

T Talk

a Local Communication Channel for Subway Riders

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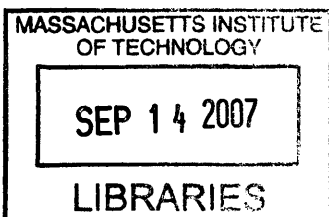
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Abstract

The goal of T Talk, is to utilize the tens of minutes of subway waiting time everyday as an opportunity for reading and appreciation of the complexity and diversity of the city, and developing an awareness of and social support from the subway riding community. T Talk is an open, asynchronous, and anonymous communication channel designed specifically for subway riders. T Talk consists of three major components for users participation: a kiosk installed on subway platforms for riders to post new messages and browse/reply to messages left by others; an in-house produced daily newspaper whose contents are the collection of messages and replies submitted during the previous day; an SMS server that enables riders to post and reply to messages without the constraint of time and space. This thesis details the iterations of design and implementation of T Talk, a complete description on the nine-session user study I conducted, and lessons learned during the process.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In many major cities, a significant number of the inhabitants daily rely on public transportation such as subways and buses as their means of mobility. For example, the subway of New York City serves 4.8 million passengers daily during weekdays (figures from 2002 [1]). Even for a much smaller city such as Boston, the subway (colloquially known as “the T”) still serves an average over half a million passengers each weekday [2]. A subway system works as part of the overall city infrastructure, supporting its inhabitants’ everyday lives. They act as the arteries and veins of a city, circulating people and keeping the city alive. Public transportation systems such as subway are really what make a modern city possible. The mobility provides the general public access to different parts of the city without the associated cost of private transportation. It allows a city to grow geographically, while shrinking its size psychologically; most parts of the city can be reached in 20 minutes, for example.

Despite its importance to the city, however, a subway stop for many commuters is a space where the sole purpose of entry is exit to some other destination. Often times we go to a station, take a train and leave, leaving little impression and being little impressed upon.

It is therefore no surprise that waiting for subways is commonly a boring experience. For most of the time, the passengers each occupy a small portions of the platform, and figure out a way to shelter themselves from the physical location and the public around them. They read books, look at advertisements, listen to music players, talk via mobile phones, or stare aimlessly. Whatever they do, they do it to “kill time” or to make “good” use of the otherwise “wast-

ed” time. Often times the interactions between strangers are merely exchanges of glimpses. This behavior and strategy is what social scientist Erwin Goffman refers to as “civil inattention:” the forms of social interaction in which strangers nominally acknowledge or block out each other’s presence in public places [4].

On the other hand, a subway station is arguably one of the very few spaces in a modern city that can serve as a good cross-section of its inhabitants. One can be exposed to a very good sample of the people of the city, and realize the extent and limit of it. In a sense passengers cannot help but face the reality of the city. People are forced to share the space every day with people of different ages, wealth, colors, sexual orientations, employments, origins, views, interests, etc. That is exactly the reason why Augé described “Metro” (the term he uses for subways) as “a particularly fruitful area for ethnography.” The subway stations and trains are in fact spaces that reflect the diversity, complexity, and reality of a city.

The inspiration behind this thesis project, T Talk, then, is the concept of treating the diversity of people waiting in subway stations as an asset to modern urban life. I would like to exploit and reveal what is easily or even consciously ignored. I want to experiment with this possibility by introducing a technologically mediated communication channel through which the waiting time for the train can be transformed into an opportunity for discovering what is not readily perceivable. The central motivation behind this thesis is this question: “is it possible to design a communication channel that helps turn the inevitable waiting time for subways into a period of reading the city and its diversity, and connecting to or getting support from the community and neighborhood?”

The importance of this question has two facets. Firstly, most of the current technology development focuses on helping users personalize their information environment. We have recommender systems and profiling technologies to help us filter in information that might interest us. We have a range of social networking and communication technologies to stay connected with our existing circles of friends and families. It is now fairly easy to only deal with information and people that we have interests in or we have intimate bond with. Diversity is hardly a central concern for information technology design and development. With the help of mobile phones and music players, we can now easily privatize public spaces even when we have to wait in an environment that displays diversity, such as a subway station.

Diversity, however, provides stimulation, surprise, and sometimes discomfort. While one may argue that what people need is safety, predictability, and intimacy, people also need variety, mystery, confusion, and other “undesirable” experiences to help them perceive the world with a more completed view. Urban designer and theorist Richard Sennett argues that “the more privatized the psyche, the less it is stimulated, and the more difficult it is for us to feel or to express feeling [5].” Individuals are increasingly concerned with their “single life-histories and emotions as never before; this concern has proved to be a trap rather than a liberation [5].” The choice of subways as the location for installing such a anonymous public forum like T Talk is therefore essential: it has the greatest opportunity to manifest the diversity a city offers. We expect to

see the differences in terms of the usages of this system, the viewpoints toward all kinds of topics, the languages and expressions being used, the issues people care about, etc.

The second important facet of the question motivating the design of T Talk stated previously is the idea of archiving stories and histories of the social interactions and everyday life for a physical location. It is an idea that tries to display an emerged locative identity out of the histories of issues, thoughts, and dialogues archived in this communication channel. Archiving is something digital technologies excel at. While the interpretation and the reading of the archive are left to the people who read it, we do hope that the collective and continuous archiving (and the fact that the archive is contributed by the people) will be helpful for building the awareness and the feeling of connections from a neighborhood and the subway community. We hope that this awareness and feeling of connection will, in turn, motivate people to re-evaluate the importance of the discarded public life.

T Talk is the pilot project we built with the ambition to address this question.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

T Talk is a free, open, asynchronous and anonymous communication space designed for T riders. In its current implementation it has a kiosk that allows anyone waiting on the platform to type in text messages to a server, and browse or reply to existing messages. A customized interface is designed for doing those tasks easily and quickly. A daily newspaper is generated in-house (at the Media Lab at MIT) and handed to riders during the installation. The newspaper's content is the posts and replies people left during the previous day. We developed a semi-automatic process for making this newspaper, through scripting and the help of off-the-shelf document layout software. People can read the newspaper while they are waiting for subways or on the train, and leave it on the train when they get off, so that other passengers can read it. We also developed an SMS server (located inside the Lab) so that those who have something to say but are not able to interact with the kiosk can instead post and reply to messages via their mobile phones. Instructions of how to do so are shown both on the kiosk and on the newspaper.

The kiosk is portable, battery-powered, and self-contained, in that it requires no network connection for the service to be up and running. (Figure 1.1 shows the built kiosk.) The top box serves as a stand for the laptop with the interface for tasks related to messages. The second box houses an LCD screen that randomly cycles through all the messages. The bottom box contains wheels for easy pulling, and the battery and wires for the screen and laptop. Between the boxes are lazy-susans that enable users to turn the boxes independently of each other. The idea behind making the kiosk in this way is to allow users to negotiate the space they need for posting messages or replies, while the rest of the crowd around the kiosk are still able to read what has been said on the LCD screen. Figure 1.2 shows a typical scene of the installation, and it

demonstrates how the design works in its intended setting. Entering new information is designed to be primarily a private activity, while reading the screen is public. The lazy-susan solution provides an effective way that meets both needs while keep the kiosk integral as one-piece portable object.

The newspaper we designed provides a tangible and portable way for information circulation in the form of paper. It gives people a lightweight solution to engage in public communication. Being lightweight and portable makes it easy to share with others or read together (Figure 1.3). With the SMS server we built, it extends the communication without the constraints of time and space.

PROJECT DESIGN GOALS

In this Section I would like to discuss the goals and hopes I tried to achieve when I started this project. They can be roughly grouped into the social aspects and the technical/design aspects.

The Social Aspects

(1) The open, anonymous and asynchronous medium allows people to post and initiate communication with a wide range of themes and different types of conversation. One aspect of T Talk is the public anonymity it allows. Users can use T Talk to talk to a specific person/group or to the general public, while enjoying the anonymity that it provides even in a public environment. The other aspect deals with the ability of T Talk to openly combine a multitude of topics into a single medium. It can be used to discuss issues and questions specifically about the subway system. It can be used to reveal personal feelings and secrets that might not be otherwise disclosed. It can be used to discuss current issues and affairs, or political and popular news items. We expect to see a variety of messages and communication happening using this medium. We expect to see how T Talk can reveal different point of views toward various topics and issues

(2) The kiosk, the display, and the newspaper can act as a social catalyst and starter for interaction among riders of the subway

(3) We expect that with the installation of T Talk, the atmosphere of the subway station and the behavior of waiting will change over time as users



Figure 1.1 The built kiosk.



Figure 1.2 The kiosk in action.



Figure 1.3 People reading T Talk newspaper together.

become accustomed to the presence of the medium. Over time, the posts and replies from a particular station can not only be treated as a historical record of the community's everyday life, but also as a characteristic image of that station. A station can be transformed from a space to a place, with its distinctive views, interests, history, etc

(4) If T Talk or similar services are available for many stations of the subway, we expect that over time the community of subway riders will develop a better awareness of the city through the history of the city accumulated in the T Talk system. They will realize and perhaps appreciate the diversity and complexity of the city they share with others, rather than passing the city itself by. People of different backgrounds understandably are concerned about different issues and have different views toward and of the world around them. T Talk can act as a forum that reveals these, exposes this hidden diversity of the mundane thoughts to its users, and turns the act of riding the subway into an opportunity for understanding and discussion.

The Technical/Design Aspects

(1) A user interface design that offers a simple and intuitive way to browse and reply to existing messages, post new messages, and find particular messages through keyword search

(2) A public display system that provides viewers a way to browse existing posts without actively engaging in interaction with the kiosk

(3) A kiosk design that can help users negotiate the private space for using the interface while allowing other viewers access to the public interface

(4) A portable kiosk construction that allows me to easily move around and pull it to people on the platforms and trains

(5) A newspaper design that presents messages and conversations left by the users. The newspaper provides a low-cost solution for spreading the information of the project and the messages. The tangible and portable aspect of newspaper provides people with more a comfortable reading experience

(6) The implementation of an SMS server that gives people an option of participating in T Talk without the constraints of time and place.

In Chapter 4, Experiment and Evaluation, I will come back to these goals and provide the lessons I learned during the experiment.

PROJECT CONTRIBUTION

T Talk successfully worked as an intervention into everyday subway riding routines. Crowds gathered around the kiosk, read what was on the screen, and interactively discussed messages with strangers. They read the newspaper and shared it with their friends. They used and appropriated the medium for their

own purpose. People used T Talk to talk about their stories and feelings. As a man working in a curatorial team at the Institute of Contemporary Art told me: “I love the fact that they are often times mundane stories and feelings, they are in fact very inspiring.”

As an embodied public communication channel, the uses of T Talk vary; the types of content people leave differ. People used T Talk to ask questions, send messages to a secret love, let out their personal feelings, share with the public what they saw and went through during the day, etc. It gives us a broader view of some of the everyday lives of those we share the city with.

This project also shows the possibility of a technology-powered public realm. Like the public plazas and squares of old, T Talk offers the public who share a subway stop a platform for freely discussing issues and affairs. The anonymity can bring both positive and negative usages of the system, but we have learned a lot from online forums how we might be able to deal with such abuses.

From a design point of view, the building of T Talk and the study of it contribute to the knowledge of designing communication services and interactive devices in the context of subways and public spaces. As we constantly raise the issue of diversity as a feature of the people waiting for subways, the degree of computer literacy of people is diverse too. T Talk tries to accommodate as wide range as possible of different levels of technology familiarity by making the interface and the service as simple as possible. The design of the kiosk provides and proves to be a good solution of addressing the negotiation of private and public spaces when interacting with technologies in public. The idea of using the familiar newspaper format helps us distribute the information to wider range of people easily.

THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis consists of five main Chapters and two Appendices. The next Chapter reviews the background theories and ideas that help me frame and construct the bigger picture of the theme of diversity, territorial acts, everyday life, notions of public, and the collective behaviors. Related work will also be discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3, Design and Implementation, details the evolution of the design of the kiosk, its interface, and the newspaper. The rationale behind the design and the construction process for the whole system will be presented therein.

Chapter 4, Experiment and Evaluation, provides a thorough description of the study we conducted, the content we gathered, the observations we made, and the lessons I learned. I was able to do in total 9 sessions, 18 hours of installation, which gave me a good picture of what worked and what did not, and the possible reasons behind the successes and failures of the design.

Chapter 5 is devoted to discussing how T Talk might be able to proceed, with a conclusion.

The first appendix, Appendix A, contains all the posts and replies I col-

lected during the study, in the format of the newspaper we handed to people.

2. BACKGROUND

In this chapter, I would like to provide several different views of the issue on public participation and communication, that informed the design and the installation of T Talk. I will also devote a section to related work that has been done in the similar spirit.

THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC LIFE

One of the major motivations behind T Talk is the continuous decline of public life in modern cities and contemporary culture. Modern life emphasizes intimate relations and values individuality. In his seminal book, *The Fall of Public Man* [6], Sennett states that this aspect of modernity started during the nineteenth century, with the rise of capitalism and was linked to the notion of family as a refuge: these factors led to a decline in public life.

“As the family became a refuge from the terrors of society, it gradually became also a moral yardstick with which to measure the public realm of the capital city. Using family relations as standard, people perceived the public domain not as limited set of social relations, as in the Enlightenment, but instead saw public life as morally inferior. Privacy and stability appeared to be united in the family; against this ideal order the legitimacy of the public order was thrown into question.” [6]

Please note the possible public discussions and discourses in the T Talk channel are orthogonal to Sennett’s definition. I am borrowing his observation

of the decline of public life here. The idea behind T Talk, is more to provide a lightweight “food of reality” that one can consume everyday, which if continued over time, will possibly help people establish a better view of the public life and the public environment.

DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Diversity in a city has been celebrated by many urban theorists and designers. Jane Jacobs’s very influential work, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities* [7], showed the effect of diversity on the growth of an energetic and lively neighborhood. Jacobs gave us many vivid examples, for instance by contrasting Greenwich Village’s liveliness with the dryness of Chelsea. She also outlines convincing theories as to how to introduce diversity into built environments, and how to change an area from a dull to an active urban space.

Gerald Frug, a professor at Harvard Law School, defined the goal of community building in a very pragmatic manner without the conventional romantic notion of togetherness: “the purpose of community building is to increase the capacity of metropolitan residents to live in a world composed of people different from themselves.” Frug, in his book *City Making* [8], gives some reasons why he thinks it would be desirable for city functions to cultivate a sense of community characterized not by “a feeling of mutual connection but by an acceptance of difference, complexity, and strangeness.” He thinks that the fact that a community shares something in common is just a start for community building. The hard work in community building—and the task he thinks cities should undertake—is to deal with the differences within the group.

Furg’s main argument is based on seeing the major characteristic of urban environment--diversity--as a valuable resource for the city dwellers to not only have fun, but to learn, to create, to experiment, and to grow from. He said, “A reliance on stability, coherence, and order inhibits openness to experience: it undermines one’s ability even to absorb, let alone profit from, the flux and variety the world has to offer.” He discussed this issue from three different angles: the psychology, the sociology, and the politics of city life.

This concept of community building and seeing heterogeneity of a city as an advantage is where I started to think about building T Talk. T Talk is not designed to provide matching or friend-making services. It does not try to turn strangers into friends. It is designed with the intention of providing a service that values different views and feelings from every rider.

GRAFFITI

“In a city that belongs to no one, people are constantly trying to leave a trace of themselves, a record of their story.” Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, p. 205.

Writers and researchers of graffiti have both noted the reference to cave

marking. For example, Sherri Cavan mentioned, “the impulse to make a mark on the environment is very ancient [9].” Pamela Dennant wrote that graffiti’s history “can be dated back to prehistoric cave man wall drawings... [and] can be seen as a human ‘need’ for communication [10].”

This territorial act of leaving traces and marks is what I would like to introduce to T Talk. Every message is saved in the database with the name of the station where it was submitted. Consciously or not, many people use T Talk as a declaration and affirmation of “I was here” and “I left that post.” The action of changing the appearance or contributing to something they know the public will see later on is part of the motivation of using T Talk.

We can see this behavior from another point of view provided by urban designer Kevin Lynch’s *The Image of the City* [11]. Lynch suggests that we perceive our own cities as a sort of fragmentary composite of spaces that we have had long associations with and have, therefore, created memories and meanings in those spaces. He finds that “image (of the city) development” can be strengthened by a dialectical process between the observer and her surroundings. A sense of attachment forms whenever the perceiver reshapes her surroundings and becomes a participant. In the case that T Talk kiosks are installed permanently in all stations of the T, being a participant of T Talk and posting or replying to messages in a particular station marks the bond between the person and the particular kiosk, and possibly the station.

RELATED WORK

Designing technologies for the public or strangers is not a completely new idea. In 1999, a company in Japan created a product line called “Lovegetty,” which is an electronic device that beeps when it detects other Lovegettys within a 15-foot range. This has inspired a whole range of location-based friend finding and match making services around the world.



Figure 2.1 The Lovegetty product

Eric Paulos and his team at Intel designed and implemented a system called “Jabberwocky [12].” It is an application installed in mobile phones equipped with Bluetooth technology. The application constantly tracks the list of devices around it and informs the mobile phone holder the degree of “familiarity” with strangers around her. This is an elegant attempt to address the issue of dealing with strangers in public spaces in that it respects the fact that most strangers want to stay as strangers. But familiar strangers do provide a sense of belonging and support. Our work intends to build on top of that and tries to develop a textual channel for this type of connections.

In the Computer-Human Interaction (CHI) research community there have been a number of attempts to address the issue of introducing public displays in either working environments or casual settings such as cafés [13, 14, 15, 16]. Fundamental differences of those spaces with subway stations are the amount of time people usually inhabit in the space, the activities people do, and the diversity of people around. However it will be interesting to see how our system will be used differently in spaces like cafés.

There have also been many related projects from the media arts domain.

One cluster of such projects can be described as presenting and expressing personal messages in the public through a variety of medium, which is a sub-category of an emerging concept called “Urban Screen” developed by Mirjam Struppek [17]. “Speakers Corner” [18] by Matt Locke and the Media Center in UK opened a long strip of LED panel (on the façade of the Media Center) to the public to post SMS messages from their cellphones. “LIK-LAK” [19] by Claude Hidber used the same idea while SMS are displayed as part of a large public sculpture. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s “Amodal Suspension” installed in Japan took SMS messages from the public and encoded them into unique sequences of flashes and sent to the sky with a network of 20 robotically-controlled searchlights [20]. “Blinken-Lights” [21] “pixelized” the façade of a building into a low-resolution display of architectural scale. Anyone can use the customized program to post short animation on the façade. “D-toren” [22] in Rotterdam, designed by architecture firm NOX and artist Q.S. Serafijn, is a public sculpture whose color represents the accumulated results of a questionnaire from the inhabitants of the building beside it. The questions to ask change every other day, and most of them are about everyday life such as “Are you happy with your partner?”

Another category of artistic projects addresses the issue of alternative channel for public communication. “33 Questions per Minute” [23] by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer in the 7th Havana Biennial displays text on 21 tiny LCD screens encrusted on the columns of the exhibition space. The sources of text are two folds: a computer program uses grammar rules to generate statements automatically and a keyboard for participants to input text to be shown. And the point is all those statements and questions are merged into a text flow for display, so there is no way one can tell which is generated by human and by the computer program. It was a way to grant people anonymity by which they could ask difficult political questions, ones that might otherwise get them imprisoned by police. “unspoken” is a project done by artist Hoyun Son[24]. She wears a vest embedded with an LED matrix display which shows what she wants to say to the public. Many of them are about



Figure 2.2 The LIK-LAK project.



Figure 2.3 The Amodal Suspension project.



Figure 2.4 The BlinkenLights project.

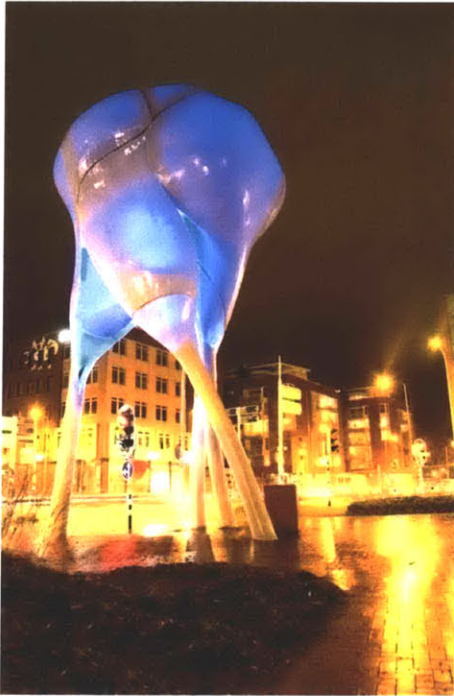


Figure 2.5 The D-toren project.

her personal emotional response to what happened to her. “Regret booth” by University of Cambridge [25] works the other way around: public telephone booths for anyone to type in their regrets to a web server, and will be returned with similar regrets (determined by computer systems) on the screen of the booth. Postsecret.com [26] is probably one of the most famous online services for revealing personal secrets and feelings. Participants describe their secrets on postcards and mail them to the host of this service, who later will post the cards on the project blog page. It used to be post-only; viewers will not be able to leave comments to those postcards. The idea was to prevent moral judgments over what people say on their cards. It opened the feature of leaving feedback recently and has been facing a huge resistance and argument. Graffiti Research Lab [27] in New York did several public works (such as Night Writer and Interactive Architecture) that have tried to blend the popular format of public communication: graffiti, with digital technologies.

“Ambient Addition” [28] by Noah Vawter addressed the issue of detachment from the surrounding by developing a headphone system that synthesizes from environmental sound/noise to create a sonic space. It shares the same spirit with T Talk of seeing something “undesirable” and turning it into an opportunity of appreciation.

The main difference of T Talk from projects discussed above, is the focus on transit spaces like subways, and the goal of revealing the diversity and enabling people to reading the everyday life.

There also have been many other projects that try to transform the waiting experience into an more enjoyable one. The famous “handle instrument” in Kendall T station is a wonderful project in its simplicity and the idea of interaction among riders on both platforms. The long history of the program “Poems on the Underground” from UK has been around for more than 20 years. And it has been the inspiration for similar programs around the world in Dublin, New York, Paris, Shanghai, to name a few.



Figure 2.6 The unspoken project.



Figure 2.7 The Ambient Addition project.

3. DESIGN and IMPLEMENTATION

In this Chapter, the details of the design evolution and implementation of the T Talk system are explained. The T Talk system consists of three major components: (1) a kiosk and interface that allows users to post, browse and reply to messages, (2) a newspaper whose contents are the messages collected the previous day, and (3) an SMS server that receives text messages from mobile phones. The sections below describe these three parts.

At the very beginning of this project, we submitted a proposal to the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority) to seek their approval and collaboration. Since the MBTA did not approve this proposal, we changed our design substantially. This chapter discusses the final system we built and tested.

Because this project had to be realized without the support and permission of the MBTA, we wanted to design and implement the project while minimally impacting the MBTA infrastructure; we did not want to be fined for using their facility without permits. Therefore, the kiosk had to be portable so I could bring it back to the Lab after each session. It also had to be battery-powered to avoid using the power on the platform. We also had to figure out another way of information display and distribution than what was described in the original proposal. We had proposed to use projection and a customized controller for navigation, which was obviously impossible given the infrastructure needed for such an implementation. The newspaper idea replaced this first concept, and was inspired by the observation of subway riders' behavior. In Boston it is very common to leave the 'Metro' or other newspaper on the seats of the platform

or trains when one gets on or off the train. And it is very common for other people to simply pick up the left newspaper and continue to read. We then decided to print a newspaper everyday; its content was what people submitted the day before using either the kiosk or their mobile phones. We then handed the newspaper to people during the study.

The need for an SMS server became clear after the newspaper idea was finalized. We felt that we needed a way for riders who are reading the newspaper and feel like saying something to participate. Even though both Kendall and Harvard Square have almost no mobile phone reception, we thought it might be useful for some people.

THE DESIGN OF THE KIOSK

Requirements for the Kiosk Design

After some initial brainstorming and site visits (I myself commute daily between Porter Square and Kendall/MIT), we finalized the requirements for the kiosk design.

Requirements:

- (1) It has to be light enough for one person to easily move
- (2) The structure has to be strong enough for bad road conditions and possible abuse by the users
- (3) It has to be battery-powered
- (4) It has to be able to stand firmly on its own without any external structural support
- (5) It has to at least house one 17-inch LCD screen, a laptop, and a battery (~10 Kg in total)
- (6) The design should provide a mechanism for users' actions to stay private while not blocking the public view of the LCD screen for other people.

The Final Design

The final design was to use the familiar form of a kiosk one would expect to see in most transportation spaces. Figure 3.1 shows the final built kiosk.

We decided to design three boxes that share the same width and length so they can stack up. The top one has the laptop with the interface for browsing, replying to, and posting messages. The middle box houses a 17-inch LCD screen tilted to provide a comfortable viewing experience. The bottom box is equipped with 360-degree wheels (similar to those of shopping carts); this box also contains all the wires and the battery. Originally we intended to tear apart a carry-on luggage bag and use its internal structure and the wheels. But we found it difficult to give it an integral look and aesthetic. Therefore we later decided to build everything from scratch, and make a handle on the back of



Figure 3.1 The final built kiosk.

the top box for pulling the whole thing along.

We came up with the idea of inserting lazy-susans between the boxes as a solution to the private-public requirement ((6)) we mentioned. It also serves as the structure and connector for holding two boxes together.

In order to minimize the weight, we chose the 1/8-inch plywood as our main material for the kiosk. We started with a 3-D structural study in Rhinoceros modeling software to make sure the design was feasible and to determine the fabrication and assembly procedure. Figure 3.2 shows a screen shot of the 3-D study. Please note that in the 3-D model we also designed a box (the third one from the top) for newspaper storage. But we removed it afterwards because we decided to carry the newspaper in our arms and hand it to people.

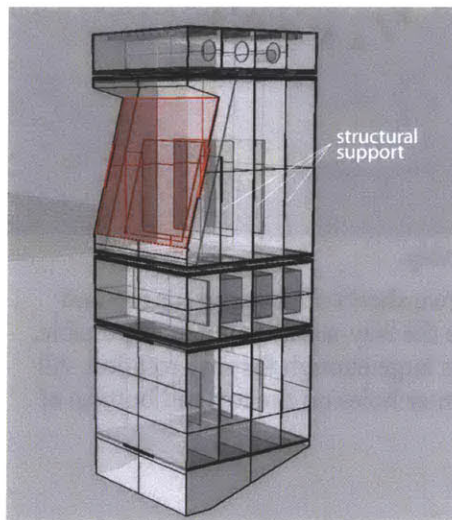


Figure 3.2 3-D model study in Rhinoceros modeling software.

This figure also shows how we provided reinforcements to structurally support the box. We did more than what is usually needed to combat possible abuse and bad road conditions. The assembly was designed to be fully joint-based to provide more support. Overall the kiosk weighs about 14Kg, which is acceptable for a short travel from the Media Lab to the Kendall T station.

We then imported the file to Corel-Draw for laser cutting.

Figure 3.3 contains several snap-



Figure 3.3 Snapshots for the kiosk assembly.

shots for the assembly process. We used two sheets of plywood for top and bottom of each box. We also tried to hide the lazy-susan as much as possible, while keeping the distance between boxes large enough for easy rotation. All the cables and wires went through the center holes on the top and bottom of the boxes.

THE DESIGN OF THE INTERFACE

Initial Sketches

We started the interface sketch with only three requirements in mind: the interaction had to be simple, quick (responsive) and the interface has to be highly legible for most users (for example, by using high-contrast color scheme and putting extra care on the typesetting). Some of the initial sketches are shown below in Figure 3.5. (Note: T Talk was named Q&A@T previously.) One thing on which we spent quite a lot of time on was designing a visualization that helped viewers browse through the collection of messages (the color strips in Figure 3.4, and the co-centered circles in Figure 3.5). We also thought a lot about the first page of the interface. Figure 3.6 shows a sketch of a starting page for the interface.

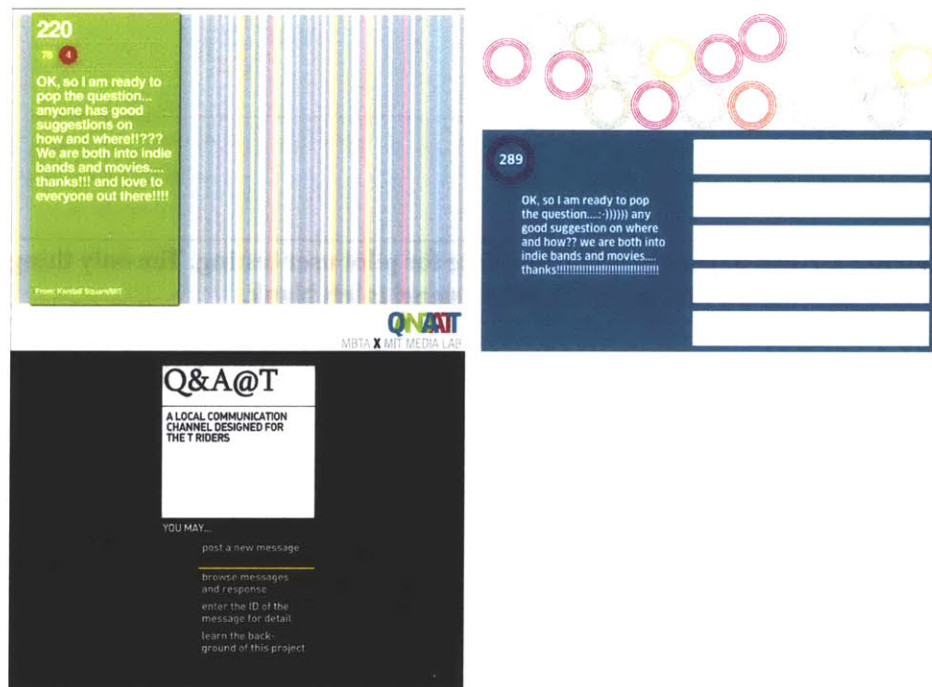


Figure 3.4 (top left), 5 (top right), 6 (bottom left) Initial sketches for T Talk interface design.

First Prototype and Informal User Testing

After some internal testing and study, we came up with the first prototype. Great consideration was put into simplicity in both the visual and the interactive aspect.

During the second week of June 2007, we brought the interface to Kendall station (the laptop only) and invited some passengers to test it out. This study was informal and meant for us to learn more about interaction design in the context of subway platforms and trains. We asked 6 people in total to play with

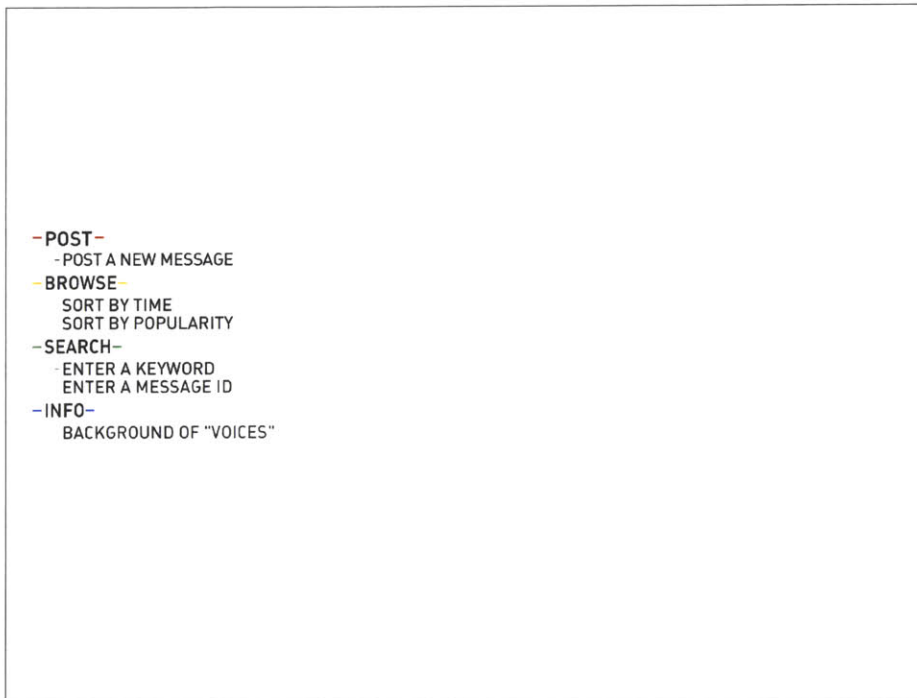


Figure 3.7 The start page of the interface for pilot user testing. The only thing one sees is the list of options. The right panel is left blank.

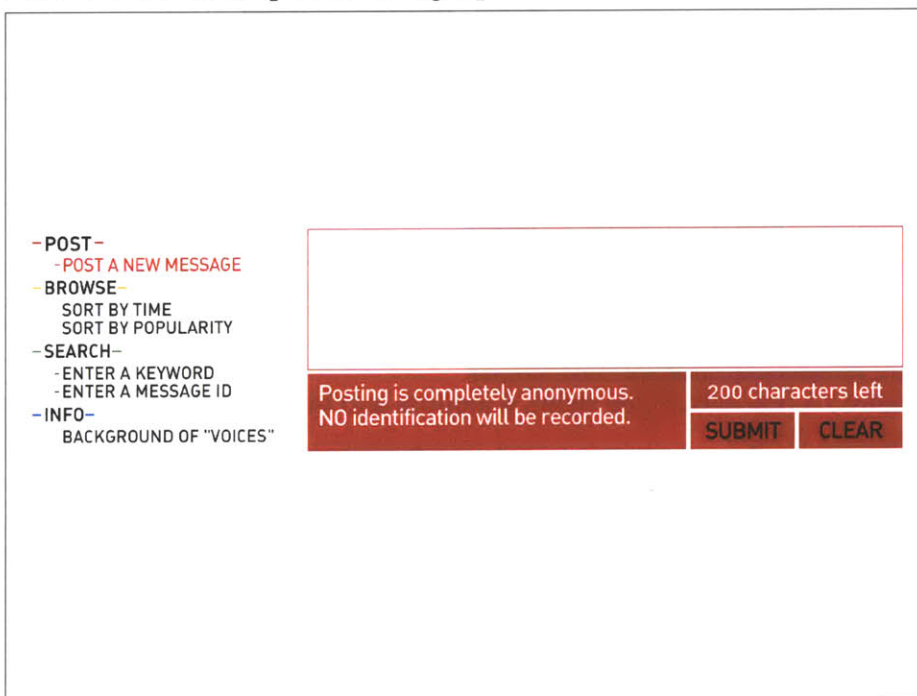


Figure 3.8 The page when users click "POST A NEW MESSAGE"

the interface. The interface was split into two panels: left and right. Figure 3.7 shows the start page: all the options are listed on the left panel, and they are all

color-coded (the color palette are the colors T uses for designating different “Lines:” Red, Orange, Green, and Blue.). Users can move the cursor to click an option, and then they are given the content on the right panel accordingly. For example Figure 3.8 shows what the main page when users click “POST A NEW MESSAGE”.

After this pilot study, we observed several problems with the initial design. Some major changes were:

- (1) The visual feedback of all interactive events from the users has to be very simple and easy to read. The track pad is much more difficult than a mouse for moving the cursor and pointing. Therefore buttons were made much bigger, easier to click, with clear visual feedback for cursor events.
- (2) Use color with caution. People do not notice the color-coding, and sometimes it can get in the way. We removed the color-coded buttons for the options and changed them all into one color (RGB 255, 0, 0).
- (3) Do not use cursor dragging. Dragging is difficult with a track pad. We changed all browsing interface to be click-based interaction.
- (4) We changed the left-right two-panel system to a top-bottom one. It provides more spatial assets for accommodating more information and bigger interface elements.
- (5) Get rid of animations for interface transitions to achieve better responsiveness.

The Final Design of The Interface

In this section we present in detail the final interface we uses for T Talk.

The interface starts with the page shown in Figure 3.9 on the next page. On the top is the panel for four different actions a user can take: BROWSE for browsing and replying to messages, POST for posting new messages, FIND for searching, and ABOUT for learning more about the project and contact information. A button changed to white background when users are in that particular page. Users can switch to different pages anytime by moving the cursor to the button and clicking it.

The middle part is the visualization designed for navigating through all the existing posts. One box represents one post. The randomness of the dot inside the box represents the “activeness” of that post. Activeness in current implementation is simply the total number of (1) how many times the post is clicked, plus (2) how many replies it gets, plus (3) how many votes (both positive and negative ones), plus (4) how many times it was searched.

The idea behind this visualization is to have it also act as an interface for easy and smooth browsing among all the posts. We envision that users can move the cursor freely over the sea of boxes and easily get a glimpse of what messages people have left. A simple way for visualizing posts would be using different sizes (of the box, for example) for different activeness. This is not a good idea in our case since each of the boxes also serves as a button for users to click if they feel like replying to the post, and the size of it would directly

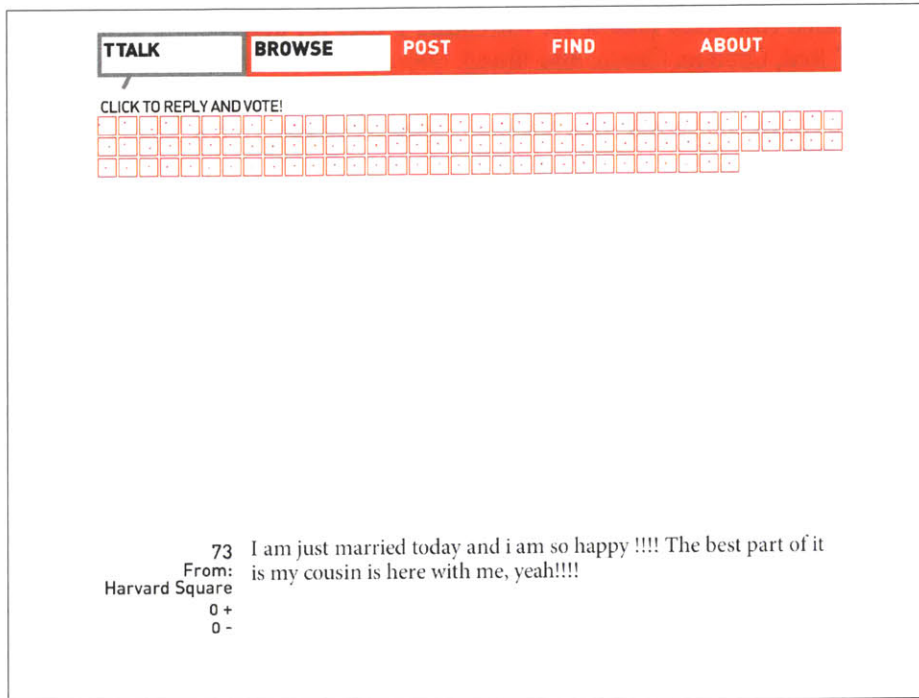


Figure 3.9 The start page of the interface for final installation. The top panel offers three options for interaction: BROWSE (and reply), POST, and FIND. The boxes and dots in the middle are visualization of the activeness of existing posts. It also serves as interface for users to select which post to reply by clicking the box.

change the ease of clicking. In our case we would like to treat every message equally, and therefore we decided to give every message the same size box, and use motion to denote the activeness. When we gather more and more messages, we will then have a big picture of the distribution of “popularity” over all the messages we collect.

Whenever users move the cursor over the box, the corresponding post message and related information are shown in the text field on the bottom of the page. If users feel like replying to that particular post, they can simply click the box; this will bring up an interface (shown below in Figure 3.10) for checking out replies people left and writing their own reply. When they finish they can hit “BACK TO BROWSE” and they will be back to the original BROWSE page with the visualization.

As stated previously, users can click other options on the top panel anytime they feel like changing. The POST and FIND page are kept extremely simple. Figure 3.11 shows the posting page, and Figure 3.12 shows the results with a keyword search “harvard.”

The ABOUT page (Figure 3.13) explains the background information of T Talk, and also shows simple instructions on how one can participate by using the interface, reading the newspaper, or sending posts/replies via their mobile phones. Contact information is attached here in case they have questions or suggestions.

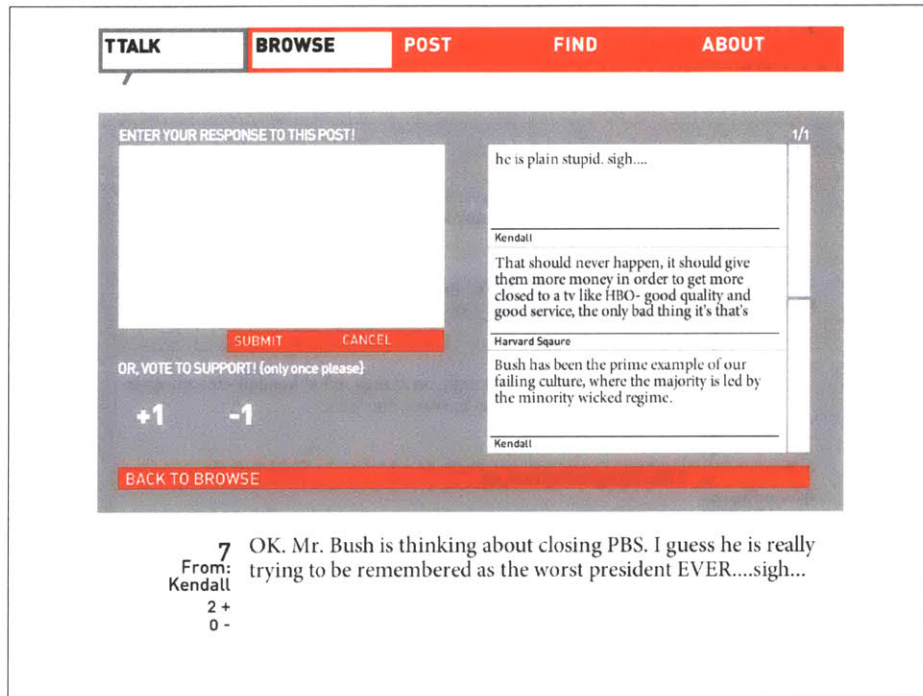


Figure 3.10 The interface for replying to a particular post. Users can enter her own reply, vote to it, or just browsing what people have said. They hit “BACK TO BROWSE” to go back to the BROWSE mode.

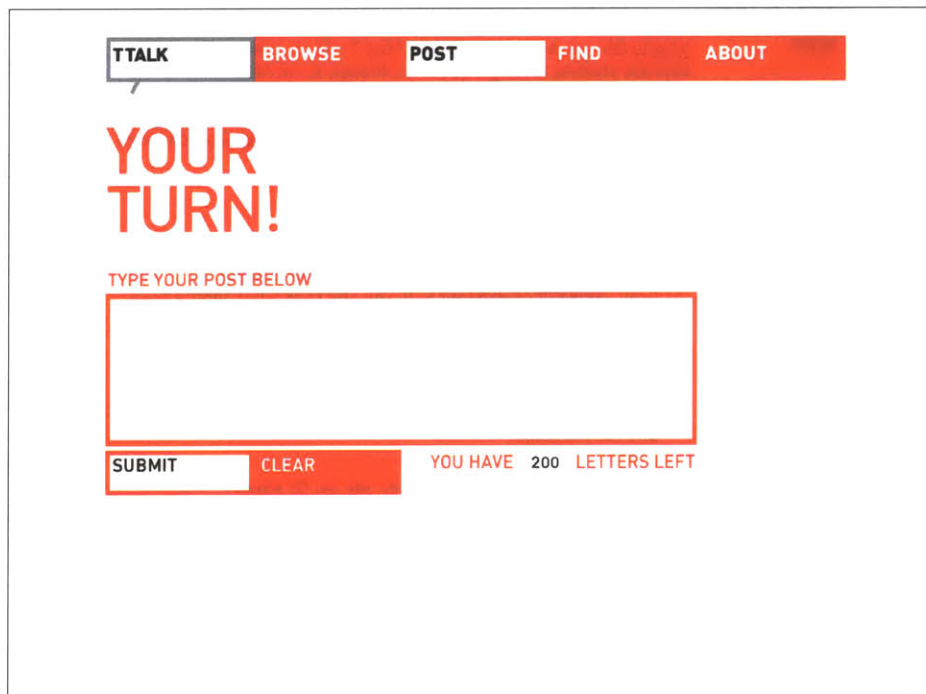


Figure 3.11 The interface for posting new messages.

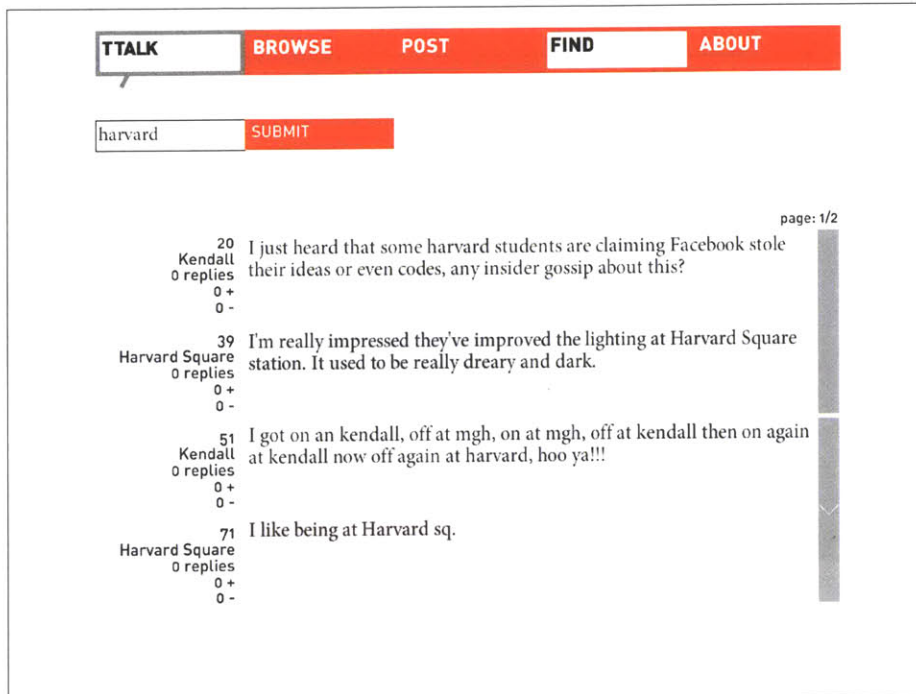


Figure 3.12 The search result page with the keyword “harvard.”

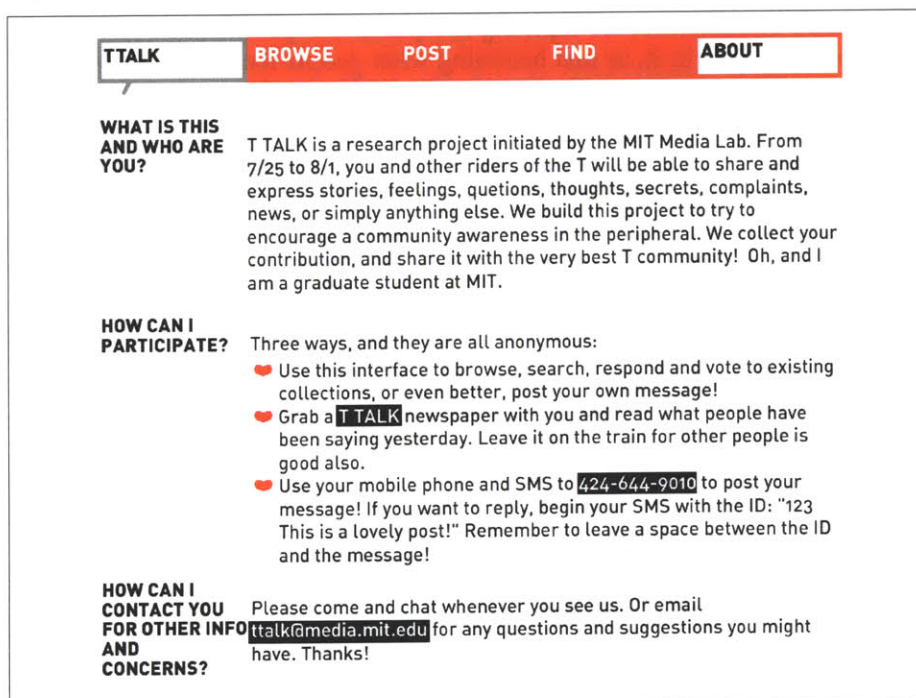


Figure 3.13 The “ABOUT” page.

THE DESIGN OF THE NEWSPAPER

The design of the newspaper also shared the same simplicity philosophy. We would like to have the newspaper look very light visually since it is going to be text-only. We want to omit unnecessary notations or marks so people are not distracted and can be directed to the content right away. We employed a simple 3-column grid system for visual organization, and also to give it a “newspaper” look that many of us are familiar with. Figure 3.14 shows an image of the newspaper.

An entry (Figure 3.15) is organized into three parts: entry information, the post, and the replies. The entry information starts with the post ID, the station from which the post was submitted, and the number of votes, positive and negative respectively. The text of the post is in italic, while the text of replies is in regular typeface. Each reply ends with the station where it was submitted.

In the newspaper design we reserved a 5cm space (shown below) for information or announcement from us to the readers. The front page describes the project, how one can participate, and the schedule of the study. The second page explains how users can post and respond via their mobile phones, and how we address privacy issues.

An example copy of the newspaper is attached with this document as Appendix A.

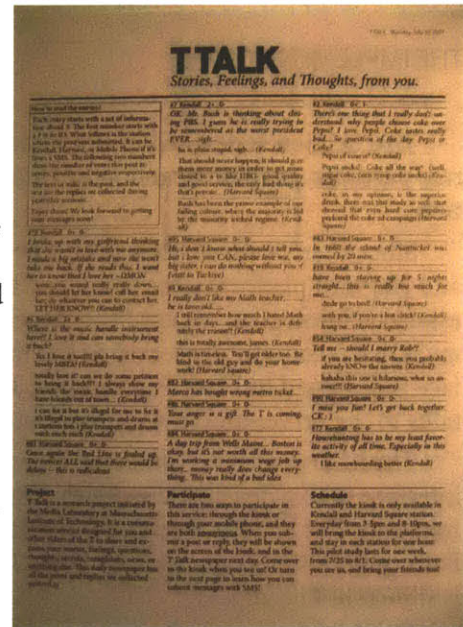


Figure 3.14 The T Talk newspaper.

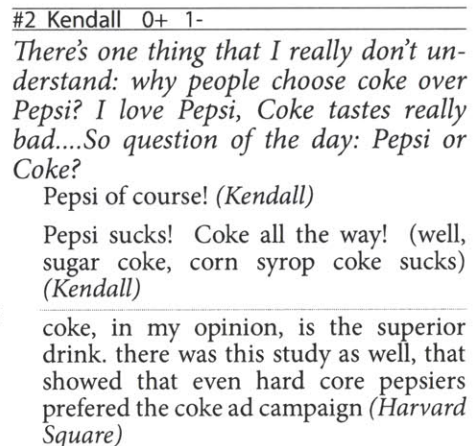


Figure 3.15 An example entry.

<p>Project T Talk is a research project initiated by the Media Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It is a communication service designed for you and other riders of the T to share and express your stories, feelings, questions, thoughts, secrets, complaints, news, or anything else. This daily newspaper has all the posts and replies we collected yesterday.</p>	<p>Participate There are two ways to participate in this service: through the kiosk or through your mobile phone, and they are both <u>anonymous</u>. When you submit a post or reply, they will be shown on the screen of the kiosk, and in the T Talk newspaper next day. Come over to the kiosk when you see us! Or turn to the next page to learn how you can submit messages with SMS!</p>	<p>Schedule Currently the kiosk is only available in Kendall and Harvard Square stations. Everyday from 3-5pm and 8-10pm, we will bring the kiosk to the platforms, and stay in each station for one hour. This pilot study lasts for one week, from 7/25 to 8/1. Come over whenever you see us, and bring your friends too!</p>
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Figure 3.16 The 5-cm bottom space for announcements and information from us.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

This Section is devoted to describing the system as a whole, how the separate parts are integrated, and what technologies were used for the implementation.

Since there is no wireless (WIFI or GSM data networks) in both Kendall and Harvard platforms, the kiosk had to be self-contained with all the necessary technologies. We used the Apache HTTP Server version 2.2.4 with MySQL 5.0 community server as the main database and web server. The interface is designed in Flash Professional 8.0 and coded in Actionscript 2.0, which talks to the server and MySQL via customized PHP scripts.

The LCD screen is connected directly to the laptop, and interface is also developed in Flash Professional 8.0 environment. The battery used to power the LCD is a NiMH Battery Pack that can source 12 V for 13Ah (156Wh) which is shown in Figure 3.17.

The newspaper is laid out in Adobe InDesign CS version 3. We wrote a PHP script that pulls out all the messages submitted during the day, organizes them into posts and their corresponding replies, and sequences the entries (one entry is one post with its replies) randomly. The PHP script generates an XML file that can be imported into InDesign; where all the styles and typesetting have been preset, and we fine-tune the final layout manually.

The SMS server was developed in Visual Studio 6.0 environment. We used a Sony Ericsson mobile phone with Bluetooth. The server program we wrote treats the mobile phone (the Bluetooth device to be more specific) as a serial port device, and reads data from it every minute.

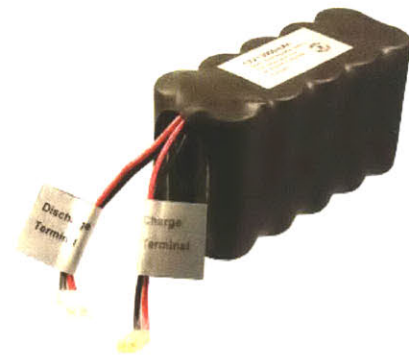


Figure 3.17 The NiMH battery used to power the LCD screen.

4. EXPERIMENT and EVALUATION

In this Chapter, we will first discuss the protocols and plans for the experiment. We will then present several statistics that came out of the data we collected during the study. For the evaluation, the technical and design aspects and the social aspects discussed previously will serve as markers, delineating appropriate forms of evaluation.

THE EXPERIMENT

We began with a plan of doing the study in the Kendall and Harvard stations. We planned to do three sessions every day: a morning session: 10-12PM, an afternoon session: 3-5PM, and an evening session: 8-10PM. We cancelled the morning session after a T station manager asked me not to do the study in the morning because there is usually a large number of riders in the morning, and he was concerned that the experiment would block traffic flow. The schedule was kept the same everyday so riders (and especially the daily commuters) would expect to be able to use the system whenever they came to the T. For every session I started from Kendall, and then took the train to Harvard.

The first session began at the Kendall/MIT station on July 26th, 2007. After approximately 30 minutes, a station manager asked if I had permission to do the study. I said no and explained the study I was doing to him. He asked me not to stop people or solicit passengers actively. Therefore for the rest of the study, I brought the kiosk to the platform and waited 1-2 meters away from it. If a rider stopped and read the messages on the LCD screen, or otherwise

showed some curiosity and looked around the kiosk, I would then come over, hand them the newspaper, and explain the system to them. In general I did not ask people to do anything. I handed them the newspaper, and let them know that if they felt like saying anything or replying to a particular post, they could use the laptop on the kiosk.

During the afternoon session on July 29th, 2007, a T staff told me that I unfortunately had to leave the station. He explained that they received a complaint from a passenger concerning boxes with screens and batteries lying on the platform. He explained that if passengers complained, they have to ask me leave. I acknowledged his understanding and completed the afternoon session. I decided to do two more sessions, but both in the evening. The last session took place on the evening of July 30th, thus I was able to do 9 sessions in total for this study.

STATISTICAL RESULTS

During the 9 sessions I was able to collect 151 entries in total. Of all the 151 entries, there were 86 posts and 65 replies. 73 of them were from Kendall, 74 from Harvard, and 4 from mobile phone. Figure 4.1 below is the distribution of the posts and replies of all 9 sessions.

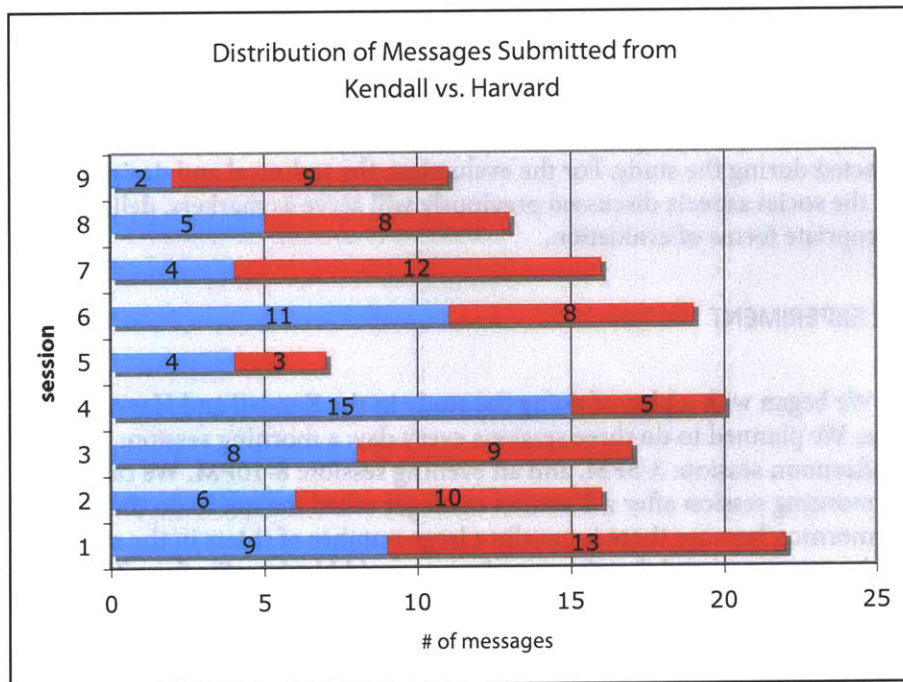


Figure 4.1 The distribution of number of messages submitted from Kendall station vs. Harvard station.

The percentage of the posts that have responses is 40.7% (35/86). The average number of replies for responded posts is 1.857 (65/35).

Approximately 300 copies of the newspaper were handed out to people.

OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION - THE TECHNICAL/DESIGN ASPECTS

Overall, the system worked as expected. Below I discuss the observation, evaluation and lessons learned for (1) the user interface, (2) the kiosk, (3) the newspaper, and (4) the SMS server.

The User Interface

Most users found no problems in using the interface. Most users successfully completed posting and/or replying without help from me. There was in fact a discussion thread in the messages explicitly talking about the interface (Post ID #37):

“I like this interface. I wonder how people will use this?”

(RE:) “like it too. Pretty easy to use.”

(RE:) “this is a really cool project! But I found the little dots confusing...”

The moving dots visualization is indeed something users did not quite understand. One passenger told me: “I think it will be easier if I can get to read the messages as soon as possible. I am given these noisy dots, I don’t know how to start.” As it turned out, only a few people really asked me about the meaning of the visualization. It is apparent the visualization did not work fully as expected. One important reason for this is that visualizations in general only help when people need to navigate large datasets. Given the amount of messages we have in the study, even simply presenting all the messages might actually be more efficient for browsing. Also, most visualization of datasets requires a certain amount of learning time to get familiar with the abstraction and its relationship with the raw data. In this study most of the users were first time users, and they usually had only a short period of time to use the system.

On the other hand, a user told me that: “I don’t know the meaning of the box. They are all exactly the same. Why don’t you use colors or sizes for different messages?” One thing I did on purpose is to make each message “looks” the same; the fact that people were a bit lost is what I wanted, since then they are not directed right away to what they might be interested in. The rationale behind it is to provide a complete and diverse picture of the messages people left.

One thing I would like to test is the idea of introducing a “dialogue” metaphor to the whole interactive experience. In particular, by designing the interface so that the mental image users have toward the kiosk become more “human,” the behavior of the users may be quite different. For example, the interface can give users a start page asking: “Would you like to...” and followed with the options of browsing, replying, posting, searching, etc. A dialogue or “wizard” based interactive system achieves simplicity by limiting the possible flows of interaction. But it would be a good fit for an interface where one interaction cycle lasts a maximum of 10 minutes. Of course, an interactive system

doesn't have to be 100% dialogue-based, but it can be used to simplify various aspects of the interaction.

Another possible improvement to the interface lies in a customized “pointing” device for the interaction. The track pad on a laptop is relatively difficult to use compared to a regular mouse. It is not feasible to have a conventional mouse in a system designed for public uses due to reliability issues. However, by designing the interface so it requires the least amount of movement and pointing, it may be possible to use the track pad. There are also a variety of options available that might make the interaction more intuitive, such as scrolling wheels or touch screens.

The voting mechanism was seldom used. We only received 12 votes in total (8 positive and 4 negative ones). From the observations and conversations I had with users, most users felt that they would rather reply with text messages if they have opinions to a particular post rather than posting a vote. Perhaps the most immediate reason for this view is that the effect of voting is unclear to users. For text replies, they can easily understand that other people will see their replies. But for voting, it seems that nothing changes except the number of votes displayed beside the post. The voting mechanism was introduced in online forums to dig out popular topics and bury unpopular or bad ones. In our case, we designed the interface consciously to display every message without prioritizing any one of them, since the medium is meant to provide the broadest possible perspective. The vote in fact changes slightly the noisiness of the dot in the visualization on the BROWSE page. But since few people even noticed the meaning of the visualization, the effect of a vote has remained unclear.

The Kiosk

The portable kiosk provided me with sufficient mobility to carry out the study in multiple stations without need for a power source or permanent installation. The road condition from the Media Lab to Kendall station is not optimal, but in general I could pull the kiosk around with no worries or failures. The design and the choice of the material made the kiosk relatively light but still strong enough to take some amount of abuse.

The NiMH battery was used to powering the LCD screen with no problem of the duration of each session.

The lazy-susan equipped kiosk successfully provide people an easy way to



Figure 4.2 The kiosk enables negotiation of the public and the private spaces.

create a private space for writing messages without impeding the view of others to the public interface. Figure 4.2 shows the usual scene of the study and it underscores the importance of this design.

It gives the user a way to negotiate the private space they need depending on the situation, while not excluding other people from reading the messages. Even when there are people using the laptop, I am still be able to explain the system to other users by turning the LCD screen to face them without regard the to the direction in which those viewers are standing.

The Newspaper

The idea of the daily newspaper greatly eased the problem of distribution of the information collected. Some people would simply take the newspaper and go find a seat and then sit down and read. Many would take the newspaper onto the train itself and continue reading. In a way the newspaper extended the distribution of the messages both geographically and temporally. The fact that we received 4 messages from mobile phones shows that the newspapers successfully extended the scope of the experiment. There was even a message submitted at approximately midnight (23:37 on 7/26) that said “Ive seen you smile but Ive never heard you laugh.” Since the instruction only exists on the newspaper (and the ABOUT page on the kiosk interface), most likely the person who sent that message was reading the newspaper at night. It is also a low-cost and effective way for information dissemination without the need for physical availability of the kiosk.

The paper format proved to be helpful in terms of the reading experience. Reading a newspaper is mostly a private activity, while interacting with the kiosk (both using the interface and reading posts on the LCD) is public. With the newspaper, T Talk gives passengers the options of presenting themselves to the public when using or reading the kiosk, or reading what people said privately via the newspaper. At times, couples or friends read the newspaper and discussed the messages. People were able to pass the newspaper to others whenever needed. Also, there were cases where after reading some of the entries on the newspaper, users came back to the kiosk to either reply or post their own messages.

I did not get to spot any T Talk newspaper being left on the train for others to read. The hypothesis of utilizing the behavior of leaving newspapers on the seats for other people thus cannot be validated. However, given the small number of papers distributed, and the fact that others may have taken the newspaper with them upon exiting, it is possible that the mechanism worked as expected but escaped my notice.

The SMS Server

The SMS server worked successfully in terms of receiving messages. The four SMS messages we collected are:

“I am better than a mouse, but not as cute.”

“Thank you all my friends!”

“Hey i am on the train texting you i am enjoying the full moon Giselle”

“Ive seen you smile but Ive never heard you laugh.”

OBSERVATION AND EVALUATION - THE SOCIAL ASPECT

We understand that the social impact (if there will ever be any) will not become apparent until the system is deployed widely and for a sufficient amount of time. Also, since we did not conduct formal qualitative and quantitative evaluation procedures, we have little concrete proof of whether the passengers will find it useful and effective in terms of community building and awareness.

In this Section, I would like to provide a detailed analysis of the messages people left during the 9 sessions of the experiment. Also, I would like to present some anecdotes and lessons learned that show how such a system might be able to act as a social catalyst.

Analysis of The Messages

The messages people have left show a variety of conversations had happened. Below I would like to discuss different types of contents we collected during this study. Please note that the types we discussed here are subjective. Whether they match the intention of the writers are left unknown. Several worth-noting ways of using this medium will then be presented and discussed afterwards. For a concise explanation, whenever I present conversations here I only list the post without the corresponding replies. For a complete view of the conversation that happened please check Appendix A (In Appendix A I list all the posts and replies I gathered during this experiment in the format of the newspaper I handed out to people everyday during the study). Also, I keep all the typos and formatting people used when they typed those messages, to reflect the nature and current usage of words in technology mediated communications.

People use T Talk to ask questions. The type of questions varied from political issues, news items, personal matters, to T-specifics. Some examples are:

“VOTE: will you watch the Republican youtube debate in September?”

“Is Harry Potter the best novel you’ve ever read? Tell us what you think about this!”

“ever wondered what people are reading on the T? I am reading “not even wrong” .. what are you reading?”

“Ashley loves the Kwakuitl Indians. She wants to be involved in a Potlatch ceremony someday. Can you help make her dream come true?”

“Where is the music handle instrument here?? I love it and can somebody

bring it back?”

The open and anonymous channel is a good place to write about personal feelings and stories that people don't find it easy to disclose or simply say it to seek for emotional support:

“OK..so I just saw my new psychiatrist today! Woohoo! He's like 75 years old...and he's legally blind, but damn! He was awesome! I hope I get well...I hate being sick in the head. *sigh*..help..”

“Why is there a mentality in the science community that we all must live in poverty! I'm so damn poor!”

“I am just married today and i am so happy !!!! The best part of it is my cousin is here with me, yeah!!!!”

“had a huge fight with my mom today. She has no idea how much pressure she put on me....to some extend I don't care about my mit degree, I am doing it for her...”

“I might get a job today. I am so happy! GO ME!”

And of course immediately people find it a good place for some advertisement:

“Kitsch in Sync, a great improv troupe, will perform on the first Friday of the month at the Brookline Puppet Showplace Theatre.”

“PEACE AND JUSTICE! GRASSROOTS ONLINE: www.grassrootsonline.org”

“Visit the new ICA; free every Thursday from 5-9pm!”

People use T Talk to maybe try to raise some issues or discussion over a particular topic. Here we can see the possibility of how T Talk might be able to serve as a forum for public discourse:

“I don't think that this whole east-coast/west-coast thing is as big a deal as everyone makes it out to be. The real division, it seems to me, is between the south and the rest of the nation.”

“More women should look into DJing. I discovered turntables at 17 and it was instant love. Haven't looked back since. Solidarity for female DJs everywhere! =o)”

“OK. Mr. Bush is thinking about closing PBS. I guess he is really trying to be remembered as the worst president EVER....sigh....”

“a friend of mine showed me today a magazine called “SAM.” Basically it's all half-naked women pics all over the mag. It really made me sick. Is that the kinda asian American image they want to show???”

“Refuse to be a victim of Communism! The Chinese Communist Party

exports both material goods and propaganda to the US and to the rest of the world. Be aware! Learn the truth yourself!”

There are some messages that are quotes, a piece of random thoughts, sometimes in a form of a short poetry.

“quote of the day: “if you have to steal, steal from the best.””

“We all share the same destiny”

“Don’t Cry Without Try”

“Your anger is a gift. The T is coming, must go.”

There are some interesting usages of T Talk that are worth mentioning. I would like to devote following paragraphs to the discussion about several specific usages.

People do use T Talk to write to a particular person. Many of them are about relationships, families or couples. It is also interesting to find that some of these are left with a coded name of the person who left the message. It makes the message personal and secretive.

“Hey Roger Sipatakiat... if you get this message, give me a call.”

“HI PAPA .. we miss you :)”

“Hi Ann, I love you miss you. Your lost love.”

“I’m in love with you Pat...you suck. -E”

“I broke up with my girlfriend thinking that she wasn’t in love with me anymore. I made a big mistake and now she won’t take me back. If she reads this, I want her to know that I love her ~DMON”

“I miss you Jim! Let’s get back together. CK :)”

There are also some posts talking about T Talk the system itself.

“twitter in the physical world! Really cool!!!”

“modernity brought us this isolation and this technology might bring us together, I don’t know if I am filled with a beautiful sadness or a sad beauty”

“this is something cool. Let us hope this will be more fun and come out as a real product in future.....”

There are a few messages that are talking about the subway or to MBTA.

“I’m really impressed they’ve improved the lighting at Harvard Square station. It used to be really dreary and dark.”

“I thought it was pretty relaxing and I enjoyed the time in this magnificent subway station”

“Once again the Red Line is fouled up. The notices ALL said that there would be delays – this is ridiculous”

“I’m so glad that the Kendall Band got fixed!”

“why is it so hot at all the mbta my money paid for fans, not ac’s why?”

It is inevitable that once people learn the working of the system, they will start to “abuse” the system. For example, one of the messages is a spoiler of the latest Harry Potter novel:

“Hermoine marries Ron”

(RE:) “the thing is, i don’t really care.”

Another message is apparently related to this message:

“Hermoine married me”

If T Talk or similar systems would be installed in the future, there has to be some sort of moderating or editorial efforts put into it. How open or uncensored the medium should be will be left to the moderators or editors, which holds true for most any mass communication medium.

Observations on the Dynamics and Social Environment

The presence of the T Talk kiosk certainly changed the dynamics of the subway platforms and trains. It is difficult for people to pass by without noticing it or reading a bit what is being shown on the LCD screen. The ratio of people who indeed stopped and read versus who just spent seconds on it was not recorded though. Crowds did gather around the kiosk, especially when I started explaining to people what the system does and handing newspaper to people. There were cases where strangers discussed messages shown on the screen, or explained aspects of the system to others who were new to it. There was one case when I was standing on the train with the kiosk, and I noticed a couple seems to be explaining to a stranger what the system does by pointing to the kiosk, and handing her the newspaper.

The effect of changing the ambience of waiting was more apparent in the Harvard Square station. Due to its much wider platform, people could gather around the kiosk without blocking the flow of people coming in to the platform. There was little chance for crowd gathering in Kendall station, and I believe the narrower platform was one of the main reasons.

The newspaper proved to be a good format for information circulation. People would come and ask for the newspaper to read. Friends shared the

newspaper and read together.

Of course not everyone got the idea or believed that they need it. During the first session there was a MIT student told me that she doesn't need to connect to strangers, and she already has enough information to consume. There were also people who asked about the difference between an online blog and a system like T Talk, or how I envisioned the future of the system and whether I had the resource and authority. There was a man asking me what do I do if people input undesired contents. It is apparent that some commuters harbored doubts about an anonymous public forum.

During the study, we didn't really get any messages that were simply cursing or outrageous taboo words. This was mainly because the way we did the study: the system is not completely "anonymous" because the user knows someone (at least me) is 'watching,' even though she/he can prepare a private space by turning the laptop stand. That imposes a certain degree of pressure to a user to keep the presentation of her/his self to be "good."

An investigation into the messages submitted from Kendall and Harvard does not display noticeable differences in terms of the contents. The demographic distribution in Kendall and Harvard are similar: college students, working professionals, and tourists. I was told by a man on a train, "you should try this across the river man! Here is only Harvard and MIT!" I immediately acknowledged that, and wondered about the differences in terms of usage and message contents for different part of the Boston city.

The number of people gathering around the kiosk and the number of posts/replies contributed by the passengers did not change noticeably over the 9 sessions. It is difficult to tell how this system might change people's behavior over time, since the study only lasted for 9 sessions (5 days). On Sunday (7/29) however, we started to have people coming over saying they know me and T Talk and were bringing friends or family members to say hi and try it out.

5. CONCLUSION and FUTURE WORK

This thesis presented a design, implementation, and experiment of an open, asynchronous, anonymous communication channel for subway riders. This is a pilot study on how to design an interactive device and service in the context of public spaces and subway stations, with an aim to utilize the tens of minutes of subway waiting time everyday as an opportunity for reading and appreciating the complexity and diversity of the city, and developing an awareness of and support from the subway riding community.

Through several iterations of design and user testing, I built the T Talk system, which consists of three major technical components: a portable, battery-powered kiosk with a simple interface for posting, browsing, and replying to messages anonymously; a semi-automated process that generates a daily newspaper whose contents are the collection of messages left by the passengers during the previous day; and an SMS server that receives text messages if users send posts/replies via their cellphones.

I successfully conducted nine sessions of study. Each session lasted for about two hours; I stayed in Kendall/MIT station for the first hour and Harvard station for the second. The installation of T Talk on the platform certainly changed the social dynamics of subway waiting. Crowds gathered, read what was on the screen and the newspaper, and exchanged conversations with strangers and friends. The newspaper format made the circulation of information easy and across time and space. We had received several messages from mobile phone, which proved that the newspaper idea was valid.

In total I was able to collect 151 entries from passengers. We grouped these

messages into 5 different categories: questions and answers, personal stories and feelings, announcements and advertisements, opinions and thoughts, and random quotes and murmurs. The topics are fairly diverse, and answers to questions vary.

The real effect in terms of awareness of the city, and the real usage behavior of this medium are difficult to identify and nurture for such a short-term and scope-limited experimental study. Provided we gather more resources and support, a long-term deployment in the future will be important to really evaluate and learn how people adopt this new way of communication. Longer deployment and more kiosks installed in different stations are necessary to determine whether it works to facilitate the readings of the city, different stations and neighborhoods, and support the archiving of stories of our everyday life.

For a long-term deployment and study, it will also be interesting to see how the role of moderators or editors should function and the effect of it for such an open and anonymous medium.

The current design of the kiosk and the whole service is to some extent compromised in order to have real-world deployment and testing, under the circumstance of doing it without the approval and support from the subway authority. It is obvious that T Talk does not have to be of its current form. How we might be able to make T Talk engage more people is something worth trying out.

It will be also interesting to try different modalities of expression. For example, in addition of using text, we could try to have video or audio capture capabilities that enable people to record clips of sound or video. An example would be the system provides one question everyday, and everyone is invited to record a short video clip to answer the question. Another possibility is to design the system so that the “traces” people leave are more abstract. In our case of T Talk people leave traces in the form of text. We can imagine building a system that allows people to leave their heart rate, or a 200X200 pixels square of random drawings, etc.

This leads to a point that is worth thinking about: how we can design a more playful experience of participation. For example we can make the writing messages or submitting video clips a full body exercise or an interactive action with other riders on the platforms (of different directions, even). We can also develop techniques for riders to manipulate the contents contributed by other riders. Turning the wall on the platform into a graffiti wall can be one idea. Collaboratively recording and editing a long video clip that can serve as a narrative of the people who share the same subway station can be another.

Instead of an asynchronous communication design, we can also think about the possibility of a real-time version. This will be more interesting if we allow people waiting in different stations communicate to each other. Imagine that people waiting in a station can answer questions from other stations through text, audio, or video, etc.

APPENDIX A

In this Appendix I attached the copies of the newspapers I distributed during the 9-session study.

TTALK

Stories, Feelings, and Thoughts, from you.

#23 KENDALL 1+ 0-

just finished my PhD -- if I can do it you can too!!!

three weeks to go for my thesis!!! hang in there!!! (Kendall)

#16 KENDALL 1+ 1-

quote of the day: "if you have to steal, steal from the best."

I love this one! haha (Kendall)

Please! The "best" is like so random and so circumstantial, anyway. (Kendall)

#11 KENDALL 0+ 0-

Stephan Koplowitz and Summer Stages Dance at ICA this weekend!!! Anyone going?

I am going! It's gonna be super good I promise everyone. (Kendall)

i dont believe (Kendall)

#30 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

Why there are always so many problems with tips??? I don't know, they are just numbers... so many fights, so many... anything, you know... Why is it a problem for foreigners? Can you help me?

#4 KENDALL 2+ 0-

Where is the music handle instrument here?? I love it and can somebody bring it back?

I know how you feel, and good luck to you! (Kendall)

Yes I love it too!!!! plz bring it back my lovely MBTA! (Kendall)

totally love it! can we do some petition to bring it back??? I always show my friends the music handle everytime I have friends out of town.... (Kendall)

#1 KENDALL 3+ 0-

I feel as though there is a connection between myself and him but I am not sure how I should go about handling that situation because I don't want to hurt him or myself in the process...

I know how you feel, and good luck to you! (Kendall)

mm...this is hard. I am always more self-ish in relationships, so I think you should just go for it. Let your feeling guide you through this... (Kendall)

be confident! sometimes it's the hardest part of all things...(Kendall)

Always be honest to yourself.(Kendall)

#8 KENDALL 0+ 0-

deadline deadline deadline....that's the only thing in my head now.

dear friend, that is the modern life. we live by deadlines. poor us..... (Kendall)

#12 KENDALL 0+ 1-

Is Harry Potter the best novel you've ever read? Tell us what you think about this!

Harry Potter = Herd Fodder!!

I REFUSE TO JOIN THE HERD!! (Kendall)

Absolutely, I think it's one of the best series we've seen thus far (Harvard Square)

#7 KENDALL 2+ 0-

OK. Mr. Bush is thinking about closing PBS. I guess he is really trying to be remembered as the worst president EVER....sigh...

he is plain stupid. sigh.... (Kendall)

That should never happen, it should give them more money in order to get more closed to a tv like HBO- good quality and good service, the only bad thing it's that's private... (Kendall)

#13 KENDALL 0+ 0-

had a big fight with my girlfriend...i really hope she can be more considerate....

#14 KENDALL 0+ 0-

getting ssssoo fat...time to work out and keep my body in shape! anyone wants to join me!?

#26 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

twitter in the physical world! really cool!!!

#21 KENDALL 1+ 0-

VOTE: will you watch the Republican youtube debate in september?

of course! (Kendall)

#22 KENDALL 1+ 0-

hello

#27 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

Refuse to be a victim of Communism! The Chinese Communist Party exports both material goods and propaganda to the US and the rest of the world. Be aware! Learn the truth yourself!

The Communism doesnt die!!!! (Harvard Square)

#9 KENDALL 0+ 0-

I really don't like my Math teacher..... he is tooo old.....

I still remember how much I hated Math back in days....and the teacher is definitely the reason!! (Kendall)

#24 KENDALL 0+ 0-

Ok...so I just saw my new psychiatrist today! woohoo! He's like 75 years old... and he's legally blind, but damn! He was awesome! I hope I get well...I hate being sick in the head. *sigh*..help..

Project

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Participate

We have designed an interactive kiosk that allows you to write messages to the public anonymously. It will be available on three stations on the Red Line: MIT, Harvard, and Park Street. So please come and play with it whenever you see us. You can also post new messages and reply to messages via your mobile phone. Read the next page to learn how!

Contact

We would love to hear what you think about this project, good or bad. Please come over and chat when you see us. You can also email ttalk@media.mit.edu any questions or suggestions you might have. Thanks for your participation!

#2 KENDALL 0+ 1-

There's one thing that I really don't understand: why people choose coke over Pepsi? I love Pepsi, Coke tastes really bad....So question of the day: Pepsi or Coke?

Pepsi of course! (Kendall)

Pepsi sucks! Coke all the way! (well, sugar coke, corn syrop coke sucks) (Kendall)

#10 KENDALL 0+ 0-

I can't control my emotions. I flip at the stupidest little things. I feel so depressed. tired, just tired...

#29 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

We all share the same destiny

#15 KENDALL 1+ 0-

where is the LOVE?

The designer rocks! Show him some love! (Harvard Square)

#3 KENDALL 0+ 0-

I am ssssoooooo tired. arrrrhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!@#@\$#\$

#28 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

i loved the air conditioning roday at the subway

#5 KENDALL 0+ 0-

had a huge fight with my mom today. she has no idea how much pressure she put on me....to some extend i don't care about my mit degree, i am doing it for her.....

#17 KENDALL 1+ 0-

fortune cookie today: "Correction does much, but encouragement everything." doesn't really make much sense....

i think that's pretty enlightening (Harvard Square)

#20 KENDALL 0+ 0-

I just heard that some harvard students are claiming Facebook stole their ideas or even codes, any insider gossip about this?

#18 KENDALL 0+ 0-

i need vacation....badly....as if life is that easy.....

#19 KENDALL 0+ 0-

have been staying up for 5 nights straight....this is really too much for me...

dude go to bed! (Harvard Square)

#6 KENDALL 0+ 0-

the subway is clean, i agree. but New York is still the capital of the world! hahahaha

great! the capital! and so what? ;-) (Kendall)

I am from boston, but seriously, nyc is way more fun....so many things going on....I dunno what to do here tho...i love boston! but... (Kendall)

Yes, and the Yankees will come back and win the division. Go Yanks! (Kendall)

Boton rocks except for the T Yankees drule but we rule. (Harvard Square)

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YOUR STORIES,
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The text in italic is the post, and the rest are the replies we collected during yesterday sessions.

Enjoy them! We look forward to getting your messages soon!

#12 Kendall 0+ 1-

Is Harry Potter the best novel you've ever read? Tell us what you think about this!

i am reading war and peace, so no.. (Kendall)

havent read it, but sounds exciting (Kendall)

the best novel is Henry James (Harvard Square)

#31 Kendall 0+ 0-

this is just a test, let's see if the search box picks this up

it is! (Harvard Square)

#32 Kendall 0+ 0-

Visiting our son's condo in Somerville is like visiting Hogwarts ... so many stairs everywhere and we have no idea where they go! How can a book not be great when it prompts imagination and simile?

yeah that's really why I love about the book. the story is so close to everyday life, it's like its might really happen right behind me! (Kendall)

#42 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Hermoine married me

#15 Kendall 2+ 0-

where is the LOVE?

Love exists in the hearts and smiles of your children. (Kendall)

Right here! In you! (Kendall)

#3 Kendall 2+ 0-

I am ssssoooooo tired. arrrrhhhhhhhhhh-hhh!!!!@#@\$#\$

it's only natural. this is the sleep deprivation territory (Kendall)

yes you are right. this is a nation that you should be shameful if you sleep 8 hours a day... (Kendall)

#26 Kendall 0+ 0-

you suck bottom line the worst service in good old USA

are you talking about T? i think T is great tho.... (Harvard Square)

#9 Kendall 0+ 0-

I really don't like my Math teacher..... he is tooo old.....

this is totally awesome, james. (Kendall)

#33 HARVARD SQUARE 0+ 0-

PEACE AND JUSTICE! GRASSROOTS ONLINE: www.grassrootsonline.org

what is grassrootsonline (Kendall)

#38 Harvard Square 1+ 0-

i thought it was pretty relaxing and i enjoyed the time in this magnificent subway station

T rocks! (Harvard Square)

#56 Mobile Phone 0+ 0-

Ive seen you smile but Ive never heard you laugh.

#54 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Tell me -- should I marry Rob??

#24 Kendall 1+ 0-

*Ok..so I just saw my new psychiatrist today! woohoo! He's like 75 years old... and he's legally blind, but damn! He was awesome! I hope I get well...I hate being sick in the head. *sigh*..help..*

hope everythings gonna be OK with you! i guess he can still *read* your mind...;-p (Kendall)

geez...good luck to you! (Harvard Square)

do you believe in them or yourself? (Kendall)

#35 Harvard Square 1+ 0-

I might get a job today. I am so happy! GO ME!

yo, glad to hear some good news in this boring and war loving country!!! (Harvard Square)

i am about to be on the job market soon, can somebody hire me? (Kendall)

#52 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

you are so cool to do this..... thanks

#55 Mobile Phone 0+ 0-

Hey i am on the train texting you i am enjoying the full moon Giselle

#34 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

what has become of donald rumsfeld ?

who is he? (Kendall)

#37 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

i like this interface. i wonder how people will use this?

like it too. pretty easy to use. (Kendall)

this is really a cool project! but i found the little dots confusing.. (Harvard Square)

#43 Mobile Phone 0+ 0-

I am better than a mouse, but not as cute.

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#39 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I'm really impressed they've improved the lighting at Harvard Square station. It used to be really dreary and dark.

go MBTA! (Kendall)

#16 Kendall 1+ 1-

quote of the day: "if you have to steal, steal from the best."

Rich people have problems that poor people never dream about. (Kendall)

#46 Kendall 0+ 0-

I am very tired today after a hot day at work and then stupidly deciding to play soccer afterwards!

#19 Kendall 0+ 0-

have been staying up for 5 nights straight....this is really too much for me...

with you, if you're a hot chick! (Kendall)

#47 Kendall 0+ 0-

HI PAPA .. we miss you :)

#45 Kendall 0+ 0-

a friend of mine showed me today a magazine called "SAM." basically it's all half-naked women pics all over the mag. it really made me sick. is that the kinda asian american image they want to show???

#18 Kendall 0+ 0-

i need vacation....badly....as if life is that easy.....

yes, i wish too. (Kendall)

#13 Kendall 0+ 0-

had a big fight with my girlfriend...i really hope she can be more considerate....

what did you fight about (Kendall)

#44 Mobile Phone 0+ 0-

Thank you all my friends!

#5 Kendall 0+ 0-

the subway is clean, i agree. but New York is still the capital of the world! hahahahaha

if you have harvard and mit in nyc, then i will probably consider moving down there...Go Rex Sox! (Harvard Square)

#41 Harvard Square 0+ 1-

Hermoine marries Ron

the thing is I don't really care... (Harvard Square)

#49 Kendall 0+ 0-

Anything to help the starving graduate student! What a cool idea to sample folks on the T. Are we statistically a different breed? Probably, but I wonder how. God bless and good luck!

Will the next step be to gather background on message-writers? (Harvard Square)

#51 Kendall 0+ 0-

I got on an kendall, off at mgh, on at mgh, off at kendall then on again at kendall now off again at harvard, hoo ya!!!

#40 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Hey Roger Sipatakiat... if you get this message, give me a call.

#53 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Theres a lot of talk about faulty structures in Boston. What do you think about offering a little training in spotting bad construction to -- sixth graders? High school students?

#14 Kendall 0+ 0-

getting sssoo fat...time to work out and keep my body in shape! anyone wants to join me!?

Try Bikrim yoga -- you'll sweat like a pig and look like a million bucks. (Harvard Square)

#50 Kendall 0+ 0-

Why is there a mentality in the science community that we all must live in poverty! I'm so damn poor!

#21 Kendall 1+ 0-

VOTE: will you watch the Republican youtube debate in september?

i hate youtube but of course i will watch it!! (Harvard Square)

#48 Kendall 0+ 0-

Visit the new ICA; free every Thursday from 5-9pm!

it's beautiful, boston should be proud of it! (Kendall)

#36 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Kitsch in Sync, a great improv troupe, will perform on the first friday of the month at the Brookline Puppet Show-place Theatre.

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Enjoy them! We look forward to getting your messages soon!

#56 Mobile Phone 0+ 0-

I've seen you smile but I've never heard you laugh.

....that sounds really sad.... (Kendall)

#63 Kendall 0+ 0-

I'm typing to you from a computer in a funny cardboard box. Why they put the computer in the box I don't know?

#58 Kendall 0+ 0-

its a good concept.....i like it

#61 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

We are 10 students from Europe and spent 4 months in Boston! We loved it!!! Boston is so cool!

#62 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

you should listen to fugazi - brian

#14 Kendall 0+ 0-

getting sssoo fat...time to work out and keep my body in shape! anyone wants to join me!?

i've been trying to lost weight too .. stopped all the yumms like chocolate .. hope it works .. (Kendall)

#59 Kendall 0+ 0-

miho is beautiful

#60 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

*The best novel I ever read was *One Hundred Years of Solitude**

yeah! that is such a great book. read his "Chronicle of a Death Foretold", the greatest (Harvard Square)

#64 Kendall 0+ 0-

i don't think that this whole east-coast/ west-coast thing is as big a deal as everyone makes it out to be. the real division, it seems to me, is between the south and the rest of the nation.

#57 Kendall 0+ 0-

Working as a Biogen Idec intern is a fabulous opportunity- the best part being having other brilliant and sweet interns to learn from!

#54 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Tell me -- should I marry Rob??

if you are hesitating, then you probably already kNOW the answer. (Kendall)

#73 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I am just married today and i am so happy !!!! The best part of it is my cousin is here with me, yeah!!!!

#68 Kendall 0+ 0-

ever wondered what people are reading on the T? i am reading "not even wrong" .. what are you reading?

interesting...mmm...i am reading...'In Praise of Shadows'. (Kendall)

#70 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

More women should look into DJing. I discovered turntables at 17 and it was instant love. Haven't looked back since. Solidarity for female DJs everywhere! =o)

#69 Kendall 0+ 0-

where's the train .. we've been waiting and waiting!

#66 Kendall 0+ 0-

hello boston

Hello back at you (Harvard Square)

#76 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

she's in town today, what do I do....

#71 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I like being at Harvard sq.

#74 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Tonight, I will discover the SPIDERPIG!

#72 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Don't Cry Without Try

#75 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Beware The Future is Now !!!!! Orwell And Magneto were right save yourselves!!!!!!

#67 Kendall 0+ 0-

come and see my mom :)

#65 Kendall 0+ 0-

I'm in love with you Pat...you suck. -E

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Schedule

Currently the kiosk is only available in Kendall and Harvard Square station. Everyday from 3-5pm and 8-10pm, we will bring the kiosk to the platforms, and stay in each station for one hour. This pilot study lasts for one week, from 7/25 to 8/1. Come over whenever you see us, and bring your friends too!

YOUR STORIES,
HERE.

We are preparing a website that archives all the posts and replies we collected during the study, email ttalk@media.mit.edu if you want to get more info.

Also, if you are willing to share with us what you think about this project, email us and fill out a survey (10-15 questions only). We will give you a \$5 ice cream coupon and our sincere gratitude as the compensation! Your ideas will be an important ingredient for the future development of T TALK!

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Enjoy them! We look forward to getting your messages soon!

#78 Kendall 0+ 0-

I broke up with my girlfriend thinking that she wasn't in love with me anymore. I made a big mistake and now she won't take me back. If she reads this, I want her to know that I love her ~DMON

wow...you sound really really down.... you should let her know! call her, email her, do whatever you can to contact her. LET HER KNOW!! (Kendall)

#4 Kendall 2+ 0-

Where is the music handle instrument here?? I love it and can somebody bring it back?

Yes I love it too!!!! plz bring it back my lovely MBTA! (Kendall)

totally love it! can we do some petition to bring it back??? I always show my friends the music handle everytime I have friends out of town.... (Kendall)

i can fix it but it's illegal for me to fix it it's illegal to play trumpets and drums at t stations too. i play trumpets and drums ouch ouch ouch (Kendall)

#81 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Once again the Red Line is fouled up. The notices ALL said that there would be delays -- this is ridiculous

#7 Kendall 2+ 0-

OK. Mr. Bush is thinking about closing PBS. I guess he is really trying to be remembered as the worst president EVER....sigh...

he is plain stupid. sigh.... (Kendall)

That should never happen, it should give them more money in order to get more closed to a tv like HBO- good quality and good service, the only bad thing it's that's private... (Harvard Square)

Bush has been the prime example of our failing culture, where the majority is led by the minority wicked regime. (Kendall)

#85 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Hi, i don't know what should i tell you, but i love you CAN, please love me, my big sister, i can do nothing without you :((visit to Turkiye)

#9 Kendall 0+ 0-

I really don't like my Math teacher..... he is tooo old.....

I still remember how much I hated Math back in days....and the teacher is definitely the reason!! (Kendall)

this is totally awesome, james. (Kendall)

Math is timeless. You'll get older too. Be kind to the old guy and do your homework! (Harvard Square)

#82 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Marco has bought wrong metro ticket....

#86 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Your anger is a gift. The T is coming, must go.

#84 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

A day trip from Wells Maine... Boston is okay, but it's not worth all this money. I'm working a minimum wage job up there.. money really does change everything.. This was kind of a bad idea

#2 Kendall 0+ 1-

There's one thing that I really don't understand: why people choose coke over Pepsi? I love Pepsi, Coke tastes really bad....So question of the day: Pepsi or Coke?

Pepsi of course! (Kendall)

Pepsi sucks! Coke all the way! (well, sugar coke, corn syrop coke sucks) (Kendall)

coke, in my opinion, is the superior drink. there was this study as well, that showed that even hard core pepsiers preferred the coke ad campaign (Harvard Square)

#83 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

In 1660 the island of Nantucket was owned by 20 men.

#19 Kendall 0+ 0-

have been staying up for 5 nights straight....this is really too much for me...

dude go to bed! (Harvard Square)

with you, if you're a hot chick! (Kendall)

hang on.. (Harvard Square)

#54 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Tell me -- should I marry Rob??

if you are hesitating, then you probably already kNOW the answer. (Kendall)

hahaha this one is hilarious, what an answer!!! (Harvard Square)

#90 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I miss you Jim! Let's get back together. CK :)

#77 Kendall 0+ 0-

Househunting has to be my least favorite activity of all time. Especially in this weather.

I like snowboarding better (Kendall)

Project

T Talk is a research project initiated by the Media Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It is a communication service designed for you and other riders of the T to share and express your stories, feelings, questions, thoughts, secrets, complaints, news, or anything else. This daily newspaper has all the posts and replies we collected yesterday.

Participate

There are two ways to participate in this service: through the kiosk or through your mobile phone, and they are both anonymous. When you submit a post or reply, they will be shown on the screen of the kiosk, and in the T Talk newspaper next day. Come over to the kiosk when you see us! Or turn to the next page to learn how you can submit messages with SMS!

Schedule

Currently the kiosk is only available in Kendall and Harvard Square station. Everyday from 3-5pm and 8-10pm, we will bring the kiosk to the platforms, and stay in each station for one hour. This pilot study lasts for one week, from 7/25 to 8/1. Come over whenever you see us, and bring your friends too!

#12 Kendall 0+ 1-

Is Harry Potter the best novel you've ever read? Tell us what you think about this!

Harry Potter = Herd Fodder!! I REFUSE TO JOIN THE HERD!! (Kendall)

Absolutely, I think it's one of the best series we've seen thus far (Harvard Square)

i am reading war and peace, so no.. (Kendall)

haven't read it, but sounds exciting (Kendall)

the best novel is Henry James (Harvard Square)

Never read it, but absolutely not according to Dre. I'd go with Rules of Attraction, she'd go with The Firm. (Harvard Square)

#87 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

i love taiwan

#88 Kendall 0+ 0-

7/30/07 Congress Has 5 Days to work hard before vacationing...

#74 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Tonight, I will discover the SPIDERPIG!

I have discovered SPIDERPIG and it was fabulous! (Harvard Square)

#73 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I am just married today and i am so happy !!!! The best part of it is my cousin is here with me, yeah!!!!

wonderful! congratulations! this really made my day =) (Kendall)

#91 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

I wish you good luck... :)

#79 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

modernity brought us this isolation and this technology might bring us together, I don't know if I am filled with a beautiful sadness or a sad beauty

you are the optimistic ones, same here! i was reading the newspaper and learned someone just got married, what a lovely surprise! (Harvard Square)

#92 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

my job sucks... Ali needs to grow up!

#80 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

Today I wore a Wellesley shirt (I'm Harvard '71) and--what do you know?-- Wellesley grads around Harvard Sq. spontaneously spoke to me. Usually, no one strikes up a conversation like that.

#89 Kendall 0+ 0-

this is something cool. let us hope this will be more fun and come out as a real product in future.....

#76 Harvard Square 0+ 0-

she's in town today, what do I do....

fly out! (Harvard Square)



YOUR STORIES,
HERE.

Post/respond via your cellphone?

You can post a new message or respond to previous ones with your mobile phone by sending SMS text messages to 424-644-9010. Please follow the instructions below.

(1) To Post: simply SMS to 424-644-9010 and you are done.

(2) To Respond: Begin your SMS with the ID of the post you are responding

to. For example: "123 This is a lovely post!" Remember to leave a space between the ID and your message!

The idea behind T TALK?

T Talk reveals the diversity, complexity, and sometimes banality of modern urban life. We think *T Talk* can serve as a peripheral communicative and supportive forum that resides in the T. Waiting for T can be boring and solitary, so check out what people have said, and consider contributing your own stories whenever you feel like saying something!

We are preparing a website that archives all the posts and replies we collected during the study, email ttalk@media.mit.edu if you want to get more info.

Also, if you are willing to share with us what you think about this project, email us and fill out a survey (10-15 questions only). We will give you a \$5 ice cream coupon and our sincere gratitude as the compensation! Your ideas will be an important ingredient for the future development of T TALK!

Privacy?

We will not record any personally identifying information from your use of our service. If you post or reply with your mobile phone, your phone number will be removed after our server receives your message.