CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- Email overload
  - Ducheneaut, N., and V. Bellotti. Email as habitat: An exploration of embedded personal information management.
    - Getting more into CSCW (Computer-Supported Cooperative Work) research
      - Social component, but also task-oriented
    - Qualitative in terms of interviewing users about their email management strategies, mixed with quantitative in terms of analyzing folder structures, reporting correlations
      - 28 interviews — 10 at Xerox PARC, 12 at "MediaWorld", 6 at "LeadDesign"
    - Documents — artifacts tied to communications
    - Different communication patterns for managers
      - Documenting activity
      - Organizing meetings
    - Interviews with 20 participants, employees of Lotus
    - Analysis of email of 18 participants — cross-sectional data collection, not longitudinal
    - Significant differences between "frequent filers" and "infrequent or non-filers"
      - Suggestion that frequent filers have fewer “failed folders” (contain only a few items)

- Major points
  - Atheoretical — mostly an empirical look at a practical problem
    - One model for a CHI (Computer-Human Interaction) paper: "problem" (in the practical sense), observation or experiment, possible design solutions
  - Appropriating a communication tool for collaboration and information management, since those activities occur socially, in the locus of communication
  - Filtering and filing are difficult for users to manage
    - Work better if users organize folders based on easy-to-filter criteria, like sender rather than project
    - These are cognitively demanding tasks and require anticipation of future needs
    - This would be a much better application for tagging, because the problem here is the one-to-one relationship between messages and folders. Conceptually, users will probably want to label messages on a number of different dimensions.
      - If a message is from your boss concerning Alpha Project and asking you to file a report by next Thursday, do you file it in "boss," "alpha project," or "to do"?
    - Little use of search found in D&B — some found in W&S.
      - But is this because search is so slow vs. sorting? What if we have instant, as-you-type retrieval?
      - Functionality IS usability
  - Email is the home of both informational and conversational missives.
    - How should the interfaces for these differ?
  - Major suggestion: threading of conversations. Interesting that many mail clients now implement this.
    - Representing threads is a common problem among persistent media that track replies — email, newsgroups
    - Graphical approaches — Venolia on email, Fiore & Smith on newsgroups
  - Email as a habitat
    - Hard to separate communication from the objects of communication — documents, to-dos.
    - Quotes from Whittaker & Sidner perhaps best illustrate "email as a habitat"
CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- Online dating
    - GREAT piece
      - Methodologically rigorous
      - Strongly theoretically motivated
    - Large dating site, "Connect.com"
    - Semi-structured interviews of 34 users
      - Half male, half female
      - 3/4 urban (LA), 1/4 more rural (near Modesto)
      - From 25-70, most in 30s and 40s
      - Online dating experience 1 month to 5 years
      - "Reflective" of Connect.com's population, but not a random sample
  - Coding: labels for statements, thought units, etc.
  - Iterative refinement of coding scheme
    - Lots of work!
    - Taking "ground level" behaviors and thought processes and building categories and conceptual structures out of them

- Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
  - Reciprocal relationship between these technologies and larger culture
    - "Shape and are shaped by social practices"
    - "As Shah and Kesan point out, 'Defaults have a legitimating effect, because they carry information about what most people are expected to do.' "
  - Howard (2004): capacities and constraints
    - But also: circumvention — how do users maximize capacities and minimize constraints through strategic exploitation of system features?
  - Available search parameters
    - Fudging age to avoid natural cut-off points
    - How do searchable features influence perception?
    - What happens when you start checking all those boxes and setting all those parameters? Overspecification.
      - You can't do this in f2f interaction, e.g., at a party
      - Do users really know what they want?

- Self-presentation and perception
  - Tension between truth and self-enhancement
  - Strategic self-presentation — self-enhancement
    - Common misrepresentations: age, marital status, appearance
    - Dan Ariely — "Lie enough to get to coffee, but not so much that you don't get to sex."
    - Economy of exaggeration — Baseline level of exaggeration that users must meet just to measure up with other exaggerators?
    - What if it leads to disappointment when they meet offline?
  - Authenticity
    - More honesty because of "passing stranger" effect or sense of anonymity?
CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- cf. Hancock et al. in Week 10 — "The impact of communication technologies on lying behavior."
- Anticipated face-to-face interactions — cf. prisoner's dilemma
- Ideal selves — describing who you want to be
  - Tension with actual self
  - Personality matching in couples — Klohnen & Mendelsohn 1998
    - Assortative mating on actual-ideal self congruence (kind of like self-esteem)
    - Perceptions of partners no more accurate than chance (!) BUT perceptions of partners were more similar to own ideal self than chance would predict
- What about people who don't really care to take the relationship offline? Perhaps swings the balance toward self-enhancement or outright dishonesty (play?)
- Social Information Processing — "cognitive misers" — forming impressions based on limited available cues (Walther, Wallace)
- Findings
  - Attending to subtle, minute cues — both in presentation and perception
    - "Recursive" relationship between the cues you focus on in others and the cues you attend to in yourself
  - Sexual language
    - Woman who avoids it entirely
    - Man who uses it deliberately
  - Photos — what does your pose mean? (seated == overweight?)
  - What are some of the things that users give off in online dating?
    - Some of these are perceived to be given off by others, but then carefully tended to by self
      - Language/grammar mistakes — lack of education, lack of interest?
      - Time of writing — night owl? What if it's Saturday night?
      - Length of email — desperation?
      - Last login
    - "Foggy mirror" — "the gap between self-perceptions and the assessments made by others." — what if people aren't lying, but rather are telling the truth as they see it or would like it to be? It's an untruth only by some standards.
  - Credibility: What are the assessment signals? (from Donath 1999)
    - Demonstrating, not describing, characteristics
    - Photos. In a way... but how do you know the photo is unmodified, of the right person, relatively recent, etc.?
- Fiore & Donath. Homophily in online dating.
  - Homophily is common in the literature on attraction
  - Political views, morals, some kinds of personality traits, interests, even level of attractiveness (assortative mating — "7s" seek other "7s")
  - Background on data set ("the Site")
    - Generally rural and secondary urban areas
    - Almost all heterosexual
  - Consider pairs of communicating users (dyads)
    - Female initiation almost 25% more likely to get a response than male initiation (25.1 vs. 20.6 percent response rates)
CMC outline — 26 Sept 2006

- Some characteristics more "bounding" than others — that is, users are more likely to seek someone like themselves on that dimension.
- e.g., smokers might want to find other smokers more so than people with blue eyes want to find other people with blue eyes.

- Method
  - How many people would we expect to have the same educational level? Same preferences for having a child?
  - Suppose we randomly draw one man and one woman from the set of users. We have to consider that men and women might be differently distributed on these characteristics.
  - Example: physical build.
  - Compare actual percent of dyads who are the same on a given characteristic with the expected percent same on that characteristic.

- Findings
  - Values for ALL characteristics were the same in dyads more often than chance would predict
  - But some are much more likely

- Methodological notes
  - HUGE sample size ... makes statistical tests almost unnecessary.
    - Problem with this? You have to see large effects or have some a priori theory about why you might see an effect in order to accept it. Otherwise you are attaching meaning to small variations that, although statistically significant, are semantically opaque
  - Other issues?
    - Lack of nuance. What exactly are these users considering when they make their decisions?
    - Outcome information. How many of these dyads meet face-to-face? What do the successful f2f dyads have in common? Is it substantially different from these online dyads?