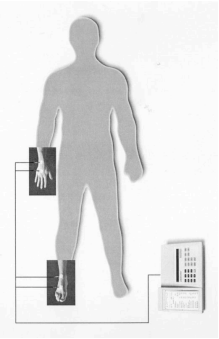
Self-Sensing and Health – a critical making experience



CoolerSolutions Workshop
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The positive and negative potential for digital sensing and tracking technologies is well known. Such technologies make it possible for institutions and organizations to track and monitor individuals in a variety of ways. Much has been written about the potential for a 'surveillance society', with the state or private interests increasingly intervening in personal lives in both productive and destructive ways. CCTV cameras that may both increase public safety as well as the possibility of state control are a good example. Another example is the Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor or "SCRAM" bracelet famously being worn by Linsay Lohan.

What makes these technologies useful as well as problematic is the way they monitor personal information (presence and location, or blood alcohol levels) and then relay that information to a central source for processing and decision-making. But what about personal usage of monitoring technology and the data that results? There are a few examples in the market that have been extremely successful, in particular medical technologies such as blood glucose meters, and sports/health devices such as the Nike+ipod pedometer system.

In this workshop we will use both conceptual exploration and material prototyping to think through some of the possibilities of 'self-sensing' and digital technology. We'll refer to some academic work on the relationship between technology and the body in order to construct a shared vocabulary on this topic, and to open up the conceptual problem space beyond the current state of the art. Some of the terms we may explore include:

augmentation, 'functionality without virtuality,' pervasive (from Viseu, 2003)
plasticity, 'profound embodiment', natural-born cyborgs (from Clark, 2007)
self-knowledge, data-driven, personal data (from Wolf, 2010)

We will then use a prepared selfsensor kit to build personal self-sensors, explore their use, and discuss future innovations and possibilities.

10AM-10:15AM: Intros, brief discussion of critical making, plans for the day
10:15-10:30: Discussion of interests around health, data, and sensing
10:30-11:00: Brief overview of potentially useful concepts (from readings):
11:00-1: Making selfsensors
1:00-2:00: Lunch
2:00-3:00: Discussion