

Community Mirrors – Using public shared displays to move information “out of the box”

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Abstract. CommunityMirrors make information, e.g. suggestions from innovation management systems or personal content from social networking services which are usually hidden inside of information systems available in a new and innovative way. In semi-public places like lobbies or coffee corners people can see, touch and experience digital content and find information by chance without having to look for it explicitly. Intuitive presentation and interaction possibilities on large touch screens improve the visibility of information, the awareness about what is happening in the underlying systems and last but not least the appreciation for information providers. Through the integration into the user's social context CommunityMirrors support the communication between people standing in front of the screen and so finally enhance the motivation of information providers for the generation of new content.

The availability and modality of access to information – particularly to information in community support applications – can be considered as a major issue of today's widely used client/server systems. Ubiquitous Computing and Mobile Computing, i.e. new user interfaces that are integrated into the real world, can address the boundaries of the existing community support and offer possibilities for enlarging the reach of these applications.

As ubiquitous user interfaces our so-called “CommunityMirrors” provide information about people and their activities on wall-sized interactive screens. They are built using large touch screens or projections in public spaces showing

information that is otherwise hidden inside of enterprise information systems, social networking services or other community platforms. In contrast to existing solutions for (community) awareness support that mostly consist of single applications dealing with information gathering, storing and visualization we follow the idea of just connecting CommunityMirrors to existing platforms, and getting information “out of the box” (in which they are usually held). By providing easy to use and peripherally recognizable displays for existing systems as lightweight “mirrors” without additional databases, we are seeking to increase the visibility of the contained information and generate appreciation for the contributors. Thereby CommunityMirrors enhance the awareness of community members about each other in order to support interaction and matchmaking inside the community. Through the generation of serendipity this approach is especially helpful for information that is not searched deliberately, but profits a lot from being displayed and consumed peripherally. With the use of CommunityMirrors the process of searching is no longer guided by intention but intuition instead.

For the implementation of these hybrid systems different applications and information feeds have to be integrated. Based on this need we have constructed our so-called “CommunityMirror Framework”, a modular java toolset for building CommunityMirror applications. The modularity of the framework allows quick customization to the special needs of a given context and through the intentional absence of additional databases existing platforms can be very easily enhanced with CommunityMirrors – in a manner of speaking: “out of the box”.

More Information

See: <http://www.communitymirrors.de>

References

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