Fostering a Community of Innovation at the Intersection of Art and Technology in the Pacific Northwest

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ISEA2015 - International Symposium of Electronic Arts
Our mission is to explore new ways to leverage social media, open data, and collective action technologies to empower communities and foster community well-being.
THIRD PLACES

- Public places away from home and work
- Gathering places for conversation
- Essential for the emergence of communities and collective action

- At Third Place Technologies, exploring how to foster innovation communities of practice situated in place through online and offline interventions
MY BACKGROUND: INDUSTRY RESEARCH

- Specialize in social technologies
  - Social networks, community, identity, mobile social, social media, social data

- Early stage innovation
  - Extremely rapid R&D cycle
  - study, brainstorm, design, prototype, deploy, evaluate (repeat)

- Career
  - B.A. in Art and Psychology
  - PhD in Social Psychology from UW
  - 7 years Microsoft Research
    - Virtual Worlds, Social Computing, Community Technologies
  - 4 years startup
    - Waggle Labs (consulting), Pathable
  - 2 Years Yahoo!
  - 4 years FUSE Labs, Microsoft Research
  - < year Third Place Technologies
MY BACKGROUND: ART & TECH

- B.A., Art and Psychology
- Dorkbot “Overlord”
- Creative director, large scale, collaborative Burning Man installations
- Arts/tech curation/producer
  - People Doing Strange Things with Electricity
  - Winter Lights
  - Oscillate
- Interactive tech art installations
  - Sculptural installations, controllable lighting, social media
- Arts/tech Initiative
  - Art and Tech Workshop
  - Electric Sky
CROSSING BOUNDARIES = INNOVATION

Brokerage, **boundary spanning**, and leadership in open innovation communities

ART AND TECH: A GROWING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
with unique characteristics, and special needs

- **Technology-mediated**
  - digital media, big data, sensors, social media, computer generated, programmed, physical computing, robotics, information

- **Interactive, participatory**

- **Collaborative, interdisciplinary**
THE NORTHWEST

- Top region in the U.S. for “the creative class”
- Former mayor McGuinn, We Are the City of the Future
  
  http://www.geekwire.com/2012/mayor-mike-mcginn-ignite-talk/
- In 2012, Seattle rated #1 city for tech jobs by Forbes, including Microsoft, Amazon, Adobe, Xbox
  
  http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2012/05/17/the-best-cities-for-tech-jobs
- Creative tech large % of population, e.g., ranked #1 for Interactive Media:

  “The Interactive Media industry is a high tech industry that blends art and technology for both entertainment and more serious or practical applications. The core of the industry is the development of digital content, driven by talented individuals with expertise in software and artistic development, including computer game enthusiasts.”

  http://www.seakingwdc.org/pdf/other-reports/IMCompetitivenessStudyJan2010_Final%20(2).pdf
NORTHWEST ARTS/TECH COMMUNITY
many “stakeholders”, without a unified voice
FEATURES OF A THRIVING COMMUNITY

Communities of practice:

- Members know each other and regularly interact
- Members can articulate their common goals
- Members have a feeling of belonging
- Community has a shared understanding of best practices and repositories of shared artefacts
FEATURES OF A THRIVING COMMUNITY

Innovation community:

- Culture of openness to new ideas
- Collaboration across organizations and disciplines
- Diversity and inclusiveness

Fuse Labs Creative Week
Overall goal:
- Foster community of innovators; increasing awareness, collaboration, and collective efficacy toward common goals

Workshop goals:
- Map out the space in the NW
- Articulate collective agenda
- Take first concrete steps toward community building

Workshop structured as four hour focus group:
- Brief questionnaire
- Introductions
- Breakout brainstorming around emergent themes
- Discussion of next steps
Workshop was optimized for conversation.
PARTICIPANTS

- 41 participants, 23 female and 18 male, representing a diversity of roles and organizations
- Many wore multiple hats, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the community

**Figure 3. Participants Represented a Diversity of Roles**

**Figure 4. Attendees Included Many Types of Innovators**
MAPPING THE COMMUNITY

Network Map of Workshop Invitees (Pink), with their Roles (Orange), Interests (Blue), and Organizations (Green)
A lot of overlapping community organizations and events, but few devoted specifically to arts/tech.

People active in the space relied largely on email, mailing lists, and social media to keep up to date.
56% reported all projects were collaborative, 38% had mix of solitary and collaborative, median size of 3-5 people

People seek out diversity of skills in their collaborators, often combining traditional artistic skills (dance, painting) with technological skills

**Uses of Technology as a Creative Medium**

Programming (10), Microcontrollers/Arduino(3), electronics(3), graphic design(3), fabrication (2), dance(2), Kinect(1), computer science (1), 3D imaging, digital mapping (1), response technology (1), math(1), logic(1), code(1), sensors(1), cameras(1), rapid prototyping tools(1), film(2), choreography(1) lighting(1), sound/music (1), Photo/video editing(1), metal work(1), word working(1), processing(1), openFrameworks(1), social media(1), CAD digital fabrication(1), visualization(1), web/app(1), Robotics(1)
ARTICULATING COLLECTIVE GOALS

Community Goals, Ordered by Importance

1. More diversity in perspectives, across gender, race or SES: 6.28
3. Increased access to educational opportunities: 6.0
4. An improved sense of community and social support: 5.95
5. More funding, fund-raising, grants: 5.88
6. Increased access to collaborative spaces: 5.8
7. Increased access to specialized tools and machinery: 5.8
8. Better promotion of arts/tech related activities: 5.75
9. More networking events and conferences: 5.36
10. An online directory for artists/technologists: 4.92
11. Better online collaboration and knowledge sharing tools: 4.87

Importance of Community Goals, where 1 = Not at All, and 7 = Extremely So
COLLECTIVE GOALS: BRIDGING COMMUNITIES
COLLECTIVE GOALS:

MORE DIVERSITY
COLLECTIVE GOALS:
ACCESS TO LIFE-LONG EDUCATION
COLLECTIVE GOALS: SOCIAL IMPACT
COLLECTIVE GOALS: A GLOBAL SCALE
COLLECTIVE GOALS:
FINANCING TECHNOLOGY-BASED ART
COLLECTIVE GOALS: PHILOSOPHICAL SUBSTRATE AND CRITICAL VOICE
# CHALLENGES TO CROSSING THE DIVIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Technologist</th>
<th>Scientist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarce resources, in competitive environment</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of existing work, language, or best practices in each others’ fields</td>
<td>Collaboration occurring outside of work, so scarce time</td>
<td>Demands for disciplinary rigor inhibits play/exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern for legitimization and the dissolution of their brand as fine artists</td>
<td>No/little direct career benefit to successful collaboration</td>
<td>Often in environments with IP/non-compete constraints</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Distrust/fear of low respect for each others’ disciplines</td>
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*Third Place Technologies*
COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

- **Documentation**
  - Write up report
  - Design study, how to increase diversity in creative communities

- **Communication and collaboration channels**
  - Mailing list
  - Developing an online, searchable community directory of who’s who

- **Community building events**
  - Arts/tech Seattle meetups
  - Arts/tech focused Pecha Kucha
  - Electric Sky
    - An art & tech hackathon in June
  - 9Evenings E.A.T. 50 years later 2016
THE MAILING LIST

Survey says, still most important for “communication and sharing with community”

Email lists
Email (one-to-one)
Social networking sites
Mobile text messaging
Real-time doc editing
Phone calling
Online discussion boards
Calendar sharing systems
Website or blog
Video calling
Online file sharing
Online chat
Online membership...
Video sharing sites
Project management systems
Photo sharing sites
Other mobile messaging
Code sharing systems

Did you mean: arttech

Susie, Joseph (6)
christian petersen
jkopel
Ana, Steve (2)
ShellyShelly, Joseph (4)
Carey Christie
julia
Shelly, James, me (3)
Joseph, Moira, janet (3)
Ana, Rebecca (2)
noreply-spamdigest
Google, Ana (3)
anamani, ShellyS. (2)
jkopel
me

[ArtstechNW] Art / Tech / Geekwire App of the Year - every stud 12:46 pm
[ArtstechNW] Seattle's Digital Sweat Gallery's New Show - onlin Apr 23
[ArtstechNW] Interesting upcoming event - Groups *ArtstechNW Apr 23
[ArtstechNW] Art + Technology Connection - Electric Sky Art Ca Apr 13
[ArtstechNW] Electric Sky: an Art and Tech Weekend Campathc
[ArtstechNW] Women Culture Builders, you rock! - Groups *Arts
[ArtstechNW] Seattle Arts Tech Meetup this Weds: Art and the A
[ArtstechNW] Please send recommendations for adding to this li
[ArtstechNW] Anybody remember the NW Cyber Artists? - * [Artstech
[ArtstechNW] PKN SEA vol. 59: Art + Technology: Bridges & Thi

A Starry Night: “Blinky” Holiday party Sat, Dec 20th at my house - inspire
EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIAL NETWORKS (Spokin/BRINK NW)

- Crowd-sourced community network of people, organizations, events, projects
- Optimized for interdisciplinary, cross-organizational collaboration
- Content is based on community-sourced collaborative editing
- Integrated updates from blogs, Twitter, calendars, etc.
You are invited!

Please join us at Electric Sky, an art and tech weekend campathon June 26-28 bringing together artists, technologists, and other interested parties to collaboratively engage with the environment in new and exciting ways. This event is a cross between an artist retreat and a hackathon, with the goal of fostering interdisciplinary creativity and collaboration in an inspiring environment. It is being organized in conjunction with the Sky Art Week, including workshops, including this campathon, an art exhibit in the nearby town of Skykomish, and a wrap-up party. The registration fee is $25 for adults, and $15 for children.