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Comments for Week 2
Direct Manipulation vs. Interface Agents: a Debate link

The thing that struck me most on reading of this paper again (especially now having thought more intensively how agent-related technology can be used in my own research) is the fact that the speakers are speaking almost at cross-purposes. To me, at least half of Shneiderman's initial presentation is wasted talking about something that is almost not relevant to the actual discussion. He presents some of the classic examples of direct manipulation at work, but that is essentially like pointing out that SUV's climb mountains well while talking about their safety in an urban accident. I think a good point is made in the counterargument, i.e., that the purpose of an agent is not the same as that of a direct manipulation interface, but perhaps parallel to it. While direct manipulation is meant for situations where access to a large volume of data cannot be avoided, agents are effectively designed to shield the user from those volumes when it can be.

Question: It seems to me (or perhaps it's skewed perception) that AI and agent based technology has in some ways gone the same direction as hardware, in that it exists under many things, but is not mentioned any more (ie, Word does not call its misguided paperclip an agent). Why has this change taken place, and does this indicate, as is the case with AI, a sort of "backing off" on some of the goals that were originally professed for this technology?

The Wearable Remembrance Agent: A system for augmented memory link

This paper seems to provide an interesting blend of augmented reality, reality mining, and agent technology that I didn't see when working with AR more recently. Perhaps it's the cost of the segmentation of that frontier. It would be nice to see papers like that often, that remind us that the boundaries of the group are not where our work stops (though AI the group seems to be further along with that goal than a lot of others at the Media Lab).

Question: Is it that these sorts of "blended" projects come out less often these days, or has the technology simply become commodity, and so people just gloss over it and emphasize their own disciplines?