Lurking and Listening: Exploring Annotation Readership

HELEN HALBERT
CSCW: DISTRIBUTED-ASYNCHRONOUS APPS
CPSC 554M: TOPICS IN HCI
V. DAY, 2013
“Using Web Annotations for Asynchronous Collaboration Around Documents” [R1]

- **Benefits:**
  - Communication
  - ‘In-context’ collaboration
    - Anchoring
  - Community-building [R2]

- **Challenges:**
  - Communicating outside system?
  - Edits to original document
    - Orphaning
  - Conflict avoidance

Figure 1: WebAnn interface embedded in Internet Explorer. On the right is the webpage being annotated, on the left is the index of notes and replies. Student names are blacked out to provide anonymity.
What about *readers* of annotations? [R1]

- **Who are they?**
  - Cadiz et al. looked only at annotators: one-time users (33%), occasional users (32%), and regular users (32%)

- **What are they reading?**
  - Notifications, but lack of meta-awareness
  - Who has seen my comment? Who subscribed to notifications?
  - 25% of subscribers to notifications never annotated

- **Why aren’t they contributing?**
System Limitations and Constraints? [R1]

- **Beaten to the punch, or ‘ditto’ effect**
  - Reduce redundancy
  - But at what cost? Comment repeats with spreadsheet method conveyed consensus

- **The public nature of annotations**
  - Self-consciousness
  - Diplomacy
  - A record for everyone to see
  - Behavioural difference?
WebAnn system; personal annotation functionality with export option

Study of personal annotations and “the transitions they undergo as they are shared” (p. 349)
- Assignment O’s gone public

Personal annotations:
- Not predicative # of public annotations contributed
- Must be changed a lot to be intelligible to others
- Mostly of the ‘anchor-only’ variety (ie. highlighted, underlined)
What about readers of annotations?

- Who are they?
- What are they reading?
- Why aren’t they contributing?
- Why should we care?
• Realizing the effect that annotations can have on reading [R4]
  o Better recall of material; affected interpretation of text

• Applications for design evaluation
  o Understand why not being used as intended [R5]
  o Improve usability, approach universality

• Because most users don’t participate!
  o Lurkers: the hippies of the Internet?
Lurking is normal; lurking is not even negative

Lurkers as ‘indirect contributors’ to system
- Altruism; prefer not to add clutter
- Idealism; defer to more informed users

Lurkers as ‘indirect contributors’ outside system
- Taking knowledge outside original community
A third potential benefit:

- Awareness

- Distributed groups, “by their nature, are denied the informal information gathered from a physically shared workspace and the proximity which is an important factor in collaboration between colleagues” (p. 542) [R9]

- Lurking as ‘learning about the group’ [R7]
  - Listening before speaking
“Is This What You Meant? Promoting Listening on the Web with Reflect” [R10]

- Designing for listening
  - Communication theory; conversational feedback; grounding for mutual understanding
  - Providing evidence of listening *without* the need for new content or judgements

![Rating interfaces in common use today.](image)
“Is This What You Meant? Promoting Listening on the Web with Reflect”

Readers
1. Hovering over bullets highlights relevant text in the comment.
2. Readers can positively or negatively evaluate bullet points.

Lisa Russell
This idea has already been put into action by the Seattle City Council with disastrous results. If you want to eliminate parking requirements, then make each person who moves into a building with no requirements sign an affidavit that they will not park their car on the street — if they won’t sign then they can’t live there. The current result of this idea is that developers make more money because they haven’t provided parking - and neighborhoods lose because new people come in and park on the street.

Readers hear Lisa saying...
1. Instead, the city should implement better neighborhood coverage of public transit and zipcar.
2. Seattle City Council already tried this before, and it didn’t end well.
3. What do you hear Lisa saying?

Listeners
3. Any reader can become a listener by restating a point they hear the commenter making in 140 characters or less.
4. After restating, a listener connects their bullet point to the relevant sentences in the comment.

Speakers
5. A commenter can verify the accuracy of a restatement of their comment, and clarify if necessary.
6. Verifications are prominently displayed to other readers.

The lack of parking motivates outsiders to use scarce parking spaces

Does Katie’s summary...
1. elegantly distill meaning?
2. uncover a good point?
3. clarify the message?
4. provoke unnecessarily?
5. umm, it’s not a summary

Figure 2. Mechanics of the Reflect interface.
How do I know if a friend has seen a message I sent?

When someone sees your most recent message, it will be got the message, and who didn't.

How do I know who's seen each post in a group?

The check ✓ under each post indicates how many group members have seen it. This way you can be updated on the group's activity.

Messages are marked as seen if the person is actively checking the group.

This feature is part of every message you send, whether it's a group post or a private message.

Was this answer helpful? Yes · No

Hover over the ✓ to get an idea of who's seen it.

Anyone who can view the group post will see the ✓.

Was this answer helpful? Yes · No
Discussion

- Do you lurk? Why do you lurk? Under what circumstances will you de-lurk and contribute?

- Cadiz et al. identify agree/disagree buttons as a way to document ‘repeat’ annotations. Would this be useful? Can you think of a better affordance?

- How can awareness be afforded with respect to users’ privacy and preferences?
References


In order of appearance:


