COMP325B 2014 Project Phase I
Due Friday, 15 August 2014

Designing a system to help people brand their personal identity

Who are you? A cool-as designer, a surfer dude, a sports star, a coder, a book-loving geek? Who am I? An intellectual, an existentialist writer, a dancer?

Throughout our lives we express our personal identity in many different ways. Sometimes this is through direct interaction with people, but more and more we present ourselves online via digital media. We tweet how we feel about that person who 'stole our' car park from us, post our dream holiday destination on Facebook, compose songs, design invitations, manipulate photos – all using digital software. Some of this expression results in permanent artefacts – photos, recorded music – other things are more temporary – phone conversations with friends, live music.

Your task, this semester, is to design a system that will help people to brand their personal identity. Phase I of this project involves understanding how people currently deal with their personal expression. The aim of the activities in this phase of the project is for you to immerse yourself in the real-world context and issues involved in producing, managing, and sharing expression of personal identity, both online and in the real world/offline.

You can interpret 'expression of personal identity' very broadly. Some things you consider might be active presentations of an artistic nature such as music, art or writing. Other aspects of personal identity might be happening more subconsciously such as the choice what food to eat, what sports to play or which friends to have; people might not perceive this as expression of their personal identity, nevertheless it forms a big part of it.

This understanding of context should be deep enough to prepare you to perform a detailed design of a system to support people in producing, managing and expressing their personal identity; the system should enable users to 'brand their personal identity'. You will create and evaluate this design in Phase II. In Phase III, you will implement and evaluate a proof-of-concept prototype of the Phase II design.

Phase I consists of 5 steps. There are deliverables associated with each of these steps.

Step 1: Self-observation and self-interview: how do you express your own identity?

In this step, you will analyse your own behaviour in expressing your personal identity: the strategies, applications, and resources that you use. Note that you might, or might not, have previously thought of yourself as expressing or branding your personal identity; here, we're defining personal identity as a set of characteristics

(opinions, values, preferences, beliefs, experiences, possessions, skills, etc.) that a person has. They can be expressed through all sorts of things: actions, artefacts, communication, behaviour etc.

Your investigation should include an exploration of:

- The characteristics of your self-expression, are they temporary or permanent? Do you create them alone or in a group? Do you express yourself in the 'real world', digital world or both? Are there any differences when and why you would choose one over the other?
- Are you active in expressing yourself, do these artefacts originate from your own creation (e.g. you are a singer/songwriter or artist) or are you more passive selecting other people's works and express your own 'personal brand' through your choices (e.g. aspiring to own all death metal that is out there)?
- The types of artefacts your might produce; songs, photos, dances, books, poems, tweets, blogs, paintings, drawings, designs etc.. Collecting stamps, photos, CDs, vinyl records? Wearing certain clothes and hairstyles?
- Which temporary types of self-expression you perform; playing a musical instrument, singing, playing sports, acting, etc.. Attending plays, concerts, sports games?
- Your expression of identity; does it happen more introverted or extrovertly? Do you keep your expressions to yourself or do you love sharing them?
- Is your self-expression based on creativity, intellectually based, belief-based, political, physical, emotional, etc.?
- Your motivation for expressing your personal identity. Think about the last few times you can identify as personal expression; how did you express yourself, why did you do it? If you produced an artefact, will it have a further use? For example, do you have a specific time or circumstance in mind when you think that you'll look at it again, or was it saved to fill out a collection, or to show someone else, or for 'just in case' (in case of what?)? – If it did not produce an artefact, do you think there will come a time you will want to know other people about that particular self-expression of yours? When might that be and with what aim?
- Regarding potential artefacts – where and how are they stored? For physical artefacts this question would be answered differently than from digital artefacts. Have you got a system of organization how to manage them or are they randomly spread out over your house or digital devices?
- Add any other personal identity-related behaviour associated to producing, managing and sharing/expressing 'your' personal identity not covered by the above points.

Please note that individuals may not participate in all activities listed above! Your work in this observation should reflect your expression of your personal identity. If you think you don't express your personal identity or think you don't have any, then include in your write-up a self-reflection on why you think this is.

Deliverable: a 4–5 page report of this investigation. You are encouraged to include photographs, screenshots, or sketches to illustrate the write-up.

In the investigation write-up, please include:

- A brief description of the location / environment of the self-observation (e.g., was this where you express yourself? Did you have the hardware/tools that you usually use?).
- A summary of your self-interview, written up as a set of questions with your associated responses. The questions that you ask yourself should be similar to those that you ask another person in Step 2.
- A brief overview of what you've learned about your own methods and motivations for expressing personal identity (what are the main themes or trends? For example, do you have a formal way of branding your identity or is your self-expression more random—and why? What were the problems points, and what worked well? Etc.).

Step 2: Interview and observation: Personal identity expression behaviour of a friend or family member

Perform the investigation in Step 1 using a family member or friend as a subject. Interview this person to find out how they currently express their personal identity. Ask to observe them as produce or manage an aspect of self-expression (e.g. watch them how the manipulate their digital photos, play the piano, have a rugby game or sing in a choir). The interview questions should be similar to the questions that you asked yourself, in Step 1. Note that the questions might not be identical to those of Step 1—you may have found better ways to word the questions, or you may be prompted to ask additional questions by what you discover in this interview.

See the "Ethical notes" below for important information on the conduct of this interview / observation.

Deliverable: Write a 3-4 page report describing this person's approach to expressing personal identity, and highlight the differences between their activities and yours. Again, you may include photographs, screenshots, or sketches to illustrate the write-up.

In the investigation write-up, please include:
- A brief description of the location / environment of the self-observation (e.g., was this where your interviewee normally expresses themselves? Did they have the hardware/tools that they usually use?).
- A summary of the interview, presented as the set of questions that you asked, with each question followed by a summary of the interviewee's response. Do not transcribe the entire interview, though you may wish to include brief quotes from the interviewee if they seem particularly interesting or useful.
- A brief overview of what you've learned about that person's methods and motivations for expressing their personal identity (What are the main themes or trends? For example, do they have a formal way of branding their identity or is their self-expression more random—and why? What were the problem points, and what worked well? Etc.). In this overview, highlight the differences between their activities and your own.

Step 3: Diary study

As you go through a normal day of work / leisure / study, record your activities in producing, managing, and sharing self-expressions. Use the form provided on Moodle. Conduct this diary study for at least three days. Note that the days do not have to be sequential.

Deliverable: Hand in your diary forms. Write a 1-2 page report summarizing your diary entries: What sort of patterns did you see in your activities? How do your diary entries match to your self-observation and interview—or did you find out something new from your diary entries? What have you learned about what you do, or don't do, with self-expressions?

Step 4: Critique of an existing personal expression system

Write a critique of a system that can currently be used to produce, manage or share self-expressions of personal identity. Possibilities include, but are not limited to,

- WordPress
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Vine
- InDesign

- Photoshop
- Illustrator
- Flickr
- Garageband
- Audacity
- Youtube

Think about how this system / site supports a user in producing, managing, and sharing self-expressions. Note how well these systems / sites supports one or more of the user activities/needs identified in Steps 1 - 3, any additional behaviours that the system might support beyond those that you identified, and any major usability issues (egg in terms of interaction, functionality, layout, icons, etc.).

Deliverable: Write a 3 - 4 page report that describes both the match and mis-match of this system to the behaviours that you noted in Steps 1 – 3. Again, you should note any additional behaviours that this system might support beyond those that you noted in Steps 1 – 3 (if any). You should include screenshots and sketches to illustrate your report.

Step 5: Summary of user needs

Using the Steps 1–4 deliverables, produce a list of user needs for a new application that will support users in producing, managing and sharing self-expressions of personal identity. What functionality should this application support? How will the user interact with it?

Deliverable: a 1–2 page summary of user needs. You should briefly demonstrate the rationale for each item in your specification by making reference to your investigations in Steps 1–4.

Deliverables step 1-5:
All students should upload a report onto Moodle containing all the deliverables specified in Steps 1–5 (apart from the diary forms) **by 5pm on Friday 15 August**. This report must be word-processed, using Times font, size 12 point, and single line-spacing. Use margins no larger than 2.5 cm on all sides. Make sure you include your name and student id number on a coversheet.

Diary forms:
Attach a cover sheet with name and student ID to your diary forms.
Hamilton students must drop your filled-in diary forms in the COMP325 assignment box (outside the Computer Science office, first floor, G Building) **by 5pm on Friday 15 August.**
Tauranga students must hand in your filled-in diary forms to Judy at the start of your Friday tutorial **on Friday 15 August.**

Ethical notes

An important aspect of conducting HCI research is to behave ethically. When you are dealing with participants, you will need to do the following:

- Give a copy of the Research Consent Form and Participants Bill of Rights to your participants (see Moodle for copies of these forms; you will need to adapt the Research Consent Form for your needs).
- At the beginning of each session, verbally explain these documents, with particular reference to the participant's right to withdraw at any point without explanation.
- Get the participants to read through the documents carefully. Two copies of the Research Consent Form need to be signed by the participant and yourself. One copy will be retained by the participant, and you will keep the other copy.
- After the end of this semester, when your grade for COMP325 has been finalized, destroy any data that you hold that was gathered from your participant(s).

Please also note that some members of the HCI research group at the University of Waikato may also analyse your results and use them to help in their research. Your work will be anonymised should this analysis be carried out. If you do not wish to permit your work to be analysed, you can inform the course tutor during your tutorial in Week 6, or send an email to the course tutor in Week 6.

In no case will the lecturers for COMP325 know which students opted out of having their work analysed until after the end of the semester; that is, a decision to opt out will not adversely affect your grade. Similarly, a decision to allow your work to be analysed will not favourably affect your grade.

Should you wish further information or to see the results of any analysis of the COMP325 project, please contact the COMP325 lecturers after February 2015.