

# i214 Personas and scenarios

# The problem

How to **record, remember, convey**  
to others what was learned in data  
collection

How to **make what you know useful**  
in multidisciplinary teams

# Representation

No representation is an objective, unbiased report of what is real

“Representations of work [are] interpretations in the service of particular interests and purposes, created by actors specifically positioned with respect to the work represented.”

Suchman, *Making Work Visible*, p. 58

Representations create as much as they reflect the world.

# One solution: summarize data

By person

Narrative organization

By theme

**Highlights key points**

Thematically

Questions asked

Issues raised

## Example interview summary - by person

**Maya** 27, a freelance theater director and teacher in San Diego



Car – enables long residential stints around the country

Mobile phone in purse

Pocket diary in purse

Laptop has been left at her apartment

» works from her living room, from cafes, on the road, and in theater spaces

» arranges meetings over email and telephone

» long-term partnership with a theater in Mississippi

A frustrating Saturday:

Finally, Officer Jolly shows up – 45 minutes after his scheduled arrival. He stays for 5 minutes, then leaves. Maya later says that she will not work with Officer Jolly any more: "He's flaky. **He's an hour and a half late...Without calling? No.** Uh-uh. No." On her way out, Maya collars one of the students – the one who had called to cancel today's meeting at 8:30am that morning. She lectures the student on responsibility and respect, saying: "You needed to have called me earlier. **There wasn't anywhere you could have been this past week where you didn't have a phone.**"

## Example interview summary - by theme

### Environments cafes

#### Canvas Gallery Richmond

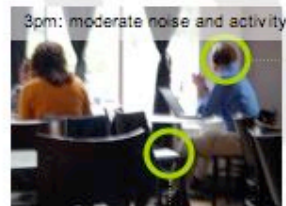


Mobile phone

Newspaper

Blackberry

Breakfast



Headphones block noise

Papers within reach on chair

Paper-only

#### Café Que Tal Mission

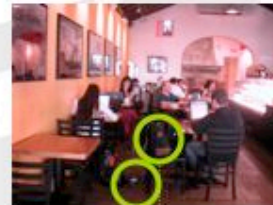


No nearby outlets

Students meeting



#### Coupa Café Palo Alto



Backpacks are stored on floors and chairs  
Power cords signal longterm use



Located by the door at waist level

# Configuring the User

Choices about

- who the user is

- which characteristics, actions, preferences matter

- what the user is like

Division of responsibility, capability, power  
between user and system.

# About scenarios and personas

**Scenarios** narratives of what people *do*

**Personas** descriptions of fictional characters intended to represent categories of users

Can be used to summarize and report qualitative findings

## Peter Collins

Peter Collins is a manager in a recruitment agency based in Dublin. He is 42 years old, and has been blind since an accident he had when he was twelve years old. This disability has made it difficult for Peter to achieve the degree of success he has had in his career, but he is a determined person who doesn't like to accept no for an answer. He has never compromised his own ambitions due to his disability, and doesn't see way anyone else should either.



Despite his busy work schedule, Peter is an active volunteer in a disability rights organisation called *Working Right*. This organisation serves to provide advice and support to disabled people seeking to gain employment or forward their careers. Peter's business experience gives him a good working knowledge of employment and disability rights law that is a valuable asset to the organisation.

For his own part, Peter is often outraged at how ignorance and prejudice prevent intelligent, hardworking disabled people from fulfilling their potential in the workforce. He feels very strongly that this can be changed by educating people and employers and by the correct legislative fillips from government. Peter feels he can make a real difference in this campaign. He makes every effort to be up to date with government initiatives regarding the disabled and constantly strives to be heard in the right places, representing the disabled whenever possible.

The web is a good way for Peter to keep up to date with the news and to track down or contact the people in the public and private sectors he wants to influence. Being blind, he uses a screen reader and is well practiced at navigating the web, although some sites try his patience or prove impossible to use despite his most determined efforts. Reports in PDF format are becoming increasingly common and are so difficult to use that he usually gives up if he encounters them. When at work, he has a fast Internet connection, but most of his voluntary work is done in the evenings using a dial-up connection from home. These slow connection speeds often compound the problems of inaccessible web design.

[http://iqcontent.com/publications/features/article\\_75/](http://iqcontent.com/publications/features/article_75/)



# Benefits

Clear and understandable **problem description** for stakeholders

**Concrete yet flexible**

Tentative working representations that **can be elaborated, revised.**

**Focus on consequences** of specific design decisions

**“Thought experiments”** to play out design & use possibilities

**Focus discussion on goals** to be achieved before design details

Useful for keeping the design team focused on **a common goal**

# Problems

Can also be used to perpetuate stereotypical, disempowering views of users

Often seen as fake or simplistic

How much research is necessary to do them 'right'?

Need full commitment to process

Making decisions based on real opinions trumps making decisions based on imaginary opinions.

...

I've never been a big believer in personas. They're artificial, abstract, and fictitious.

Jason Fried, 37Signals

<http://www.37signals.com/svn/posts/690-ask-37signals-personas>



UC Berkeley School of Information

Needs and Usability Assessment 11.06.08



# Personas

Fictional people with life stories, goals, tasks.

Instead of focusing on the task in a work context,  
focus on a whole person (performing a task)

Powerful, engaging – more interesting than  
scenarios?

(Grudin and Pruitt)

# Personas

**Realistic** personalize by including picture and name

**Demographic** \* consider age, gender, profession, marital status

**Personal** \* family, hobbies, likes, dislikes, background, expectations

**Technological** \* computer experience, connection speed, computer type

**Details** relevant to the site/project

**Purpose** reasons to visit your site such as goals and preferences

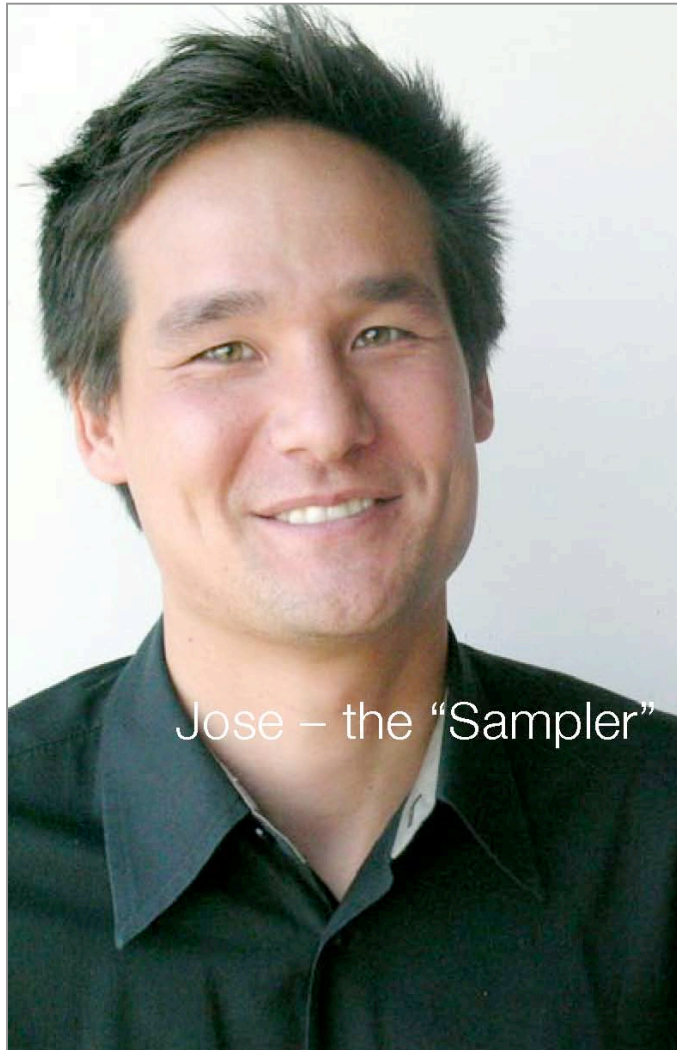
It is important to ensure **everyone on the team understands** the role and importance of each persona and that they review and approve them.

The personas are used to guide the creation of **task scenarios**.

*\* Relevance?*

[http://www.eias.ie/usability\\_service\\_persona\\_dev.php](http://www.eias.ie/usability_service_persona_dev.php)

## Example persona: IDEO presentation for Berkeley



The sampler is an active undergraduate who is interested in engaging with the broadest spectrum of campus engagements possible. Jose's extracurricular interests are often more engaging than the realities of his academic life. He dives into all of his interests with tremendous enthusiasm if not expertise.



As a sampler Jose's path takes him to all parts of the campus at all parts of the day. He may stop in for a piece of a lecture, move on to a multi-cultural pot-luck and then head back to the library to meet with his study group in a single night.

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# What are scenarios?

Stories about people carrying on a *well-defined* activity.

**Problem scenario** activity as it exists prior to technology

**Design scenario** describes new vision for interaction

Consist of

**Setting** *context of use*

**Actors** with high level goals, task goals, and plans

**Actions** (observable behavior)

**Events** (external actions produced by computer or other features of a setting)

**Evaluation** (mental activity interpreting situation)

**Plot** sequence of actions & events

*People's goals, plans, and understandings can change.*

# Types of scenarios

## Daily use

frequent actions

## Necessary use

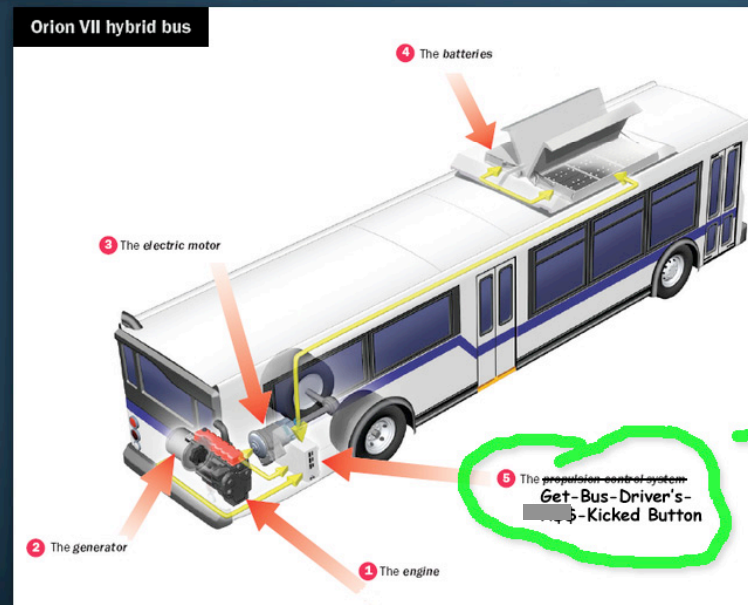
ALL actions that MUST be performed

## Edge case

unusual events

Cooper

### "Happy-Case Scenario" Design Example: The Orion VII Hybrid Bus



<http://uxarts.blogspot.com/2008/03/what-happens-when-your-design-only-for.html>



# Uses of scenarios and personas

## Problem scenarios & personas

**Develop and illustrate *assumptions*** about existing users and uses or *targeted* users and uses

**Summarize *empirical findings* about users, uses**

### **Purposes**

For design, communication **within design group**

“Configuring the user”

For **communication with users** (e.g., “is this realistic?”)

For **evaluation** of designs, prototypes (e.g., walk-throughs)

## Design scenarios

Present possible solutions, identify possible problems

For **communication with users** (e.g., “is this realistic?”)

For **evaluation** of designs, prototypes (e.g., walk-throughs)



# Where do scenarios and personas come from?

**Designers'** ideas and assumptions  
about how technology is used and by whom.

Engagement with **users**  
user and task analysis, contextual inquiry, ethnography.

**Designers' and/or users'** hypotheses  
about possible **future** activities, users.

And **surveys**

# Using surveys

“ The most eager and productive content creators break into three distinct groups:

**Power creators** are the Internet users who are most enthusiastic about content creating activities. They are young – their **average age is 25** – and they are more likely than other kinds of creators do things like use **instant messaging, play games**, and **download music**. And they are the most likely group to be **blogging**.

**Older creators** have an **average age of 58** and are experienced Internet users. They are **highly educated**, like **sharing pictures**, and are the most likely of the creator groups to have **built their own Web sites**. They are also the most likely to have used the Internet for **genealogical research**.

**Content omnivores** are among the heaviest overall users of the Internet. Most are **employed**. Most log on frequently and **spend considerable time online** doing a variety of activities. They are likely to have **broadband connections at home**. The **average age of this group is 40**”

[http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Content\\_Creation\\_Report.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Content_Creation_Report.pdf)



# Konstantin Stanislavsky on scenarios (not really)

“All action on the stage must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent, and real.”

When writing a scenario, consider:

What concrete event or desire prompts the activity it describes?

How do we know the activity or episode is completed?

Is a happy ending the best outcome?

Think about frameworks and needs:

What ‘needs’ are being fulfilled in this scenario? *Whose* ‘needs’?

How *exactly* does a scenario of the future improve upon the present?

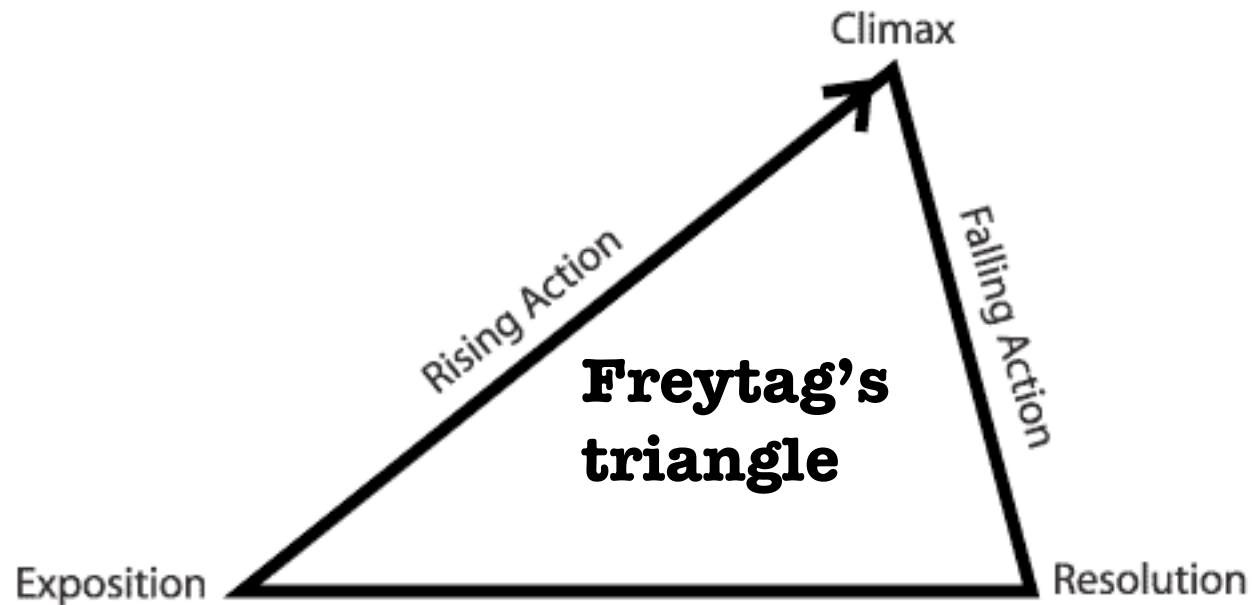
# Scenarios are representations, too

They're a lot like little plays, so we can look at play structure to learn about making scenarios

**Gustav Freytag**



1816-1895



# Illustrating action



After Angela disembarks, the airport map and service details are downloaded to her PDA via a wireless local network, using Bluetooth. Angela quickly finds her favorite coffee shop in the list and sees it is only a few minutes walk away.



The Airport Guide shows Angela exactly how to find the coffee shop, with handy landmarks indicated on her map.



Angela follows the directions the Airport Guide gives her, successfully finds the coffee shop and gets her latte.



Now Angela needs to find her way to the gate. She uses the Airport Guide to look up the gate for her connecting flight and then follows the directions it gives her.



Angela arrives at her gate with plenty of time to spare.



# Maps

## Scenario 1: Kim forgets milk and salad dressing at Jewel Osco



"My challenges are trying to remember what was on the other list that I forgot. And sadly yes, that IS typical for me. Also the challenge of trying to remember which apples I like."

### Checkout

Kim says she does not watch the screens displayed at the checkout counter



### Produce

Kim can't remember which apples she likes best and what the different taste characteristics are for each



### Forgotten Items

In Kim's case, there was no recall phase; she left without milk and dressing

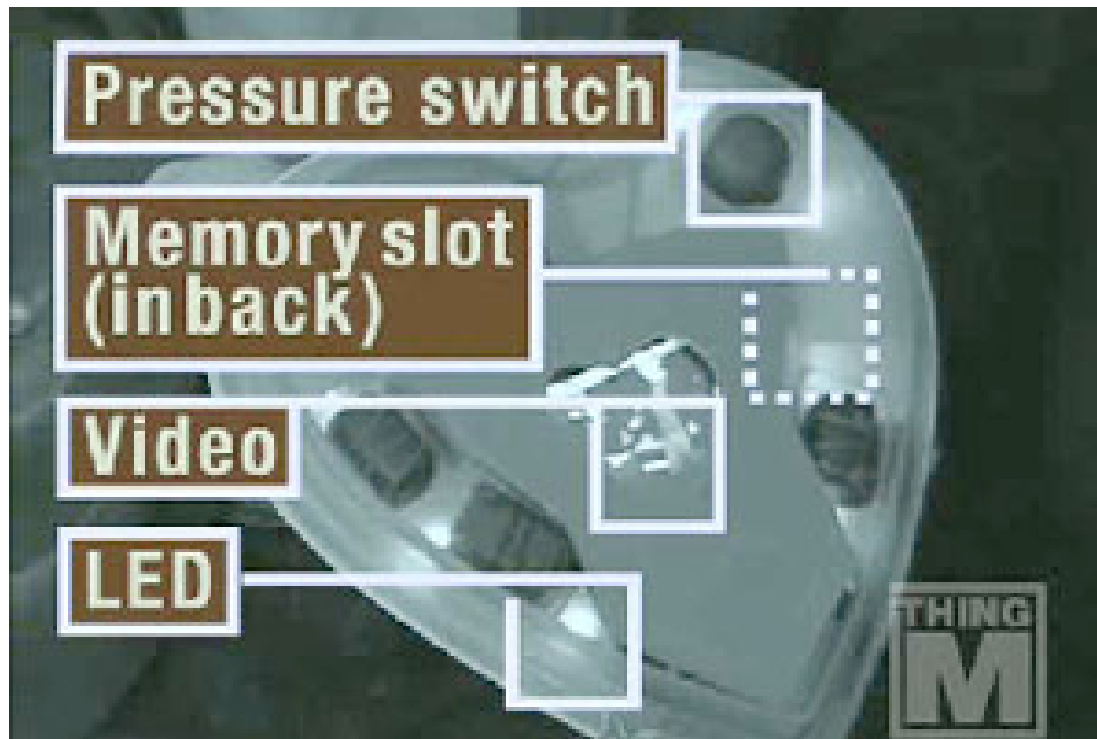


Kim doesn't notice or read any of the signs around her. When asked about the 'floor talkers' (advertisements on the floor next to products) in the laundry and pet food aisles, she says she has never noticed them

### Grocery Aisles



# Video scenarios/sketches



ThingM LoveM technology sketch <http://thingm.com/sketches/lovemch>

## Benefits of scenarios and personas

1. Easy way to summarize and make memorable complex info
2. More realistic than abstractions; more closely related to real world — if designed appropriately
3. The power of narrative: complex personalities and story lines in an easily-understood format
4. Focuses designers on people other than themselves
5. Focus on users' goals and activities rather than on design features
6. **A way to translate empirical findings into a form that is communicable and usable**



# Risk: substituting fiction for reality

1. Too much reliance on something not sufficiently empirical  
May seem deceptively empirical, “true”
2. Too few or too simple scenarios.  
Tendency to reduce complexity to one or a few actors, single story line.  
Caricatures, stereotypes.  
Confirming rather than challenging assumptions.  
*The real world is messy.*
3. Unrepresentative scenarios, actors.  
“Good” stories rather than representative ones.  
Stories that designers *think* are representative (but aren’t).
- 4. Can replace empirical info on actual tasks, conditions, actors, work practice with *assumptions***

## Other risks

Use of stereotypes; reinforcing stereotypes

“Peggy Grayhair, a 55-year-old nurse, is afraid to use her new office tablet PC.”

Inessential information that can be misleading or limiting

“Jane is a computer engineer who likes to cook and has a 5-year-old daughter; Jim is a computer engineer who spends his spare time re-building cars.”

Scenarios fit proposed technology rather than tech fitting personas

“Guy likes to watch videos on his 3G mobile phone while he walks across campus between classes, to keep up on his favorite situation comedies.”

Focusing on the technology, not the story

“She presses ##889 and presses Menu-OK, highlights Save Phone # and presses Menu OK, highlights Accessibility and presses Menu-OK, highlights TTY Off and presses Menu-OK. Kim then disconnects her TTY.”

Overreach: trying to solve too many problems at once

“Our augmented guitar lets the audience interact with street musicians in



# **Vs User journey over time**

Moment vs journey

Micro vs macro

# Let's make scenarios!

Context 1: Booking travel

Persona

Problem scenario