In Supporting community and building social capital: Social translucence: designing social infrastructures that make collective activity visible by Thomas Erickson, Christine Halverson, Wendy A. Kellogg, Mark Laff, and Tracee Wolf the authors talk about different strategies for making online interaction easier for collective groups of people. The social clues that are apparent in everyday interaction are masked by most online forms of communication. The authors promote different elements of interaction, which they strive to add to the online medium. They ask for intuitive clues, awareness of what they mean and when they occur. Also needed is a way for users to be held accountable for their actions. Society allows for people to be held accountable as long as others realize that the user is aware of their transgressions. The trouble is to incorporate these ideas into digital representations of real life interactions.

As the babble interface is discussed at length in the other paper, so here I will focus on the auction and online lines analyses. I enjoyed the auction visualization. I think that being able to see the lurkers as well as the actual bidders was highly useful, especially since in online sites people will “watch” auctions until they are almost complete, and then have a bidding frenzy. By seeing the popularity of an item you can guess whether or not this is likely to happen. If you could somehow add a statistic to show how many things people look at. That could be useful for knowing if people tend to surf pages or just look at things they purchase.

The lines visualization can be both positive and negative. It is a good representation of how long you will have to wait. However, you also can misunderstand a line visualization, which can reflect badly on the corporation with the line. If there are many people, a common occurrence online, you will have to consolidate dots for space. This makes it no better than a written estimate of when you will be finished. Also, if the line is moving very slowly with just a few people you may assume that the people managing the line are not very good. Or, if there are many people and only a few service representatives you may be angry at them for not having more. I do think that it is useful to be able to see the line stretch behind you however. This is something that is lacking in most notices of time remaining. By seeing how long the line is behind you, you may decide the wait is worth the effort, or decide to come back at a different time.
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Social translucence: an approach to designing systems that support social processes

In Social translucence: an approach to designing systems that support social processes by Thomas Erickson and Wendy Kellogg the authors discuss the benefits of translucence in social interaction. By making actions of an individual evident to the members of a community, you can increase both social awareness and accountability. Unfortunately, if you portray all actions, concerns about privacy are often brought into play. By balancing “translucence” and “transparency” you can provide for both a dynamic social atmosphere, and maintain an amount of privacy in social interactions.

One section of this paper discusses knowledge management. It is suggested that it would be beneficial to be able to search a database of papers based on specific criteria like authorship and citation. The paper states that although you can currently use a search engine to specify two names that you want cited, it would be better if you could be more specific. I actually find that the search engine process is more likely to find papers with the ideas you are looking for. Many times even conventions are either made incorrectly, or do not grasp the entire concept that you are looking for. By searching in a broader generalization, you can find if a name is mentioned in an entire paper rather than just cited in the bibliography. Although the paper lists the naming convention as the reason for the technique succeeding, I think it is merely a beneficial addition to be able to have the resources all listed, and not necessarily relevant to be specifically organized as a research paper.

This paper also discusses a chat visualization called “babble” that was created. I like that the people who are not in the conversation are shown outside the circle. This creates a clear delimitation between participants and nonparticipants. Also, I like that active participants are moved to the center. By having all the active participants close to each other you can eliminate the importance of location around the circle. Everyone is close who is active at that time. By using the “wedge” idea, you can also eliminate people's circles crossing over or blocking other circles. One potential problem that I thought of was in the instance of large groups. For example, if there are 20 people in one conversation, when they are all active their dots will still look far apart since a circle of 20 dots is quite large. I know that this visualization was intended for smaller audiences, however. I found the circle useful for several reasons already mentioned, however by having a round interface, it makes it hard to compare people with each other. It would be hard to tell who spoke most recently between two random people if they are in the middle. However, if the dots were in a line you could more easily see which was higher or lower than another.