



Sunday, March 21, 2010

PREFACE: This text is a PDF version of the CCCC talk, which relied heavily on hands-on demonstrations of several texts prior to the talk and more than a few videos during the talk itself. So the thing you're looking at is pretty static.

In addition, I haven't copyedited or proofed any of the speaker's notes, so they're only that: Notes about things I wanted to mention during the talk. To further complicate things, during the talk itself the notes weren't available so what I actually said on stage probably bears only a passing reference to what I remembered about the notes. I'd suggest refraining from direct quotation.

If you have questions or comments or would like help tracking down some of the original materials referenced, let me know.

Later,

- Johndan

I know someone who lives several hundred miles from her relatively new partner. The separation is temporary, but months' long; in the evenings, they open Skype sessions and just leave the channel open while they go about their evenings, a ghostly but very real presence in each other's lives.

[That is, I promise, the only heartwarming portion of this talk.]

Texts both promise and deny bodies: they offer us connection when we acknowledge our disconnection, then participate actively in reconnection. But the boundary between embodiment/physical and disembodiment/virtual is increasingly difficult to maintain.

What happens when texts become interactive in ways not previously thought of: Not simply mouse click, but hand wave, jump, crawl, and nodded head. More: what happens when texts not only allow us to take them apart, but invite us: they come with their on making and un-making manuals. More: What happens when our texts begin watching us: counting, accumulating, suggesting, gossiping about us.

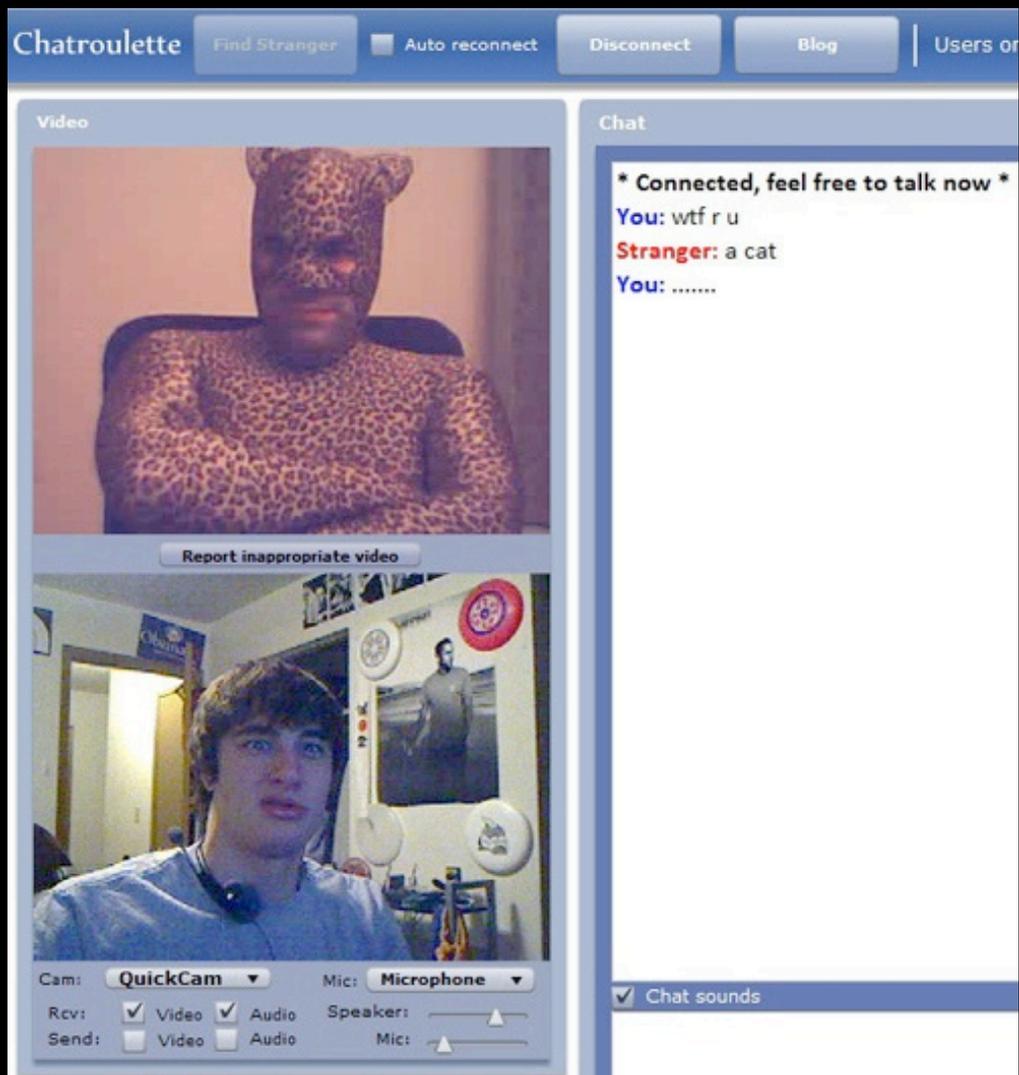
The things I have here, the demos and the video, are all relatively simple, either out there right now or in the wings. We need ways to think about them, think with them, use them to think and be with one another.



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Part of my interest in this is based of research I'm doing on how people interact with texts in their workspaces.

Text as Performance as distributed cognition.



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Chatroulette: The exact opposite of “heart-warming story.” It’s like the premise for a frat-boy-written sitcom: You, a webcam, and all the happiest and darkest parts of the internet on the other end. Click Next.

As we make these texts and they remake us, as we/text become more intertwined and fluid, forms of textuality take on new, well, FORMS.

**POLYMORPHOUSLY
PERVERSE TEXTS:
DYNAMIC FORMS.
JOY FROM
UNCONVENTIONAL ACTS
AND OBJECTS.**

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Playing fast and loose here, but I'm making connections to the concept of polymorphous perversity, ranging back from Freud's ideas about infants needing to be trained about what parts of their body are appropriate for sexual pleasure (Can't say "Don't touch that" to every body part) through Foucault, D&G, and others attempts to use in positive rather than negative ways.

Some of the examples I'll touch on here are very mundane, very functional. But I would argue that even, maybe especially, at those mundane levels, they are the sites of fracture in traditional ways of understanding ourselves and how we relate to each other, how we relate to each other within, across, and toward texts.

If a writer is a sorceror, it is because writing is a becoming, writing is traversed by strange becomings that are not becomings-writer, but becomings-rat, becomings-insect, becomings-wolf, etc.

**- Deleuze & Guattari,
One Thousand Plateaus, 240).**

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Writing always involves self and other, in ways that affect and infect us. And increasingly, reading is writing, not just in metaphorical ways, but in concrete, visible, active ways.

POLYMORPHOUSLY PERVERSE TEXTS ACT.

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Sometimes they just re-act, sometimes, they interact act. Sometimes they act w/out us.



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The Phrases 9 piece I demoed earlier was not all that innovative. Here's Camille Utterback and Romy Achituv's "Text Rain" (1999). I think there's a current version of this running in town, near Proof if you want to track it down.

In fact, the things I demonstrated are all pretty old hat: I demonstrated them merely to show how simple they are. Kids half my age and less—our students—are capable of doing these things and more.

The screenshot shows a Twitter profile for a user named 'pothos'. The profile includes a bio stating 'I am a Botanicalls plant' and a link to 'www.botanicalls.com'. The user has 3,511 followers and 79 lists. The main content is a list of tweets, many of which are automated messages triggered by a watering kit, such as 'URGENT! Water me!' and 'Water me please.'. The tweets are timestamped and include 'via API'.

Twitter interface showing the profile of **pothos**. The profile includes a bio: "I am a Botanicalls plant. http://www.botanicalls.com". The user has 0 following, 3,511 followers, and 79 lists. The main content is a list of tweets, many of which are automated messages triggered by a watering kit, such as "URGENT! Water me!" and "Water me please.". The tweets are timestamped and include "via API".

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Botanicalls' makes \$99 kits for letting your plant tweet when it needs to be watered.

What's happening?

140

Latest: Text movement. 9 days ago

Tweet

Tweets mentioning @fredfeeder



dmandle @fredfeeder Chelmsford, MA

12:28 PM Mar 14th via TweetDeck



kakennedy @fredfeeder Mars. and Syracuse. Simultaneously.

10:18 AM Mar 14th via Power Twitter



kjohnsoneilola @fredfeeder i'm physically just in the other room. Spiritually in a place far far away sliding down rainbows and hopscotching on stars.

10:10 AM Mar 14th via web



Mediaburn @fredfeeder this is just a test. Glendale, AZ

9:19 AM Mar 14th via web in reply to fredfeeder



crmcardle @fredfeeder "We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful what we pretend to be." – Kurt Vonnegut, Mother Night

9:14 AM Mar 14th via TweetDeck



fredfeeder

2 tweets

3

following

1

followers

0

listed

Twest-i-val

n. a way to take part in a global event that transforms lives.

Home

@fredfeeder

Direct Messages

0

Favorites

Retweets

Search



Lists



Lists are timelines you build yourself, consisting of friends, family, co-workers, sports teams, you name it.

New list

Trending: Worldwide



Change

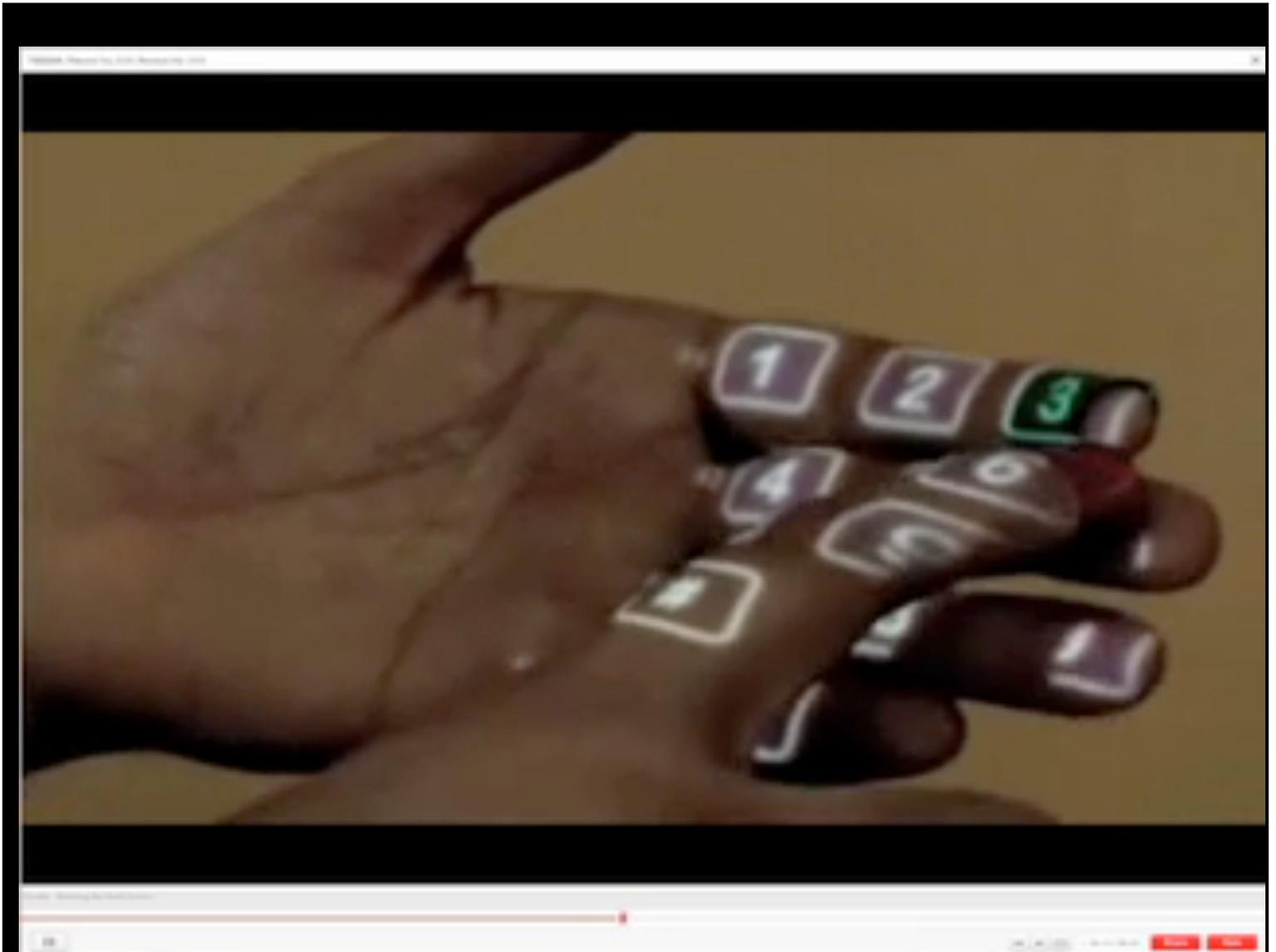
#hereugo

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This, again, is just a prototype: When I was working on the barcode reader, I set up a test account on Twitter to see what it might be like if texts had tags that automatically tracked the locations of each, specific incarnation of that text. At one point, I asked people following my Twitter feed to send @fredfeeder their own locations. This seems a little goofy, I know, but it's already happening. Your cellphone's GPS is already tracking you. Science story on cellphone GPS data & research on movement (most people are 90% predictable).

**POLYMORPHOUSLY
PERVERSE TEXTS
BREACH THE
VIRTUAL/PHYSICAL
MEMBRANE.**

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Shifting across the boundary here: such communication
3b. SixthSense Demo (Pattie Maes and Pranav Mistry @ MIT Media Lab). Prototype of wearable interface (projector, camera; interfaces to user's smartphone).

As Pattie Maes says, this is like touch surfaces we've seen before, but it turns everything into a surface.



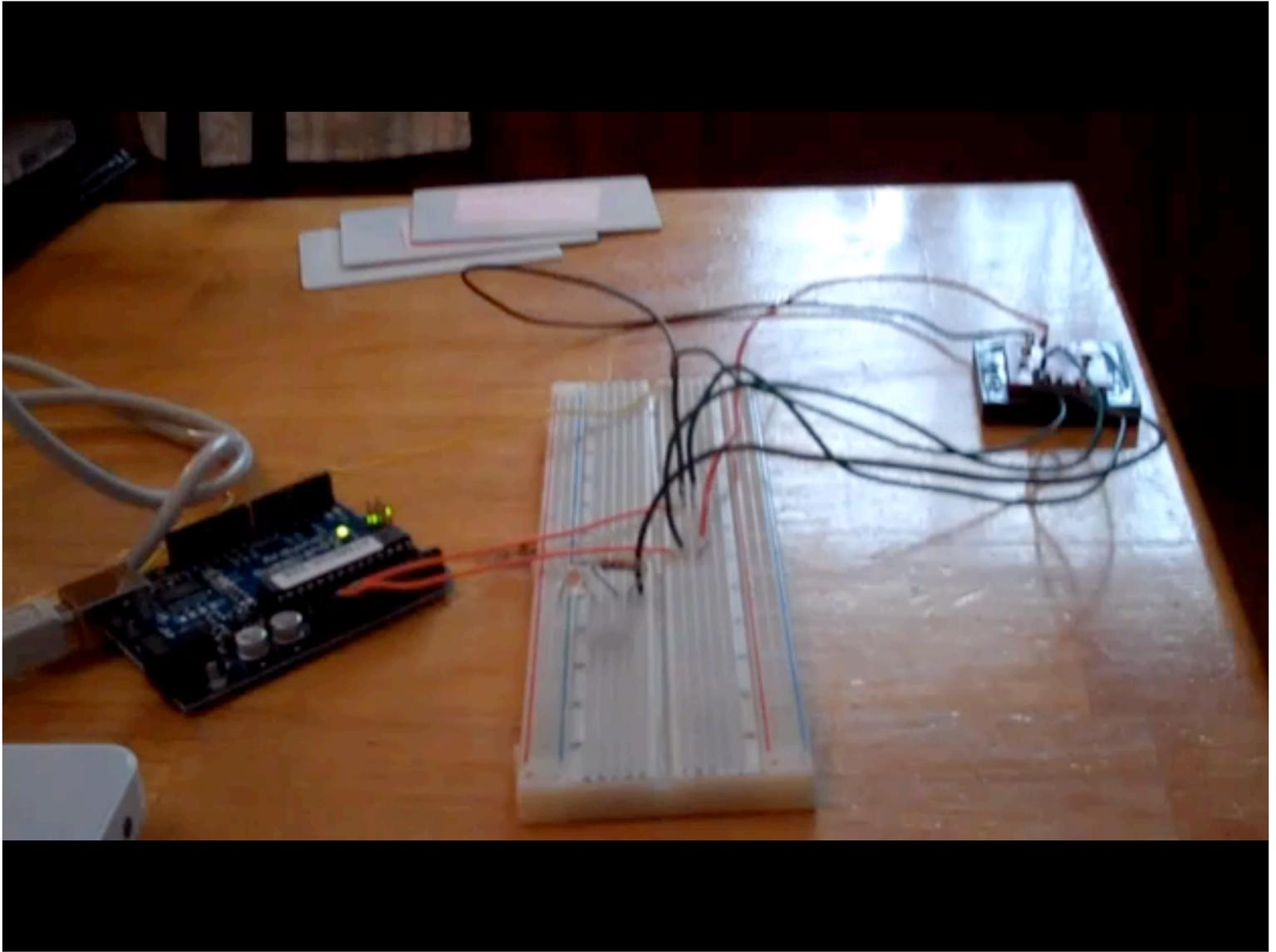
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Augmented reality: There's never enough screen real-estate. The simple overlays that most of us have seen is one step, but I thought this was more interesting than seeing what subway stop I needed to take. Australian dance troupe Chunky Move's piece, Mortal Engine takes place in an interactive, computer-driven system where dancer's moves initiate light and audio on the fly.

**POLYMORPHOUSLY
PERVERSE TEXTS BEG
US TO TAKE THEM
APART AND PUT THEM
BACK TOGETHER.
(PLEASE.)**

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These texts want to you take them apart, hack them, re-make them: When you make them, you make yourself. This hands-on creation is crucial to such texts.



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DIY RFID wireless card reader or crude bomb? I decided to not press Homeland Security at Syracuse Hancock Airport so I shipped this to Louisville by UPS.

Generative texts: Texts gaining active, structured identities. Not free will, but we don't have free will, either. Evolutionary architecture. Maker/hacker culture: rewiring.

THE MAKER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

- Meaningful and specific parts lists shall be included.
- Cases shall be easy to open.
- Batteries shall be replaceable.
- Special tools are allowed only for darn good reasons.
- Profiting by selling expensive special tools is wrong and not making special tools available is even worse.
- Torx is OK; tamperproof is rarely OK.
- Components, not entire sub-assemblies, shall be replaceable.
- Consumables, like fuses and filters, shall be easy to access.
- Circuit boards shall be commented.
- Power from USB is good; power from proprietary power adapters is bad.
- Standard connectors shall have pin-outs defined.
- If it snaps shut, it shall snap open.
- Screws better than glues.
- Docs and

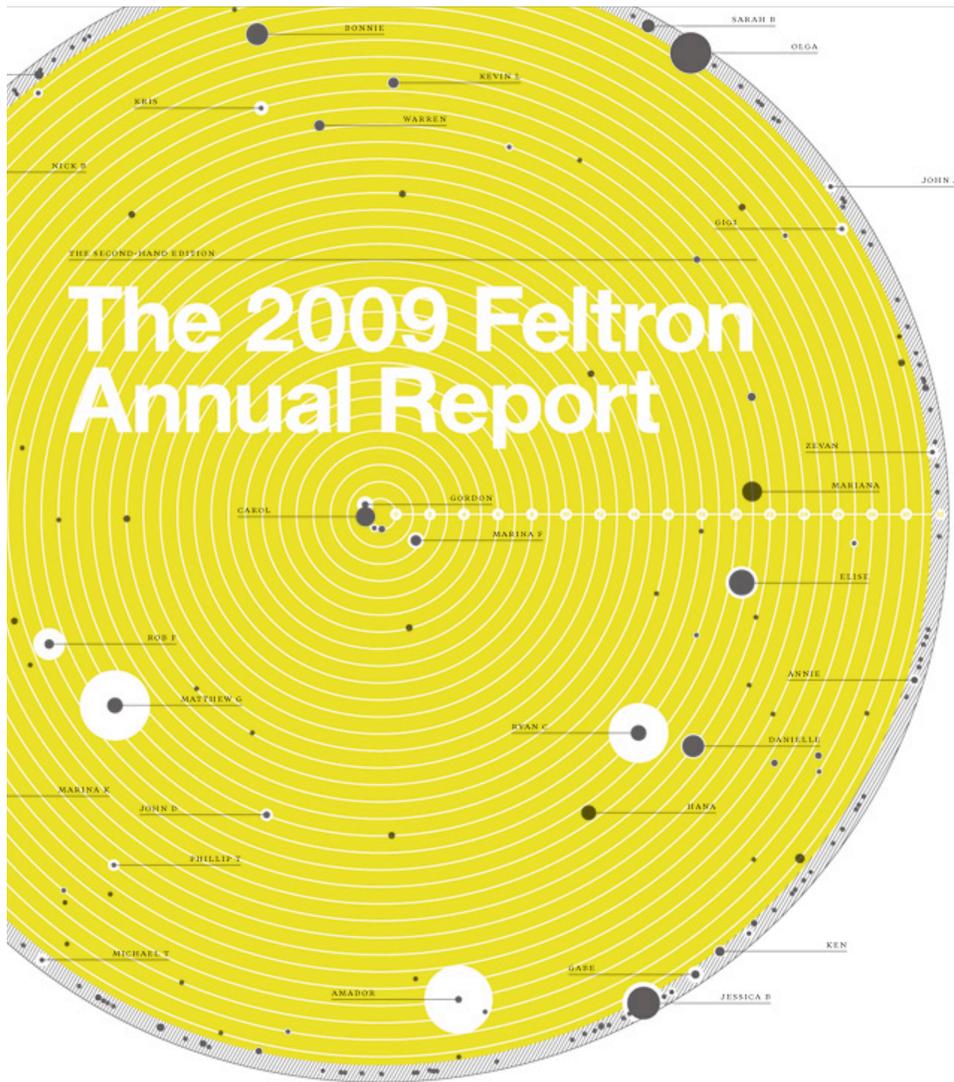
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Make Magazine, a major proponent of hipsterish DIY projects, has a manifesto that could be restated as a description of polymorphously perverse technology.

POLYMORPHOUSLY PERVERSE TEXTS WATCH US.

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We teach polymorphously perverse texts to watch us—track our data for us via upc codes, or the Forward key or the Copy/Paste command.



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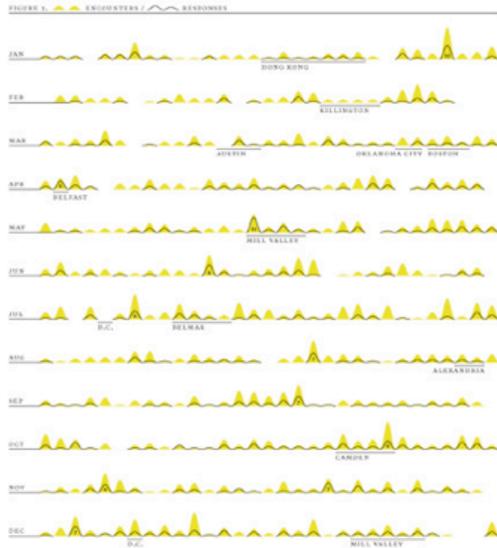
So what happens when we can start tracking, automatically, the minutiae of our days? This is a whole new world. Nick Felton has been doing some of this, on a manual basis, for several years. After he has an exchange with someone, like his dentist, or a friend, he gives them a card that leads them to a web page where they fill in some brief info. Felton compiles the results in his Personal Annual Reports.

Casual texts, generative texts. Body sensor networks (GE). Track and manipulate the pervasive data any of us generates on an ongoing basis: Personal Annual Reports, Machines that broadcast (plants asking for water). The misfit toys in Blade Runner.

What would a book tweet?

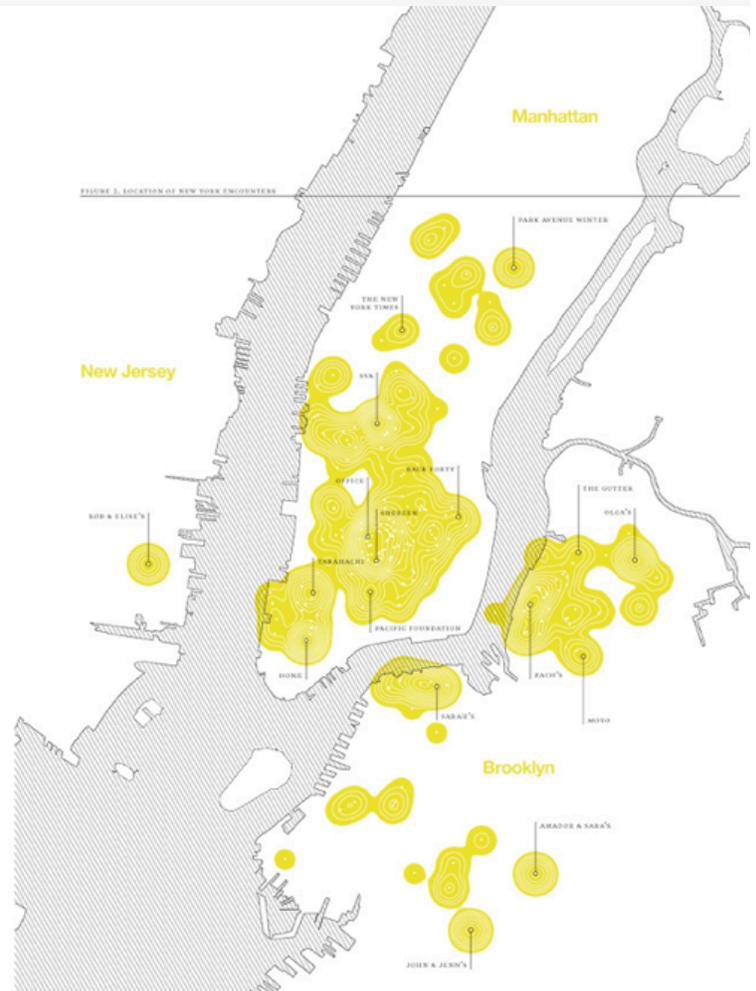
Distribution

Date and location of encounters.



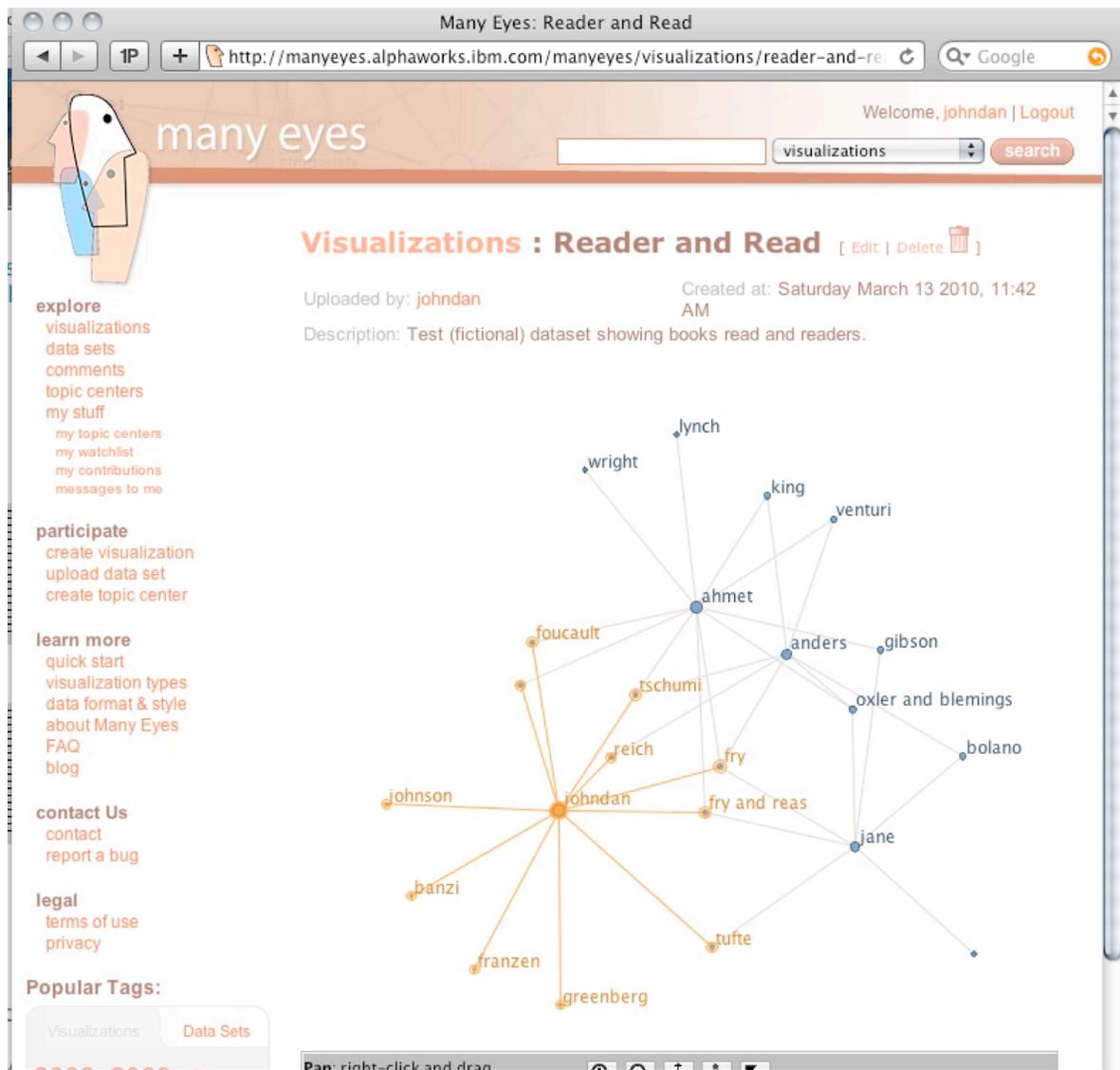
METHODOLOGY
 Throughout 2009, friends, family, co-workers and acquaintances of Nicholas Felton were asked to report on his activities whenever they met.
 All data on the following pages was compiled from the responses to a variety of questions concerning their encounter.

TOTAL ENCOUNTERS 1,761	AVERAGE ENCOUNTERS PER DAY 4.8	SURVEYS COMPLETED 560	CUMULATIVE RESPONSE RATE 32%
COUNTRIES INCLUDED Three <small>U.S.A., HONG KONG AND NORTHERN IRELAND</small>	STATES INCLUDED Nine <small>CALIFORNIA, MAINE, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, OKLAHOMA, TEXAS, VERMONT, VIRGINIA, WISCONSIN</small>	DAYS WITH REPORTS 254 <small>70% OF THE YEAR</small>	CONTRIBUTORS 210 <small>AVERAGE 2.50 REPORTS PER PERSON</small>



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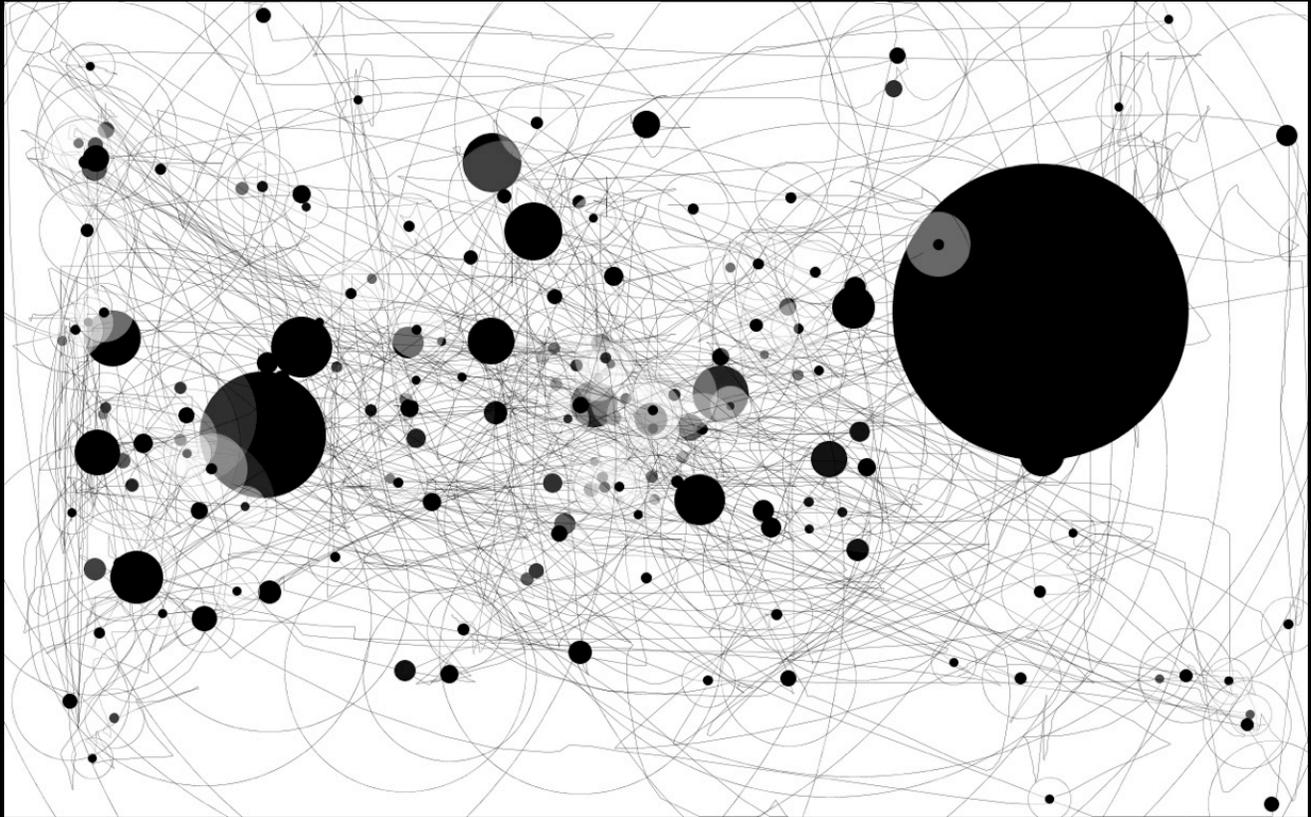
From Nicholas Felton's Annual Personal Report for 2009. This is all relatively manually collected. But at some hazy point, the data collection becomes automatic. Skynet wakes up.



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5. Flip side: Couple automatic data tracking (RFID sniffer or barcode reader) w/info viz.

The main point of this: We need to think of our job more as teaching interaction design (rhetoric, design, communication, production) and not as just teaching writing (a limited view).



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IOGraphica 1-hour plot of mouseclick data (last night); lines are mouse movement, circles are stops. size of stop = length (overall). I think I went to get a beer there.

POLYMORPHOUSLY PERVERSE TEXTS CAN CAUSE TEXTUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

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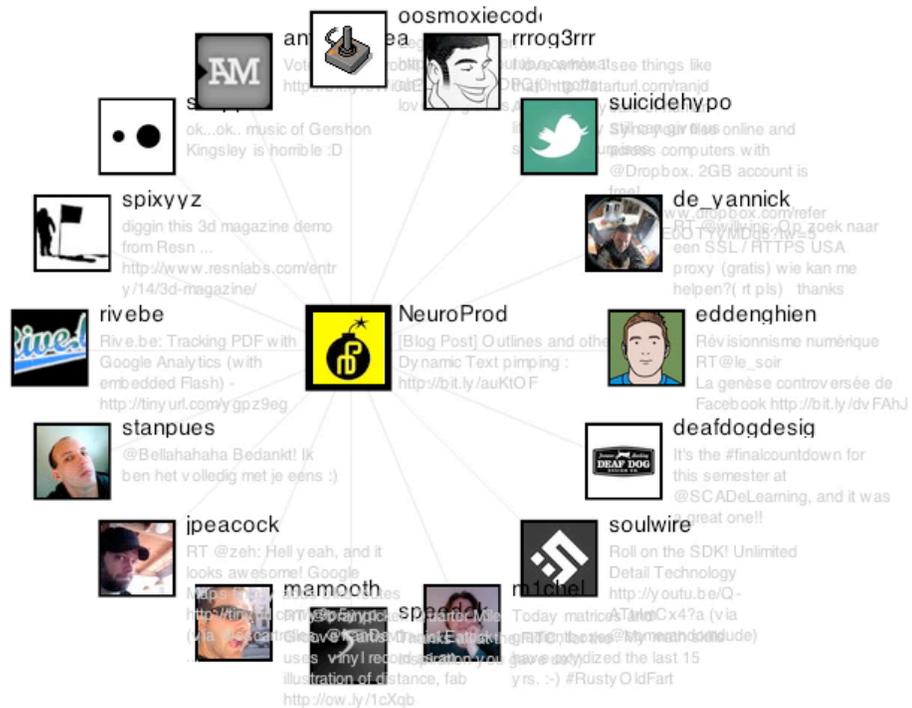
These texts deterritorialize and reterritorialize. They take parts of us with them, infect us with the parts of others.

POLYMORPHOUS TEXTS ARE US.

5k Twitter Browser by Neuro Productions

Instructions: Fill in a twitter username and start clicking and dragging.

Username: New only: Fullscreen:



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V. Quick: I'm also interested in how these texts and technologies generate data, automatically, as we use them.

Twitter is easy to make fun of b/c it's mundane and stupid and often sounds like people just talking to themselves about their lunch. But this non-purpose driven comm is extremely vital: it's the suggestions that we're somehow in touch with the people who follow us on twitter or friend us on facebook. Think back to the Skype example. Is a Facebook friend really a friend? Sometimes, sometimes not. Are all your "friends" really the same times of friends? Of course not.

What's happening?

140

Text input field for tweeting

Latest: Text movement. 9 days ago

Tweet

Real-time results for #cccc10

+ Save this search



slatts Chicago St. Pat's = dodging drunks while biking 2 get #cccc10 haircut.

less than 10 seconds ago from txt



kstedman This was the first year I attended a workshop at #cccc10, and it was super energizing. Go, creative approaches to research! Ra!

3 minutes ago from web



ncaswell became a new fan of maker's mark! <3'ing #cccc10 thus far.

6 minutes ago from web



mediatedlife Looking forward to catching up with @rrodrigo after long day of workshops #cccc10

7 minutes ago from UberTwitter



NCTE_CCCC Live Twitter feed viewable in Tech Center at #cccc10. Stop by tomorrow and see for yourself! http://yfrog.com/7bik1xj

22 minutes ago from Twiterrific



LiteratiLisa At the Marriott, sipping grapefruit and cranberry infused water (who knew?) and getting ready for the women's



fredfeeder

2 tweets

3

1

0

following followers listed

Twes-t-i-val

n. a way to take part in a global event that transforms lives.

Home

@fredfeeder

Direct Messages 0

Favorites

Retweets

#cccc10



Lists



Lists are timelines you build yourself, consisting of friends, family, co-workers, sports teams, you name it.

New list

Trending: Worldwide



Change

#hereugo

#nowplaying

#hiphopaintdead



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6. Downsides: Who Owns Your Data?

Also, cognitive overload. But as Clay Shirky says, that just means we need better filters.

Resources:
johndan.com/intexts/

