

ByteMap: Phase 1 Design Document

OVERVIEW:

Purpose and Goals-Nitya

Motivation

ByteMap's primary purpose is to eliminate the high-volume, low-relevance entity that is the MIT free food mailing list (and every other list that is occasionally used to announce the presence of free food on campus). Oftentimes, we receive emails announcing free food at times we don't care about, or at locations that we won't be able to get to before food has run out. And if we manage to get to the free food, it's sometimes all gone, making the time and effort required to get there wasted.

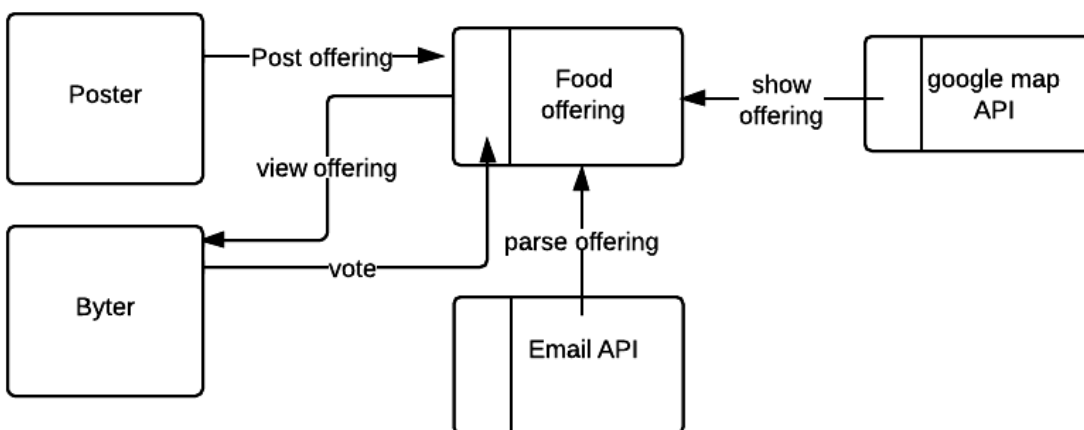
Insight

Our major insight into this problem was to create a visual that organizes the varied times and locations of sent emails into one easy to digest visual: an MIT map. Using a familiar, intuitive interface, users can view free food that is in places they care about at times when they are in a position to take advantage of it. We think that a visual approach will eliminate the need for noisy email lists and instead allow users to look at offerings when they need them.

Goals

Our goal for ByteMap is to provide an easily accessible, intuitive interface for users to check where free food currently on campus is located. We would like to leverage existing channels of communication(the current free food email list) to ease integration of the app, and we want to make the app very usable with a large, active user base so that we can leverage crowdsourcing to provide real time information regarding free food locations and status.

Context Diagram- ido



CONCEPTS:

Key Concepts -Cynthia

Map: An interactive map representing locations around MIT's campus. A user can view the locations of buildings and zoom in to explore pins representing various food offerings currently in that location.

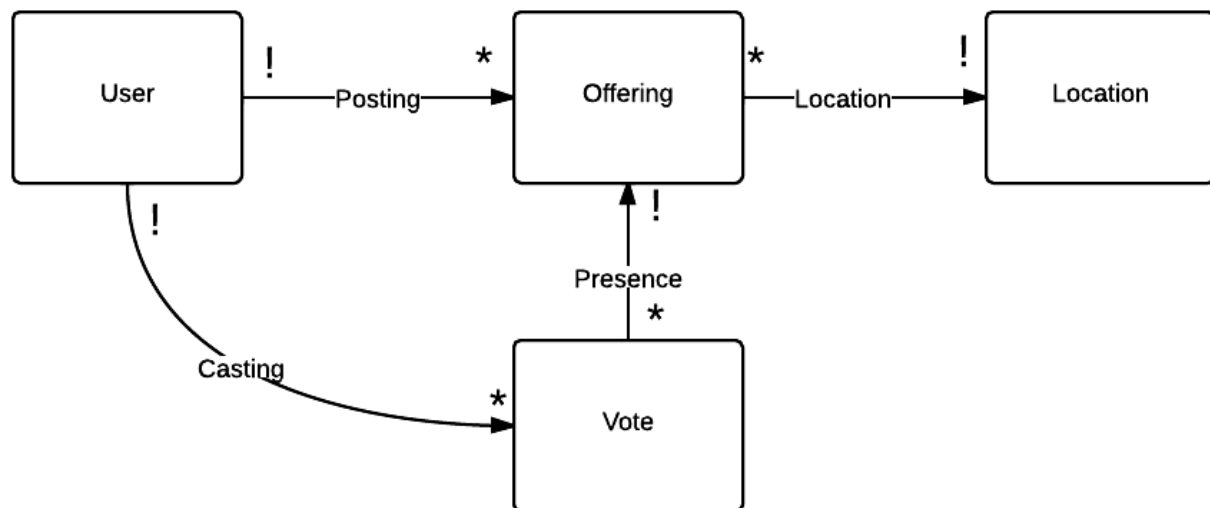
Offering: An instance of available food and its description, represented via a pin dropped at it's corresponding location on the map. Offerings only exist for a fixed duration of time, to be specified by the poster of the offering and by eater verification.

Pin: Icon representing an offering that can be seen on the map.

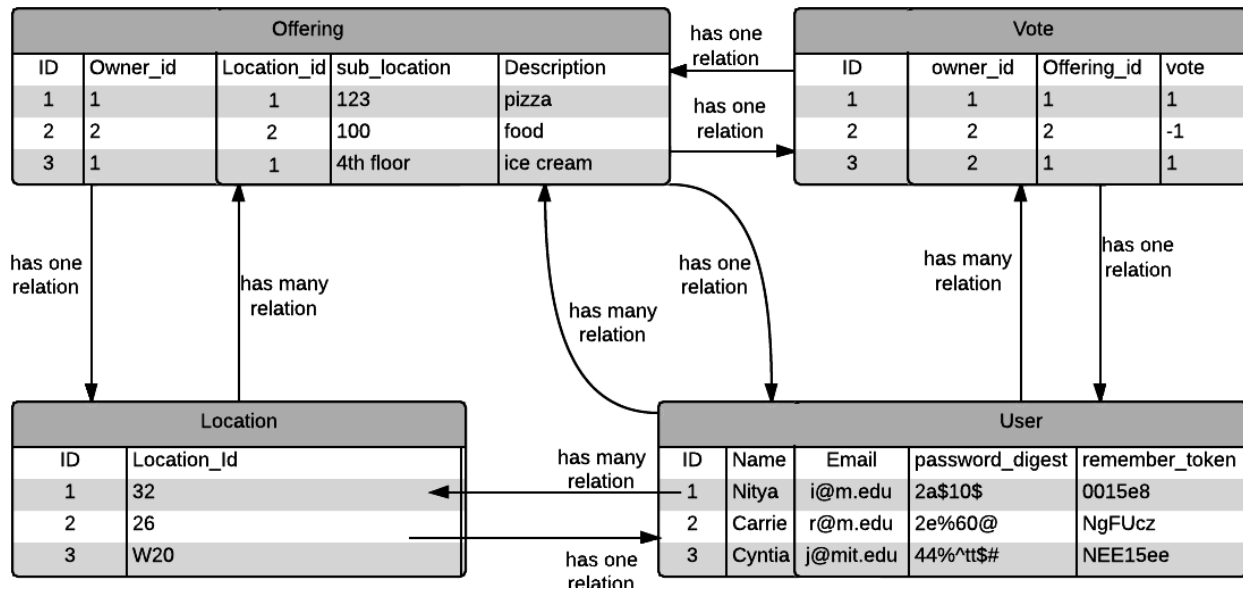
Poster: Member of the MIT community who creates offerings.

Byteer: Member of the MIT community who can view the offering on the map. They can assess the pin of an offering and vote on the state of that offering.

data model - ido



database design - Ido



BEHAVIOR:

Feature Descriptions - Cynthia

Visualization of all available food on campus: A map with pins allows byters to visually see all available food offerings. This lets byters easily determine the proximity of offerings through a geographical representation of all the information.

Flexible input methods (manual or email): Through either an easy input form on the app or through directly emailing to a list ByteMap subscribes to, posters of offerings will not have to spend significantly more time to enter their offerings to the app. ByteMap will be able to receive emails from relevant food lists and scrape that information and create an offering.

Crowdsourced verification of presence of offerings: Byters can indicate if an offering is all gone by a simple action to the offering. If enough Byters verify that the offering is gone, ByteMap will remove the offering.

Quality control for posters: Posters must sign in to add an offering. This allows ByteMap to keep track of information on the creators of offerings. ByteMap will keep track of the relevant mit email address of offerings automatically created through an email. This provides the same amount of quality control as when users currently email out about free food on mailing lists.

Low barrier of participation for Byters: Use of MIT certificates or an easy sign in will allow Byters to instantly see all available offerings. All information is centered on the map page and requires no actions of the part of an Byters.

Minimal Viable Product- Nitya

For our minimal viable product, we have decided to implement our basic Map and Pinning functionalities without users. In this phase, we will allow for anyone to post offerings, view offerings, or make vote on the status of offerings(mark if food is 'still there' or 'all gone'). The primary challenges of this step will be integrating the Google Maps API and making the user interface intuitive. For this phase, we will only be allowing postings to the list via a form on the website, saving the added complication of parsing emails for a later iteration.

Preliminary Design Challenges and Considerations- Nitya

Authentication: Users vs. No Users

We extensively debated whether or not to have users(or what types of users we would have). We want to make the app very easy to get started with because we want to encourage as high of an active user base as possible, and therefore don't want to burden our users with signing in. We do, however want to have a way of controlling the quality of content on our application, and want to therefore have some barrier to entry for posters of offerings especially. For this reason, we are considering using certificate authentication as well as using a standard login procedure.

The advantages to using certificate authentication are mainly related to ease of access. We can easily confirm that our users are members of the MIT community, and our users don't need to create an account before posting. Our main challenges with certificate authentication are integrating our application with scripts.mit.edu, as athena currently only supports rails 3, as well as how to integrate certificate authentication, as we have never worked with it before.

Our alternative to certificate authentication is having a standard login procedure that requires posters of offerings to make an account. Because the risks associated with low content quality are much higher on the poster side, requiring an account might drive away spam more effectively than allowing open posting. If we went with this route, we would not require accounts for viewers of offerings, as the sign-in process would be very cumbersome for as dynamic an application as ours. We will, however, require sign-in before a user may interact with an offering(mark as 'still there' or 'all gone') for the same quality control reason mentioned above.

We have not made a decision on which type of user authentication to employ, and plan to discuss the issue at our next TA meeting.

Updating Offering Status: (click button vs upvote/downvote)

One important aspect of our application is notifying users when it is no longer worth the trek to get an offering that is completely depleted. We plan on having a duration attribute of an offering that can be set, but we would also like to crowdsource the task of reporting offering status. We considered two methods of doing this: notification buttons, and an upvote/downvote system

The notification buttons 'still there' and 'all gone' would be clickable by consumers of the offering, and would serve as an additional source of information for prospective consumers. If a consumer obtained food from a source and noticed that there was more food left, they could

click the 'still there' button, and users would be able to see that at the time the 'still there' button was last clicked, food was still present at the given location. The other button we would have would be the 'all gone' button, which could either be clicked by the last person to get food or by someone who happened upon the empty food containers at the specified location. We could then augment the specified duration feature by taking into account the crowdsourced data we get, allowing for a more realistic picture to be presented to our users. One challenge of this option would be how to appropriately weight the crowdsourced data such that we don't trust one downvote too much and remove an offering that still exists.

The upvote/downvote system would be somewhat simpler to implement, as it would just have users give positive or negative points to an offering. However, this system was not time-sensitive enough for our specific use, and we were also unsure as to how we would properly weight upvote/downvote data in order to determine if an offering was still valid.

Our team decided to move forward with the 2 button offering feedback system for the MVP, and maybe combine the upvote/downvote system in a later phase of the project. Our initial database design takes into consideration such combination, but this feature will not be implemented for the MVP phase of the project.

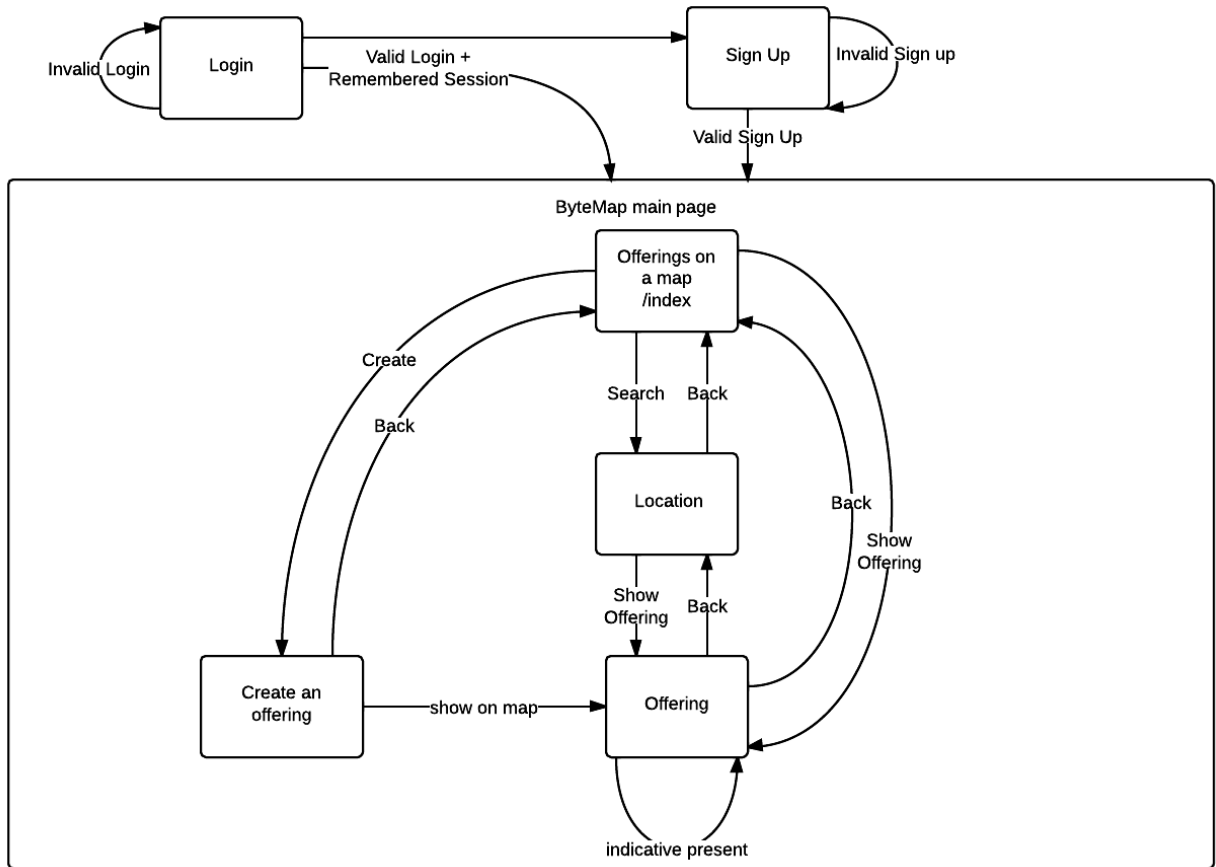
Lifespan of an Offering

One other challenge we faced was determining the duration for which we would keep an offering on our map. As described above, we will consider the duration input by the user as well as the crowdsourced feedback received and keep the offering up for as long as either parameter requests we keep it up (we will take the max of user feedback and poster-defined duration). This does mean that occasionally we will keep offerings up that are no longer valid, but we think that this small variation will still be a major improvement over the current system, which gives very little intermediate feedback (typically one announcement and sometimes one termination email are sent for a given offering)

How to Post an Offering

We debated three different methods to post offerings to our website- emailing to free-food@mit.edu (the current mailing list), bytemap@mit.edu (a new email we would create), and having a form submission on the site. We will definitely have a form on the site to begin, but as we progress, we will integrate emailing to [bytemap@](mailto:bytemap@mit.edu) (with a specifically formatted email), and if we have time, we will then try to parse the unformatted messages sent to [free-food@](mailto:free-food@mit.edu).

state machine -ido



User Interface and Wireframe - Carrie

Interface for posting a new offering (“byte”)

View this byte

Post a new byte

food and cookies!
building 32, outside rm 123
last seen: 20 min. ago

Food still there? ☒ yes ☐ no

posted by: Ben B.

food and cookies!
building 32, outside rm 123
last seen: 20 min. ago

leftovers from Chipotle
building 24, open area 2nd flr
last seen: 22 min. ago

burgers and fries
killian court
last seen: 31 min. ago

Royal East trays
building 32, student street
last seen: 40 min. ago

Interface for viewing an offering (“byte”)

Building 32 search

View this byte Post a new byte

Location Building 32

Location details i.e. 3rd floor open area

Food description i.e. chips and cookies Create

food and cookies!
building 32, outside rm 123
last seen: 20 min. ago

leftovers from Chipotle
building 24, open area 2nd flr
last seen: 22 min. ago

burgers and fries
killian court
last seen: 31 min. ago

Royal East trays
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Security Issues - Cynthia

Some security requirements are that:

- Byters and posters must be part of the MIT community
- Posters must use a valid MIT email/certificate when posting
- No one needs to see the information on a poster, byters verifications are anonymous

Potential Risks:

- Trolls placing faulty "pins" or reporting that food is still there, to misguide other eaters.
- Byters faultily reporting that food is all gone to keep the food to themselves.
- Hackers who attempt SQL injections, cross-site scripting, CSRFs

Mitigations:

- Standard rails/ruby strategies to address code vulnerabilities (such as injection, XSRF, etc)
- Attribute offerings to a creator (poster) so that posters can be held accountable if need be.
- No important information is stored and all users are assumed to be part of the MIT community, so there is already a level of privacy and trust between users
- Use access control to allow only MIT people to see and post to app.
- Crowdsourcing verification of the presence of offerings will allow users to quickly indicate if an offering is gone. Since offerings are so transient, only a few people are needed to indicate an empty offering for it to be removed from the site.

Teamwork Plan:

Stakeholders: In order for ByteMap to become successful, we rely on members of the MIT community to both use and post to the app. Specifically, stakeholders might include hungry students/faculty in search of food, department administrators who frequently announce free food, and facilities staff who may be concerned about unattended leftovers or food sanity. Lastly, the team members of this project are the administrators of the Bytemap system.

Resources: We will use mainly our laptops to create the app and heroku to deploy it. If we get MIT Certificate validation working, we will host our app on scripts and use the scripts locker of one of our team members to host the application.

Tasks:

	phase 4.1	phase 4.2	phase 4.3	phase 4.3 (following week)	phase 4.4
Carrie	Wireframes	customization of GMaps to MIT buildings	server pull requests	Parsing real-world emails, search, testing	Parsing real-world emails, testing
Cynthia	Features, Key Concepts, Security Concerns	Parsing custom template, voting	UI/UX	testing, Parsing real-world emails	Parsing real-world emails, testing
Nitya	Design Challenges/ Main purpose and goals	Creating offerings via form, Google maps API integration	login/ certificates	newsfeed, testing	newsfeed, testing
Ido	State machine, data model, context diagram, database design	Google maps API integration, bootstrap integration	UI/UX	testing, search	Texting (optional), prezi presentation

As stated in the team contract, we will spend all the time possible to finish our own tasks, but if there is an instance where we can't finish our personal milestones, we will tell the rest of the team a day or two beforehand so that the whole team can work together to finish the milestone.

Risks:

Design risks:

Faulty “pins” might put off users. If there are constantly offering without the advertised food, users might become unhappy with ByteMap for wasting their time. We have timestamps and a voting system to remove offerings as soon as they are consumed.

Implementation risks:

Push notifications: As ByteMap depends on real time updates, it is important to synchronize users as fast as possible.

Development risks:

Complicated map APIs: We will be using Google API, which is well documented and has many developers. If this feature proves infeasible, we can go back to a static map of the campus.

Getting content from emails: Email scraping may be difficult to achieve a high rate of success. We are allowing user to post directly to the site, so there is an alternative source of inputting offerings.