

When asked about what the world would be like in 2050, and specifically network culture, we had a very difficult time with this idea. The problem wasn't that we had no ideas about the future it was more about focusing on a single idea. The truth is, the future is very undetermined and although there are many people who have predicted the future quite accurately, the future is still unknown and spontaneous. Our idea about the networking future is actually not very far off from current research, in fact we may even see this idea introduced in the next 10 years as a low powered prototype. We believe that technology will be more integrated to the human body and will actually augment our reality to help us get through the day. This technology will come in the form of common eye-glasses (a piece of technology that already helps individuals with vision problems). These eye-glasses will have the same power, features and more, of a high powered desktop computer that exists in society today. They will be fully networked because by 2050 wireless internet will be virtually everywhere around the world and free. These glasses are ultimately controlled by the individual's mind thus making everything virtually hands-free and more convenient. We have named these eye-glasses the Meta Lens.

Current Ideas of the Future:

Admittedly, the idea of our Meta Lens were purely based on our imagination and we did no prior research. We were however, not very surprised that there have been people already working with wearable technologies. One of the most prominent figures in this research is a man by the name of Steve Mann, otherwise known as the human cyborg. As a forerunner to this technology, Mann has already introduced us with the idea of the Wearable Computer (Mann, 1998). Wearable Computing is defined by it's name, a computer that is worn by the user except with a few additional add-ons. Unlike normal computers, the Wearable Computer is always on and always with the user with commands that can be entered during daily activities (Mann, 1998). This idea of the Wearable Computer is the exact basis for our Meta Lens, it has all the aspects of a computer and more. The most important idea about Wearable Computing is the augmentation into daily life with the notion of it based on that computing is NOT the primary task and instead augments the intellect or the senses (Mann, 1998). The idea of the Meta Lens is to help augment reality while making things from finding a restaurant to paying for groceries a lot easier. Augmented Reality and Wearable Technology exist separately, the idea of this product is to combine the two.

The idea of the Meta Lens extends to the possible future of the internet and how far it will expand. The internet is already constantly expanding and has yet to slow down. It has become the main mode of communication between humans and we believe that it will stay that way. Programs created from the internet like MSN, Facebook and Skype are all used everyday by thousands of people all over the world just so they can keep in contact with friends and family. This is why the Meta Lens will be fully networked as this will be how virtually everyone will communicate. With the Meta Lens being fully networked we also believe that internet access will exist virtually everywhere and it will be free for everyone. Having internet 'everywhere' is already an established innovation with phone companies like Rogers and Bell selling a basic idea of this. Web terminals are already very common in public spaces, cafes, etc. (Kotz et al., 2000) and it is only a matter of time until this extends to a large area such as an entire city. Mobile technology has expanded greatly and will keep on expanding (Kotz et al., 2000) in the years to come which will lead to more areas of accessible free internet. The idea of free internet isn't as farfetched as some may think as some web terminals automatically offer free internet access (cafes, schools, etc.). Although the owner of said web terminal pays for the internet, this idea of free internet still exists. A major survey of leading technology thinkers believe that the internet will be a low-cost network of billions of devices by 2020 (BBS News). If in the next 10 years the cost of internet does decrease, the idea of free internet will not be too far off.

Current Technologies:

While attempting to find existing technology that co-relates to our Meta Lens, we went back to Steven Mann and his identification as a human cyborg. Steve Mann has not only hypothesized on the idea of wearable technology, but he himself has attempted to develop this technology. Mann's existential computer begun in 1980 as a clunky and awkward helmet and has slowly evolved into a complete multimedia computer, with cameras, microphones and earphones all built into an ordinary pair of eye-glasses (with some of the electronics in a small box which fits into his shirt pocket) (Mann, 1997). The input device for Mann's invention is in the form of an ordinary belt which uses microswitches (Mann, 1997). The Meta Lens will essentially be this but will only consist of the glasses and the features will be controlled with the mind.

Technological control with the mind may sound a bit farfetched to some but it has actually been in development and is actually being sold as a computer device. This link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn3QdtUOTrM&feature=related> is a video of a product called NeuroSky. NeuroSky reads brain waves and adapts those brain waves to certain reactions with technology. The drawback to this product (which is partly noticeable in the video) is that it relies entirely on human emotion and thus you have to concentrate on the technology itself. The Meta Lens is about augmenting reality and thus will not require a lot of effort to use. Augmented reality has already been applied to our mobile devices such as the iPhone but the task of constantly carrying the device out in front of you will get very annoying (Ross Dawson, Trends in Living Networks Blog). Meta Lens is constantly in front of the user and thus is not a hassle to use.

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Group Member Roles and Responsibilities

Konstantino Kapetaneas – Script/Storyboard, Project idea, Project creation using flash

Jonathan Seguin – Script/Storyboard, Project idea, Project elaborator, Information and opinion contributor

Winnie Kwan – Script/Storyboard, Current technology research and future ideas research

Evaluation

Our project, “The Meta Lens,” succeeds at communicating our predictions for the year 2050 with a degree of tangibility and fun for our audience, and is overall a project to be proud of. For one, our idea is already an extension of something already going through current development and thus it is not very far from reality. The project itself is interactive and it approaches the future from a humorous standpoint, utilizing a visual style that compliments the early 90s of video games which makes a nice environment for the user.

An area where our project could improve is the research with current technologies. Although the research done was helpful to our current understanding of existing technology most of the research, especially about Steve Mann is a bit outdated with articles from the late 1990s. Also when viewing the project there is already the assumption that the viewer already knows what our idea is about from the very start. Although the actual project does show what the glasses do and how they work the viewer might just see John as putting on a normal pair of glasses with numbers appearing everywhere. If we were to improve upon this in future iterations, we would establish the concept beforehand more explicitly. In the introduction we may include a brief description on the glasses and that they augment reality for the user, or perhaps show the world from outside of the protagonist's head first, tagging the glasses and explaining the kinds of functions they serve. After this has been established, we would return to his first-person perspective shortly after. We might also "pause" the presentation at points to explain what the glasses are actually doing — for example, in our movie scenario, we might explain that the glasses actually find John's contact's schedules (with permission) and find any gaps in time with their collective schedules and the movie show times. Also when each scenario has ended, instead of starting at the beginning again, we can go straight to the scenario menu to cut away from the repetitive nature. Nonetheless we feel that we did an exceptional job on our assignment, especially with the actual idea and project as a whole.