Medst 255

New Technologies

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**Final Exam**

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**E1:**

The UX designer is a person or group of people at the charge of the UXD (user experience design) and his/their primary job is to enhance user satisfaction by improving the usability, accessibility, and pleasure within the interaction between the user and the product. The UX designer uses personas, scenarios and storyboard, and “pitch and critique” technique to build the reason for a certain application. However, there are challenges that constantly have to be met. There are five ethical quandaries and challenges that the UX designer faces: human costs and de-valuing work, de-skilling, influencing user behavior, the erosion of privacy, and the dangers of distraction.

One of the challenges the UX designer faces is the cost of human work and its devaluation by optimizing the system design, augmenting human ability, and automation. As technological equipment progresses, the need for actual human workers decreases. The beneficial side of new technologies such as automation is that efficiency is greatly increased and safety is secured especially for factories that have potentially dangerous hazards. One of the potential democratic presidential candidates, Andrew Yang, brings up this issue of automation and new technology taking over the jobs of thousands of people. He brings on the topic of truck drivers and how self-driving tech will replace millions of them. Truck driving is the most common job in 29 states in America; 3 millions Americans work as truck drivers and over 7 million are employed related to a trucking activity. Andrew Yang and lot of other public faces are saying that self-driving technology is now advanced enough to replace the millions of drivers, and the economy will not be ready for the drastic change. There are risks to many communities that are built around trucking industry as automation comes. In fact, this not only trucking jobs; it’s the same with all manufacturing jobs. Now the question is, is it right to take away jobs from millions of people for the sake of technological advancements? My answer is no, however, I do believe there will be a way to very slowly transition into automation that could benefit the millions already in manufacturing jobs.

Persuasive design is an area of psychological technique or practice that focuses on influencing human behavior through the product’s characteristics or persona. I believe to some level, persuasive design is a type of advertisement to appeal to the customers or consumers. Advertisements also subconsciously affect a user’s decision. I tend to feel it as a more negative thing that affects human behavior simply because of the motive behind such persuasive design and just the fact that one taps into the subconscious to affect people. I believe everything should be done in a conscious way with awareness. And yes, the pitch may be for comfortability, safety, or efficiency, however at the end, I think it is ultimately about profit for many. However, there can be a good side to persuasive design, just as Manoj Bhargava did with the collaborative movement, *Billions In Change*. As we learned in the lectures, “the fate of positive or negative experience solely depends upon their decisions while doing so.”

**E2:**

Three core characteristics of the digital world is that it’s electric, networked, and interconnected. One of the revolutionizing changes for the creative community is the fact that material has now become digitalized rather than a physical form which means art work no longer has to be in a physical object such as a book, photograph, record disk, painting, and so on. Art becoming electric means that art can be stored in the digital world that has more space. However, it also means that it is harder to distinguish between the real and the fake, the original and the copy. Art becoming networked means that art can be produced anywhere at anytime and distributed the same way on to a massive platform of the digital world. Lastly, being interconnected means a public interaction can happen and is open to modifications. Unlike television which has a broadcaster or some speaker speaking to an audience one-way, information on the internet can have a two-way conversation as well as editing.

Everyone and anyone can produce and distribute art. Due to modern camera tech on smartphones now, anyone can take high-quality photos with just few simple know-hows on how to take photography. There are numerous photography apps that allows anyone to make it look professional. Instagram and Snapchat are few of the many platforms one can become an “artist” without really a $3000 equipment. It is the exact same with music. With free programs such as GarageBand, anyone can create and produce music and distribute it on the open internet on platforms like SoundCloud, YouTube, Vimeo, and so many more.

Out of the screenings we had for class, I believe the documentary “PressPausePlay” brings a lot of points in terms of how new technological developments impacted and still impacts the art and creative culture. Everyone today can now produce and distribute music through developed music software and engineering devices. Everything is being democratized. Anyone can make a book, put out an album. The problem is everyone is doing that. Similarly, new technologies have emerged enabling anybody to produce books, films, and photographs. Recording music used to be considered a luxury and heavily reliant on the people you knew and a certain industry to promote your music. Artists now have more ability to create, publish, and interact with their audience and have an influence more than ever before. As Seth Godin in the documentary puts it, ‘the industry’s dead’. The artists that the documentary interviewed all had a common concern: they were afraid that art is now becoming or already has become mediocre. Since everyone is now producing music, it will be harder for anyone to stand out in the crowd. The danger is mediocrity against creativity. Against good music compared to mediocre music. The craft of writing or making music is gone. These anti-technology artists is calling this innovative progress in technology ‘depressing times’. Another downside of technological advancements in terms of art is that it is open to piracy and P2P sharing. It is virtually almost impossible to stop music piracy due to the limitless space of the Internet and just how easy it is to download a music file that has the exact same quality of the original.

Although I understand the concerns that the interviewee artists brought up, I disagree that creativity is being hampered and that art is turning mediocre. It is true that because of the open access and ability to create art many have come out as mediocre due to the sheer size of the creators in the world, I believe lot more creativity has been developed and used in ways like never before. Even artists before all these new technologies are starting to use it because of its efficiency and the constant change in the audience’s taste. One thing I do agree with the interviewees is that almost every art, especially music for instance, are being computerized. In art or any human-made thing, there’s imperfection and vulnerability. That’s what makes us human. Music that is computerized makes everything all too perfect—too perfect to the point that there is no humane feel.

**E3:**

Some specific developments in human enhancement technology that has caught my attention are mobile phones and the internet in existing technologies, brain-computer interfaces and 3D bioprinting in emerging technologies, and mind uploading in speculative technologies. Personally, I am all for technological advancements. Many of these advancements really advances our efficiency in output, although I am skeptical about technology advancing efficiency in input. What I mean by that is technology helps us to do things what we could of never done before in history and accelerates the process: it increase the output. In a way, everything is becoming faster. On the other hand, technology decreases the input: in self-development, creativity, and may perhaps cognitive surplus. It detaches us more and more from interpersonal human relationships and human activities such as children playing outside in the dirt, physical contact with things, and even just simply being outside itself. Now these things are done mainly in vacations. When I see children these days glued to their cellphones and contacting their friends who are sitting right next to them, it makes me concerned.

These advancements may well come at a high price if we are not careful and good stewards of it. One concern I have with these technological advancements on humans is that we might lose our humanity--as in what it means to be human. I do not believe technology should dominantly replace us in areas of functionality, emotion, expressions, spirituality, and relationships. One of the characteristics of humankind is imperfection. We, as human beings, are not perfect and I believe that’s what makes us humans. Imperfection is one of the differences between machines and humans. Machines are designed to do what humans cannot due and to make no mistakes in the process. However, I believe imperfections are the beauty of human nature. Through imperfections, failures, and pain, we grow and learn. Without imperfections and failures, there can be no process of things; and there is beauty in the process of failures. In the documentary “PressPausePlay”, one of the musician interviewees said that with the use of new technology in producing music, music has been perfected so much that it no longer sounds like it is created by a human. Imagine if all of us are perfect: perfect in skin, health, mentality, character, personality (which I don’t believe such thing as “perfect personality exists”), manner, speech, movement, emotion and so on. A world like that would be so boring, systematic, and uneventful—basically we will be robots. I believe all creation is flawed in a slight way. And there’s beauty in the faults and in the cracks.

I also believe privacy will become rarer and morals become more devalued as technological advancements progress. Privacy will become rarer because modern technology like computers, smartphones, and even cars are now all trackable. Because of the Snowden incident, people have found out that the government has used technology on cameras on devices to spy on people for “safety and security” purposes. As technology progresses, I believe the notion of individualism and privacy will wade. I believe morals are becoming more devalued because, as mentioned earlier, I believe when the essence of humanity begins to fall, we would become more confused and unsure of morality. Morality, I believe, is a humanity issue, and when our focus becomes on becoming a better version of ourselves through inhuman functionality or methods, I think we will fall into the grey area of morality.

We are definitely more drawn to and connected with technology. I would argue that for some people it would be extremely hard to live without any present day technology such as smartphones, computers, the Internet, and social media. I personally know a lot of those people, including my younger brother. I have no issue with humankind being more connected with technology as long as the connection is not stronger or does not replace the connection with other humans. Gaming, for example, has replaced many human interactions. The reason I know is because I myself had been addicted to gaming for a long time. Likewise, I have no problem with gaming. It’s only when it starts to replace my connection and importance with human relationships is when it becomes a problem.

Lastly, I think the technological innovation we need most is, ironically, technology that will help us rely less on technology. Technology, for example, that will help us spend more time with family members rather than watching Netflix or TV; technology that will help us go out and enjoy nature, physically touch dirt, smell the scent of flowers, feel the wind, and see the sky and animals rather than playing games and digitally touching and feeling a false reality; and technology that will help us focus on things that really matter—humans and the lives of humans. There are hundreds of thousands of human lives dying each day. Humanity and being human is not about “I” but about “us”. We were not created as a single person but as a collective. Being human is not about how I can get better but rather how we can become better *together*. That is why I believe technology should always have a foundation towards that belief and is most needed today.

Citations:

**E1:**

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**E2:**

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**E3:**

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