The article is basically about designing a system that fosters effective communication, collaboration and productivity. There a series of problems that current systems have to face in order to become an effective system. These problems, as mentioned in the article, include addressing, managing threads, bringing other people into the middle of a conversation, keeping a conversation on track, knowing who is listening, getting people to respond in a timely manner, finding old messages with crucial information, etc. These problems escalate further when there are more people involved.

Everyday in real life we are social creatures. We communicate with each other through body language, speech, gestures. We also base our actions on the actions of those around us. If we see a crowd surrounding one area, we are curious and go up to the crowd. The article makes the point that ‘in the digital world we are socially blind’. We cannot see the people we are interacting with. Therefore, it should be the goal of well-designed system to foster this interaction and make us see other people through computers. The article refers to taking knowledge from architects who, throughout history, have been analyzing the relationship between physical spaces and social relationships. However, architects can predict that social interactions will occur in the spaces they build. System designers have to design how these social interactions will occur.

I found this article very interesting. I implemented a Google Apps system for an registered student organization that I am in called AIESEC Illinois. This system basically
fosters collaboration, communication and productivity by making emails, documents, spreadsheets and presentations easily searchable, accessible and modified. Through this system AIESEC Illinois members have significantly increased personal and professional communication.

**Social Translucence**

This article is about designing systems that help people in an organization with a common mission achieve a common aim. In face-to-face communication, humans are easily able to collaborate and achieve goals. This is because humans are naturally attune to each other’s body language, subtle cues and faces. The goal is creating this same type of collaboration ability online. The article uses the phrase social translucence to explain this concept – make it easier for people to carry on coherent discussions; to observe and imitate others’ actions, to engage in peer pressure, to create, notice and conform to social conventions.

The article mentions a conversation system that is used in small-medium sized businesses. This system is called Babble. Babble has a very unique feature – a social proxy visualization. It basically allows people to know when someone is currently active on their computer, either typing or clicking and scrolling within the program. This idea is good in theory, but it is not able to recognize all activity that is currently happening in a chat room. For example, sometimes a group might be working on a research project. At a certain time a person might not be fully active in scrolling down the chat box, because they may be busy researching the topic. However, this work that the person is conducting outside the chat box is not recognized.
I really liked the “Online Lines” diagram. This type of image would work very well for people who wait on the phone. It would create the customers a peace of mind, since mimics waiting in line in the physical world. You have a place and no one can take your place. These mechanisms are various ways that we can simulate the physical world in the virtual world. It helps people communicate better and understand each other online.