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GOOGLE HANGOUT

REFLECTION PAPER

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1 INTRODUCTION

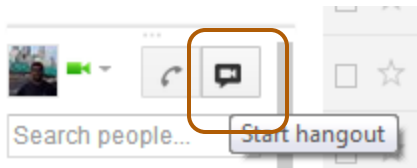
Google Hangout is a video conferencing tool developed by Google Inc. that lets you catchup with your friends and family. It has both web based and mobile application. The only requirement to use this app is that you and your friends and family should have a Google+ account.

For the purpose of this paper we are going to concentrate only on the web based Google Hangout application. We will study the app in the following context –

- The Actors, Artifacts and Organizational Structures
- McCarthy and Wright's Threads of Experience

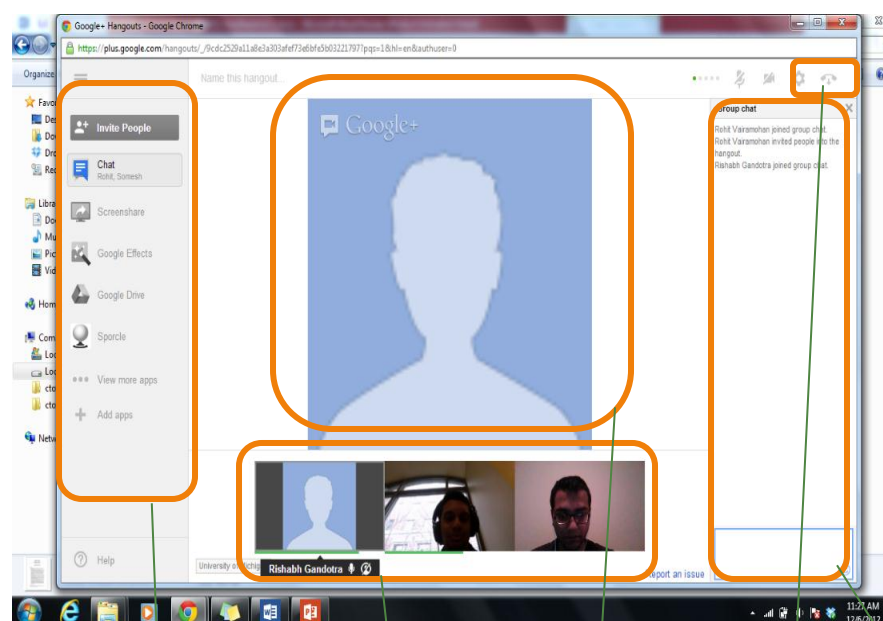
2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SYSTEM

Google hangout's web based application enables all the Google+ users to start a 'Hangout' (a temused for video conferencing by Google) with their friends and family. To start the 'Hangout' you just have to click the video icon, placed in the chat section of your Google+ email account.



Once the 'Hangout' starts, you can view the users present in this hangout by looking at the small screens placed at the bottom of the application. Moreover, the person who is currently speaking takes the center large screen. Furthermore, you can add up to ten people in this 'Hangout' by clicking the "Invite People" sidebar tab.

The sidebar also contains tabs for screen share, Google drive etc. There is also an option to chat with the users present in this 'Hangout'. This feature is located on the right side of the app.



After you have finished the 'Hangout', you can opt out of the application by clicking the "phone with the down arrow" icon. Moreover, if you were the user who started the hangout, then too you can leave the application, while others can still continue the video conferencing.

One of the compelling features of Google Hangout is that it is absolutely free to use and is an exceptional tool for collaborating.

Sidebar with options like screenshare, invite people etc.

Users Present in Hangout

Center Large screen

Finish Hangout Icon

Chat with users' option

3 EXPERIENCE WITH THE SYSTEM

This experience is about the time when I used Google Hangout to attend the CHI Design meeting, with my group members. I was in a Google voice call, when my group members pinged me and asked me to join the 'Hangout' they had created. I tried to click on the "Join Hangout" link which appeared in my Gmail chat window but without any success. I was unable to join the hangout and was frustrated to see the error message "You are already in a Hangout".

Moreover, I tried to open the link in a new window, but that too resulted in failure. I was getting more and more annoyed and angry but then I realized that the Gmail voice call might be interrupting with the 'Hangout' process. Hence, I ended the voice call and re-tried the link. To my pleasure, it worked this time. Moreover, I was exultant to see my group members already present in the 'Hangout'. Furthermore, the presence of features like chat, screen share and other collaboration tools made me even more elated.

The output which we wanted from this meeting was the initial model for our CHI Design idea. We had several research papers and design ideas thought individually, to serve as the basis for developing this model. Moreover, we had notes from our previous meetings to guide us further with this modeling process.

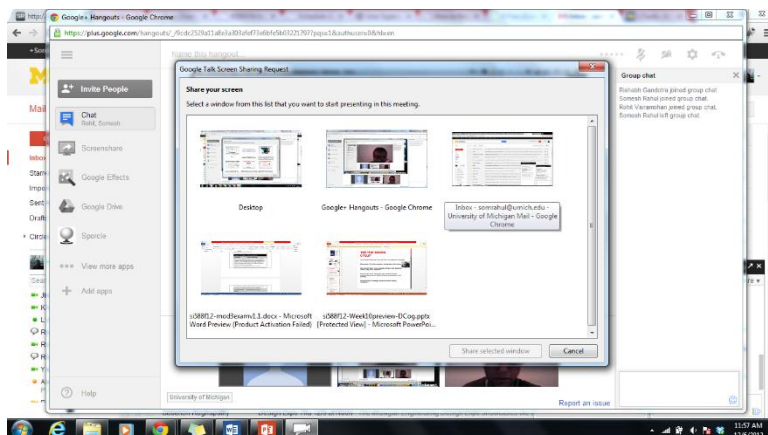


Figure. Sharing the Screen with Google Hangout.

We started the meeting by presenting our individual models. Each group member was presenting one at a time and the other two were taking notes. Thereafter, we merged these ideas with the research work. Then we divided the work into two distinguished roles, one of a "Modeler" and other was "Helpers". I as a modeler started to make the rough draft of the CHI Design Model and the helpers started to assist me with the integration of the previously formed notes and ideas. Moreover, I could sense the presence of my team members and this made me excited and careful at the same time.

After the preparation of the final draft, I shared the draft through the email and the others accessed their email to have a final look and to give the review comments. Fortunately, everybody did a commendable job and therefore we did not make any changes to the final draft. This made me wonder and rejoice at the same time, as the 'Hangout' turned out to be a successful alternative to the meetings in the same physical space.

We decided to end the 'Hangout' after the preparation of this model for the CHI Design. I was so happy to complete this task without having to go out in the cold and meeting each other in person.

4 KEY CONCEPTS FOR ANALYSIS

The key concepts that I am going to analyze are as follows:

4.1 ACTORS, ARTIFACTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

In a group the work is distributed across the people and the resources that are part of this group. Moreover, this group acts as a single unit with a specific task in hand. Furthermore, the people of this group who are associated with this specific task are known as the 'Actors'. Hence, unlike individual cognition the cognition in the group is carried out by the Actors and the resources that are part of that group. Moreover, the actors individually cannot determine the flow of the process. [Perry]

Artifacts are manmade or modified objects [Cole, 1990], used by the 'Actors' to either aid their cognition or to help them in problem solving. Some examples of artifacts are: Computer, Language, pen, paper etc.

There is a social order that exists within the group. Actors within the social context form the organizational structure in the group. Moreover, the organizational structures are dynamic and depend on the specific task and the role assumed by the individual 'Actor'. Furthermore, the organizational structure is important to the efficient functioning of the group, else chaos will prevail.

4.2 MCCARTHY AND WRIGHT'S THREADS OF EXPERIENCE

The threads of experience are the ideas that define an experience. Moreover, they should not be confused as the elements of experience.

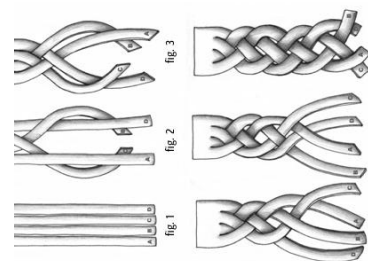
The Sensual thread is concerned with our sensory engagement with the situation. Moreover, it is related to the visceral aspects of the experience.

The Emotional thread pertains to our 'oughtness' of the situation. Furthermore, it is concerned with making sense of our experience.

The Compositional thread touches upon the story aspect of the experience. In addition, it defines the relationship between the parts and the whole of the experience.

The Spatio-temporal thread encompasses the space and time aspect of the experience. Moreover, it relates to the perception of time and social space and how they change during the experience.

Hence, we can say that these threads are inter-woven and might overlap with each other.



Source: Class Notes

5 ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE

In this section we will analyze the experience based on the concepts that have been described in the previous section.

Actors, Artifacts and Organizational Structures: My other two group mates were already present in the 'Hangout', when I joined it. Together as a group, we had the task of creating the initial model for CHI Design. Hence, I and my other two group members became the 'Actors' for this specific task. Moreover, to solve this task we made use of various artifacts. We used **laptops** and **internet** to initialize the video conferencing. We used 'English' and 'Hindi' as the **language** to distribute our cognitive load and coordinate the activity of model making. Furthermore, we used **pen, paper** and **pencil** to draw the model. Moreover, I used **post-Its** to keep track of the changes. In addition, we used **Headphones** to avoid outside noise and disturbances.

The organizational structure was dynamic, and changed according to the roles assumed by the individuals. Initially, the organizational structure consisted of a 'presenter' and 'note taker'. The presenter took the central large screen of the 'hangout' and the note takers listened carefully to the information delivered by the presenter. In the latter half of the meeting the organizational structure consisted of a 'modeler' and 'reviewer'. The modeler designed the model while the reviewers assisted the modeler with comments and reviews.

McCarthy and Wright's Threads of Experience: The sensual aspect of the 'Hangout' is not as prominent as meeting the people in person. Moreover, I was frustrated as I was unable to join the 'Hangout'. But the thread thickened when I saw my group members and was able to communicate normally with them. Moreover, the collaborative features like 'Screenshare' made me excited. Furthermore, the mere fact that you could have a near in-person meeting experience without having to go physically in the cold weather, made me even more elated and all this resulted in a good sensual engagement.

Initially, my 'oughtness' was to get connected to the 'Hangout' which I was unable to do. Hence, I felt frustrated and angry. Later, when I was able to access 'Hangout' my 'oughtness' changed to having an experience similar to that of an in-person meeting. It was interesting to note that 'Hangout' was exceptional in meeting this 'oughtness'. Moreover, it provided features like 'ScreenShare' that helped in collaboration and this made my emotional thread even more swollen.

My compositional thread of experience started with frustration but afterwards I attained happiness while having a fluent face to face conversation with my group mates. Moreover, the ease of using the collaborative tools provided by 'Hangout' further increased my felicity. Furthermore, the completion of the task, without any mishaps elated me even more. Hence, the experience of using 'Hangout' turned out to be delightful as a whole.

The spatio-temporal thread changed my perception of time and space. In the beginning when I was having trouble with the 'Hangout', the time was passing by really slowly and painfully. But as soon as the video conferencing started, time passed by so pleasantly and quickly. Moreover, the 'Hangout' gave me the illusion of actual presence of my group members in the same physical space.

6 GENERALIZATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

My experience of 'Hangout' started with the frustration of unable to join it. This may not be true for every user. Moreover, the experienced user will know their way around the problem of – not being able to join the 'Hangout' while in a voice call. Hence, for these users the experience of 'Hangout' will start with pleasure and satisfaction.

Moreover, my group was comprised of two more people other than me. This satisfies the requirement of less than ten people needed for a 'Hangout'. There might be larger groups who want to use 'Hangout' for their meetings but will eventually face frustration after they find out about this requirement.

Furthermore, people with slow internet connectivity complain a lot. According to them, all the threads of experience result in frustration and anger. Hence, the overall experience of 'Hangout' is negative for such users.

In addition, people who want to use Google 'Hangout' necessarily need to have a Google+ account. This process might annoy some of the users.

I cannot argue on the above valid points, but there is no denying that the large number of people who have used the Google 'Hangout' are all praise for this web application. A testimony is the fact that it is being used by a significant number of users for not only collaborative purposes but also for catching up with their friends and family. And lastly, the perfectly designed UI just helps amplify the positive experience.

7 CONCLUSION

Google 'Hangout' turned out to be an extremely useful tool for collaborating purposes. Moreover, the layout of the application is simple and intuitive.

To summarize,

- We identified the various Actors, Artifacts and the Organizational Structures present in the experience
- We understood the role of McCarthy and Wright's various Threads and how they impact an individual's experience