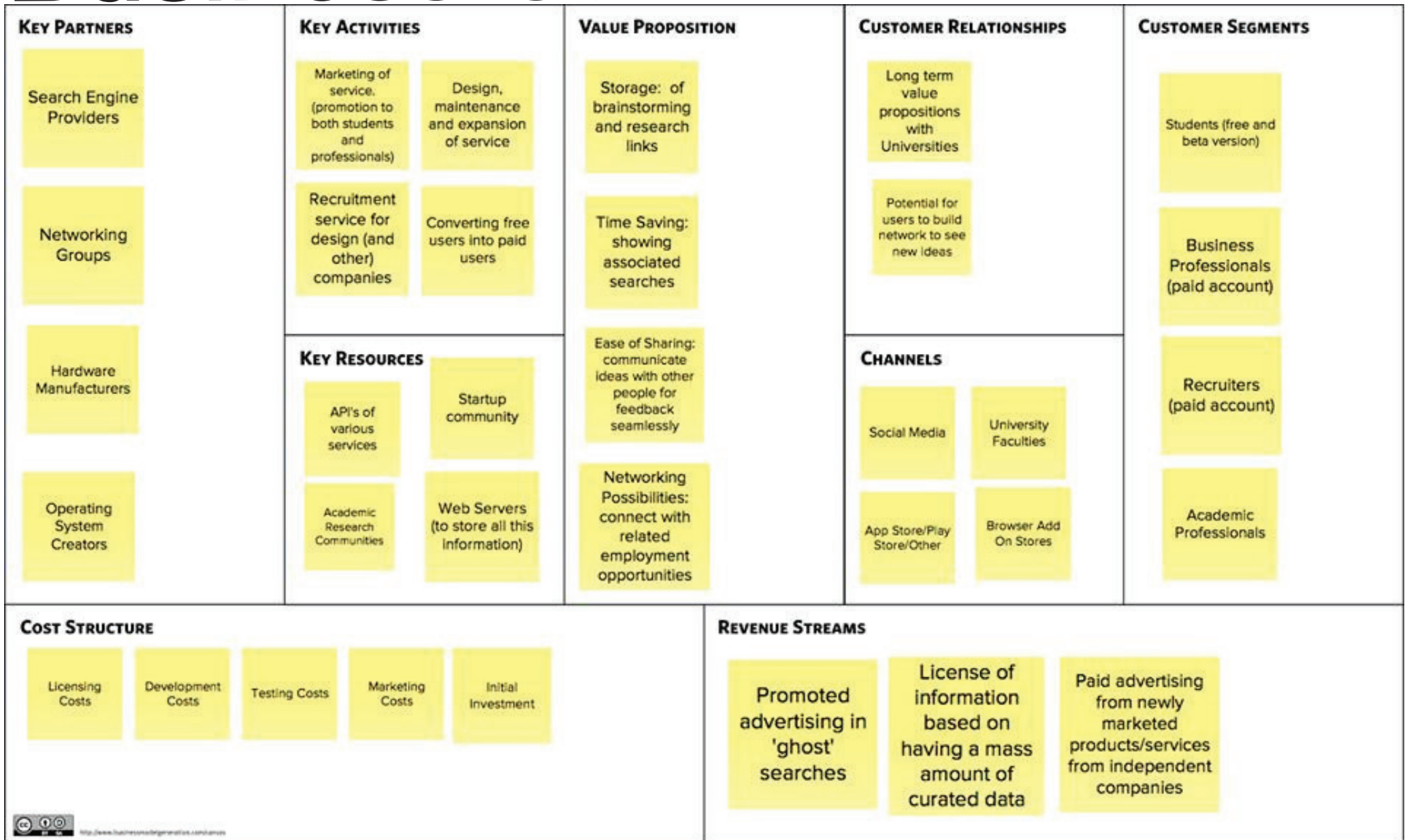
Team Members:

Name:	Liz Gilleran
Phone Number:	0435 743 083
Email:	lizzy.claire.gilleran@gmail.com
SID:	311 224 571
Course Name:	B Design Computing
Study Status:	Studying

Name:	Hanley Weng
Phone Number:	+61 497 066 788
Email:	hanleyweng@gmail.com
SID:	309 248 434
Course Name:	B Design Computing
Study Status:	Graduated

Landing Page Url: <http://torchboard.launchrock.com/>

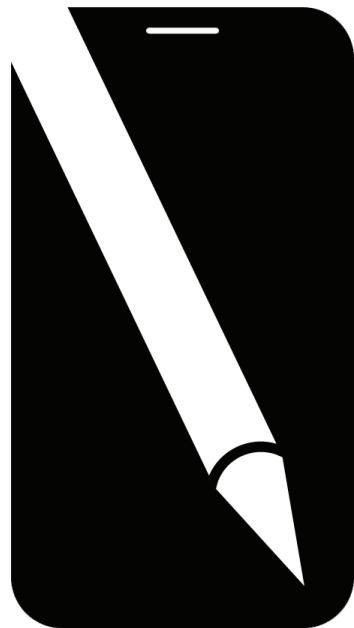
# Business Canvas



# Torch Board

A space for exploration

Sydney Genesis 2013  
University of Sydney



# About Us

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**Torch Board** is Hanley Weng and Liz Gilleran, two students of the Bachelor of Design Computing program! We have been longing for an application like this as design students throughout our studies. Design Computing is a multi disciplinary degree, combining both academia, professional design practice, and emerging technologies, as well as theory from both the Science, Arts and IT disciplines. This has resulted in our frustration at the lack of effective collaborative tools to do smooth effective research that blends both the real world and academia that we can then present to potential employers as well as professors.

Our education and networks ensures we will succeed because we are very in touch with our customer base, as we have very strong links to researchers in the Design Lab at the University of Sydney, as well as academic staff in other faculties.

## About Us Cont.

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This ensures we can have direct access to a diverse range of beta testers and hence a rapid development of a viable product.



Hanley is a 2012 graduate of the Design Computing program and currently working as a technical analyst for Bientalto. He has strong capabilities in the computer science field, design, and has studied cognitive science at UC San Diego, winning Design Challenges; MAB'12, OzChi'12, GD'11, and OzChi'11.



Liz is a current student of the Design Computing program, with a strong skills in user testing and research as well as creative pursuits, having had her first year film in the Byron Bay Film Festival and the UK Film Festival. She is currently also working on the organisation and web-site of the end of year Design Computing/Masters of Interaction and Electronic Art exhibition.

# The Problem

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## Introduction

Content discovery remains one of the most challenging aspects of designing for web applications today. How do we find good content? Apps of this nature are quickly changing how we discover content and combat 'Information Overload'. Web content is updated so rapidly that curating this content is becoming very important. Would you be able to sort the quality out of the more than 100 videos that are uploaded to the web per minute?

# Problem Cont.

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## Current Environment

Technology pervades into our environment more than ever before. The majority of workers (62%) admit that their work suffers because they are unable to sort through information fast enough, at the expense of their work quality <sup>1</sup>. Even our information networks are cluttered. Harvard Business Review research predicts that only 36% of our Twitter feeds is worth reading<sup>2</sup>. So how do we stay on task to do actual research? How do we combine analogue techniques to a digital workplace/study space to discover what we need?

Big businesses and brands often circumvent this by the use of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and Social Media Marketing in order to get attention to their product, services or promotions. However, this is not delivering necessarily better content to users, nor necessarily relevant content either.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/about-us/media/press-release.page?id=128751276114739>

<sup>2</sup> <http://hbr.org/2012/05/what-makes-a-great-tweet/ar/1>

**With almost all web users being able to develop and publish content, the challenge has now become how to find, process, collate and share relevant information in order to complete tasks.**



# Problem Cont.

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## Write things Down!

According to our research of a sample of our potential customers (internet users under 30 with at least a post secondary education) , although 90% of people search for content through Google, many have ambiguous methods of collecting this information. Over 60% of respondents used informal methods of storing information, such as using tabs as a checklist, or putting all their links in a text editor, in addition to using browser bookmarks simultaneously.

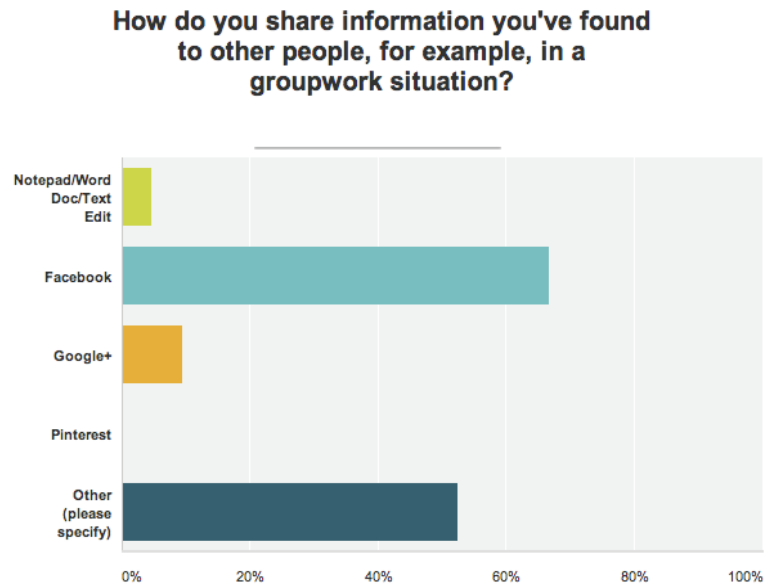
Many respondents who were undergraduates especially had trouble aggregating data, when they had many journal articles, or a lot of visual images. This weighed down their process considerably as they had to refind information. This also slows down brainstorming and other processes that are necessary for efficient project work. Respondants also valued work that they got from friends higher than that from a search engine.

# Problem Cont.

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## Sharing is caring

Responses also varied on how people share their research content. Although the overwhelming majority use Facebook, 90% of the 'Other' respondents used email, with the other 10% using Google Docs. This is because email has perceived as having 'less junk' as Facebook, less content to distract the user from their purpose in completing their work.

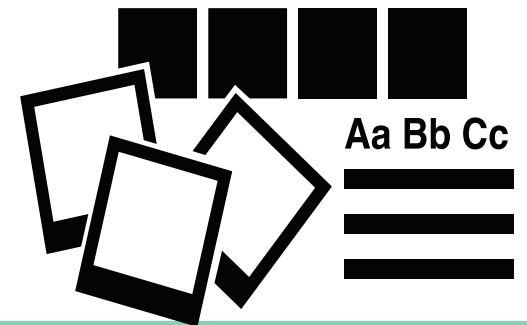


# Competition

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To accomodate prominent visual thinking styles we decided to follow and research a pin-board and mindmap style interface. These allow for spatial cognition of data and give the user a better idea of what information they have collated.

This successfully blends analogue with digital techniques that people use to map if people can combine their current techniques into a program that will assist them, but not direct them. This is also in line with current UX philosophy that emerging technologies should accomodate, rather than direct user habits, as we will demonstrate in the following examples.



# Mural.ly



Mural.ly is a web application that assists in the creation of visual mindmaps with a blank canvas, various drawing tools, and visual representation of the content placed within it.

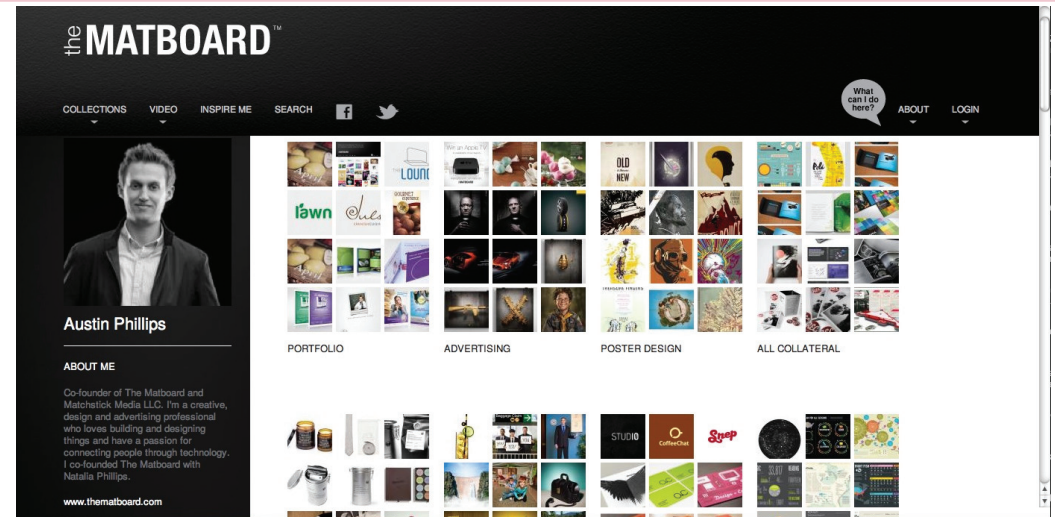
## Pros

- Can accept multiple file formats with a drag and drop function.
- Easy sharing settings, through Google, Evernote and Facebook accounts

## Cons

- No easy drawing over material, as you would in an 'analogue' setting.
- Mobile apps does not have same functions as desktop

# The Matboard



The Matboard is primarily a social media pinboard web application targeted at creative professionals, unlike the everyday Pinterest. It leverages curated content with social insight into the inspiration of talented individuals.

## Pros

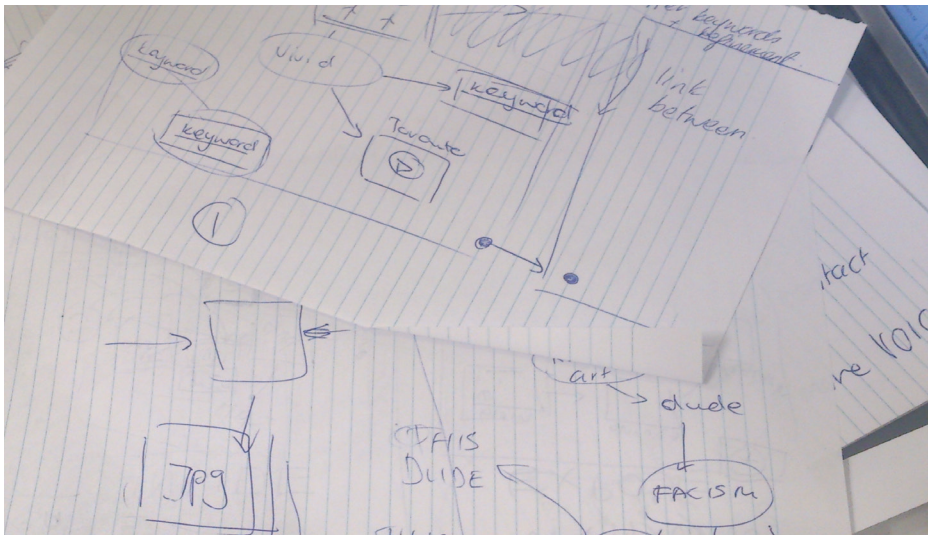
- Allows filtering of information whilst browsing, allowing easier access of content.
- Allows searching for people as well as adding your own work

## Cons

- Like other services, the 'Mat' button is required for sharing.
- Sort of has two functions; looks like social climbing, which is unattractive

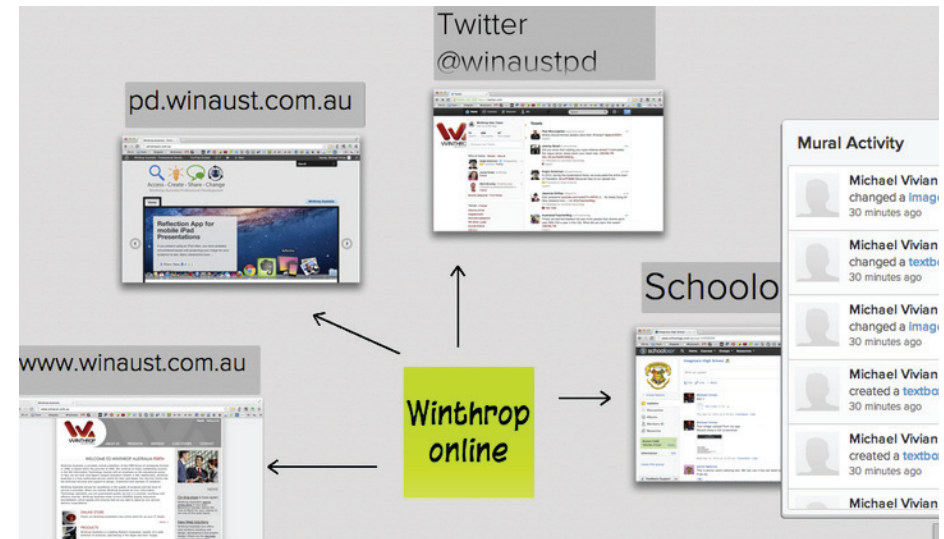
## What do they lack?

Although these options are great additions to the field, they really confine the user experience to predefined pathways that subscribe to a certain look,



## Freeform constant information

VS.



## Strongly controlled formatting

# The Torch Board Difference

Torch board will improve on these options by offering :

- dedicated environments for project work, but not necessarily restricting the user
- Leveraging the user's social media/ search history for ease of use
- easy categorisation and management of files/links
- cross platform integration (from mobile, to web, to projector screens/displays)
- easy backtracking of links to original sources
- utilisation the data of other users to suggest/ghost links so that there is seamless access of relevant data without searching for it.

# Solution

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To present a simplistic interface for someone to grow their web of ideas - via automated relevant content being presented for selection and exploration. This would incorporate file management for a project and expand the space to work with (tv/projector) bringing it cross-platform and streamlining the process for our users, so that they only get the most relevant data.

It would be like digitising the analogue sticky-notes, imbuing it with the benefits of the digital, whilst also allowing the freedom of being able to annotate it without the 'neat freak' controlled formatting of other solutions.



# Solution

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## But why?

Streamlining the process and keeping it both collated and organised has the potential to save people a lot of time. By keeping all their brainstorming and research in the one place with annotations, this offers a unique opportunity to utilise current technologies (voice recognition, projection, cloud storage, social media integration) for the benefit of reducing information overload passively, without huge amounts of timely input of data that is often in pinboard or bookmarking programs and add-ons.

# Solution

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## How does it work?

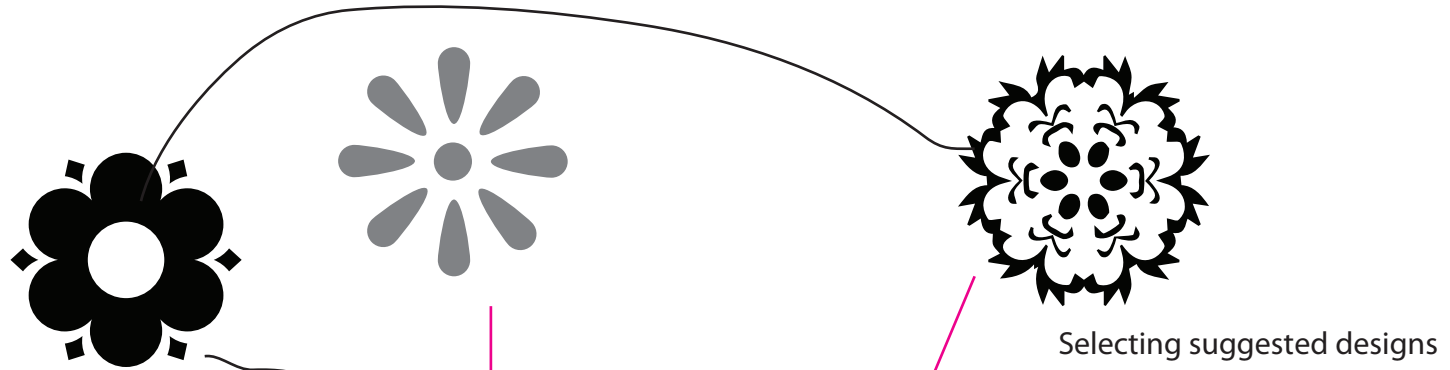
Depending on the input device, Torch Board takes the first few keywords of user input, or goal and generates associated links into a mind map. The user can then select which links they like generating further matches.

In the following example a user tries to generate inspiration for a flower logo. They start with something they like to get similar content. By selecting the designs they like (in the 1st iteration) and putting it into Torch Board other content is suggested and 'ghosted' in grey with the user selecting and further refining the display. It also allows the element of surprise when the user can select other designs that they may have not found otherwise. The user can further annotate and draw over these designs, whilst Torch Board will record the item's web location.

# Solution

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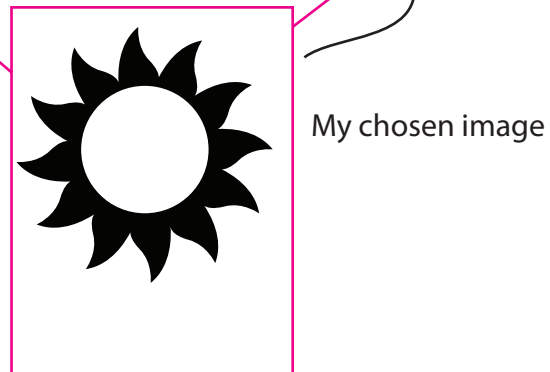
3rd iteration



2nd iteration



1st iteration



# Solution

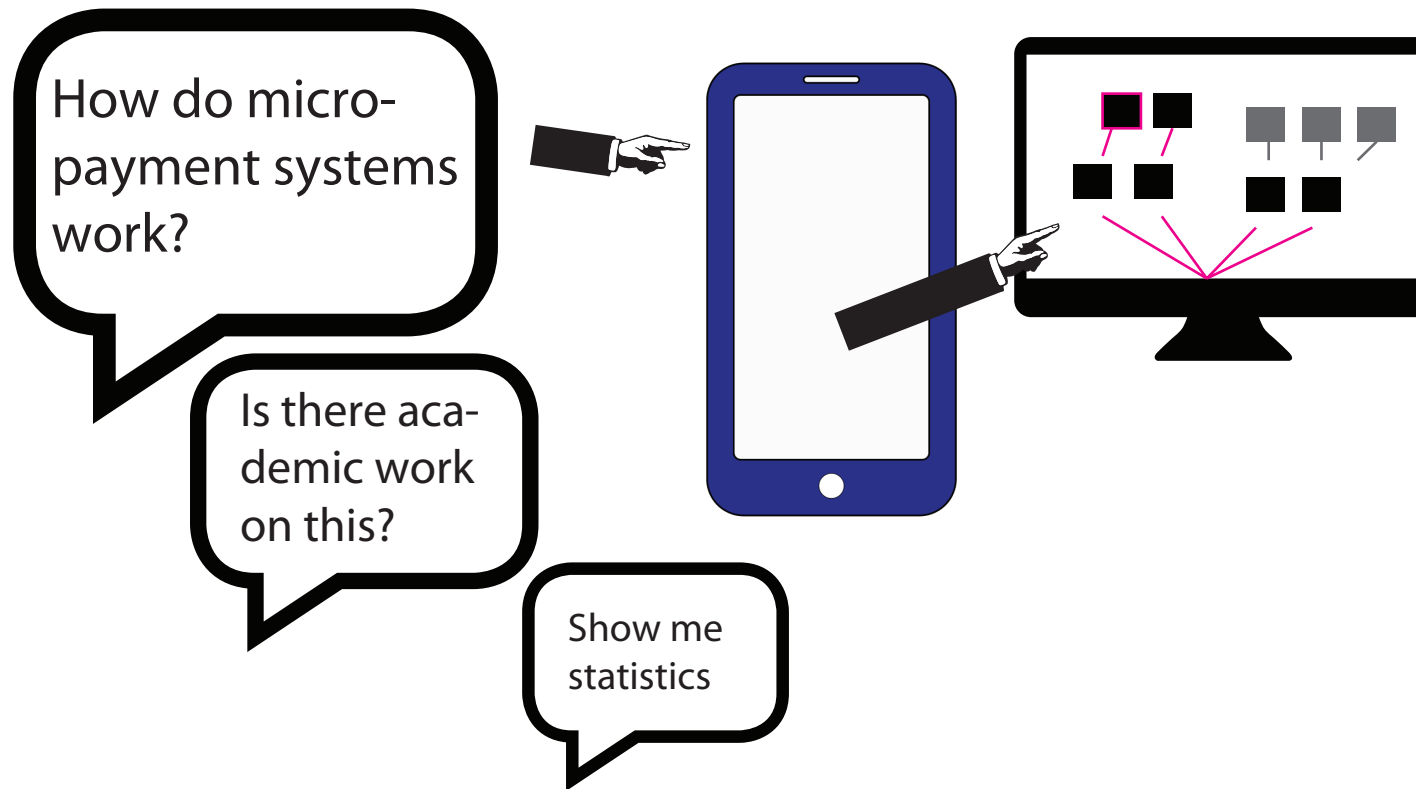
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This example is very basic, but what sets this apart is linking it with emerging technologies. In this example the user uses voice commands in order to retrieve information regarding research. This is currently an original idea that is not utilised and is very good for auditory or kineasthetic learners who may be restrained by, and even hindered by, more text and visual based solutions to retrieving data.

In particular regards to academic research, the content generated would be unaffected by SEO marketing, and be content that actual academics/designers/programmers, who would be professional users, would read, and therefore Torch Board would be able to suggest the best content as well as a way to back track.

# Solution

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Here the user wishes to quickly know some reliable academic information about micropayment systems. They talk into a voice system on their phone that feeds into Torch Board, and displays on either a projector or a screen. They can gesturally select data they desire with their phone and ask further questions with automated mapping.

# Current Status

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## The Idea Refinement Phase

We're still in the iterative user testing stages. With the fast iterative cycle taking a duration of ~2 weeks each. You may have noticed we have completely changed our original concept and evolved from that from our own research/user interviews. But we're narrowing down and are gearing up for the release of a technological probe. We are continuously expanding to make connections with potential new customers.

With more investment (but also Liz finally graduating), our final beta design to go into development could be ready as early as December - with better iterations. And a public release in February.

# Financials

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## First Generation Users

We aim to generate our first 100 users from offering free services to students (across 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year classes for one semester) and thus start generating the data important for our ghosting features. This also will be a period of further refinement and testing of our product.

Our first stream of revenue therefore, will be from offering smaller companies the option to advertise their products/services/research etc through us for a smaller price as early adopters of the technology and including these as prominent 'paid for' content. This also will allow students to become familiar with their product/brands.

After this, our product would become available both as a web app, and a mobile application on the Play store and App store, further opening up revenue options.

# Financials Cont.

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## Further Revenue Streams



Free users, thereafter, will have their data sold to various companies, with a micropayment option to remove ads/remove their data from being sold. This would be similar to current payment options for companies like models of Flattr and Spotify, whereby users pay a flat fee per month based on what options they want, and what they can afford, so that we can reach larger populations.

Premium features will also become available as we further develop our product, which will be available for paying users as a way of covering our user testing and development costs, until eventually we can open this up to free users as well.



# Financials Cont.

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## Initial Costs

Our initial investment would require an initial investment to pay development costs (using contacts which we already have to negotiate a good rate with developers that we trust), but also the fees and costs associated with registering our product in the App store (this requires a fee).

Furthermore it would contribute to the costs of development materials (such as testing for different, new and old, phone models to get the best working product for the widest customer base), the hosting and server space required. In addition to this, we will have to lightly compensate our first generation users with some sort of reward for their use of the service in its beta version.

# Financials Cont.

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## The Ideal Future

Ideally another future revenue source would be the inclusion of companies looking to recruit graduates and being able to see their research and design processes, this is especially important in the communications, science and design fields. Furthermore, that more smaller companies and universities would come on board to promote their research and ideas in order to gain more publicity from a dedicated customer based in their fields.

This would require our investment in also legal and marketing professionals who could assist us in taking a broader scope of our product further.

## Misc

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One part of our business plan relies on being more closely tied to academia. Currently we keep ourselves apprised of local and international conferences and research in the areas of machine learning and human computer interaction and this work probably would sometime form a submission to competitions and conferences as a way of aiding our progression as we leverage studies, promote our idea, encourage collaboration from said conference attendees.

This also would keep us informed about the latest in relevant algorithms but also about other ideas that we could form value partnerships with.

# Requests

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## Things that always help...

We currently require more contacts in marketing and legal to really get our idea off the ground and also more contacts in other universities/campuses so that we can keep abreast of other/further user needs, but also technology changes in the use of search algorithms etc.

# Thankyou!

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## Remember...

Torch Board is a creative way to curate and record your data, offering a way particular for academics and designers to track their search history and discover new and relevant links. This is a unique opportunity to utilise new voice and gesture technology. With all our contacts and knowledge this is potentially a fantastic tool to invest in, as it will revolutionise how we search for information in the coming 'big data' technology age.

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