
Designing for Schadenfreude

(or, how to express well-being and see if you're boring people)

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Introduction

This position paper presents two studies of content not normally expressed in status updates—well-being and status feedback—and considers how they may be processed, valued and used for potential quality-of-life benefits in terms of personal and social reflection and awareness.

Do I Tweet Good? (poor grammar intentional) is a site investigating more nuanced forms of status feedback than current microblogging sites allow, towards understanding self-identity, reflection, and online perception.

Healthii is a tool for sharing physical and emotional well-being via status updates, investigating concepts of self-reflection and social awareness.

Together, these projects consider furthering the value of microblogging on two fronts: 1) refining the *online* personal/social networking experience, and 2) using the status update for enhancing the personal/social experience in the *offline* world, and considering how to leverage that online/offline split. We offer results from two different methods of study and target groups—one co-workers in an academic setting, the other followers on Twitter—to consider how microblogging can become more than just a communication medium if it facilitates these types of reflective practice.

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CHI 2010, April 10–15, 2010, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

ACM 978-1-60558-930-5/10/04.

Do I Tweet Good?: Nuanced Feedback for Microbloggers

Social networking sites take a rather optimistically positive view of status updates (for instance, Facebook's 'likes' and Twitter's 'favorites'), despite mainstream media, numerous parodies, and websites dedicated to the contrary (see sidebar). But what about the updates people don't like seeing? And why exactly do all those beret comments keep getting re-tweeted?

This project examines both a broader and deeper type of status feedback than is currently available. Through our website, doitweetgood.com, we allowed people to provide positive and negative feedback on status updates, and also explain *why* they liked or disliked those updates. By examining this feedback, we hope to give people potentially useful information for self-reflection (and the opportunity to tell others what they think of their tweeting), as well as analysis towards managing self-identity and perception online. We report on a one-week pilot study just wrapping up.

Methodology

A user signing up at doitweetgood.com is provided a unique URL to send to followers to anonymously rate 10 of his or her tweets. Users are also free to enter any Twitter username and start rating. The ratings page gives 3 options: negative ("meh"), neutral ("ok") and positive ("sweet!"). Once the user has made this choice, further options became available: checkboxes to describe *why* that rating was given (refined through pilot studies), and a free text area for other comments.

Media references, websites and parodies of status updates:

<http://tweetingtoohard.com/>
http://theoatmeal.com/comics/twiter_stop
http://current.com/items/89891774_twouble-with-twiters.htm
<http://www.newgrounds.com/portals/view/498203>
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/TECH/08/20/annoying.facebook.updaters/>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN2HAr0A12w>

Figure 1. A tweet and rating area from doitweetgood.com, currently rated positive (sweet!).

<http://twitpic.com/vbrg1> - Went clay pigeon shooting today. Such larks. F-f-f-freezing though.

Why? [this is optional]
 funny exciting useful informative

Don't like checkboxes? Say whatever you want here.

Meh. OK. Sweet!

Fig. 1 shows an example of a rating area. Users are direct messaged a private link to a page showing statistics of their rated tweets.

Initial Results

Though we have not yet completed our analysis of the (limited) dataset, there are some preliminary results emerging. There were 205 'likes' compared to 54 'dislikes'. We hypothesize a number of reasons for this: it is likely people only follow people they are interested in, users are friends with many of the people they follow and thus are likely to "play nice", and people are more comfortable giving positive feedback as is the current case with microblogs.

It was interesting to see some tweets rated as both liked and disliked. Such disagreement among followers suggests we might be able to categorize people as either disliking certain topics, or a certain type of tweet (personal, link, etc.) If you knew you weren't trying to appeal to everybody, perhaps you could be more engaging with a subset.

The most common reason for disliking a tweet was simply 'boring'. Some users reported more illuminating feedback, such as that followers did not like swearing in tweets, or mentioning people that they didn't know. One user was so excited by the service that she rated British actor Stephen Fry's tweets (for which our bot automatically sends a message to that Twitter username telling them they have been rated), hoping to spread the site further.

Do I Tweet Good: Conclusions and Future Work

We intend to take the current data and feedback from users to re-focus the site in order to attract more users,

obtain data more focused on specific hypotheses, and re-launch later in the year. To further understand the problems of online perception, we are considering using Mechanical Turk workers to rate tweets to broaden the perspective beyond current followers and friends.

Healthii: Self-Reflection and Social Awareness of Well-being Online

The simple act of asking how someone is feeling has complex importance, in phatic communication (social small talk) [8], medicine [3], and health-related quality of life [10]. Further, psychology research has suggested that personally, assessing subjective well-being may improve actual well-being [4], and socially, awareness of others' well-being may aid in collective welfare within a group [2].

In current online practice, we portray simple mood, expression or availability through emoticons or busy/away settings in instant messaging tools. Social networking encourages us to share what we are doing or thinking for a variety of uses and gratifications [7]. These practices have been shown to increase connectedness [9] and fulfill the role of social small talk [8]. However, a richer or more explicit sense of well-

being is rarely communicated. We might say "Walking from airport, train is delayed, late for meeting," but whether because of character limits, social convention, or an unwillingness to talk about

emotion [3] rarely add "I'm very busy, enjoying this work but starting to get stressed, and feel a bit under the weather."

Motivated by the aforementioned research suggesting that consideration of well-being has benefits both personally and within a group, we developed a tool that would let us explore whether enabling the expression of well-being status within social networking sites would be perceived as valuable. We briefly describe Healthii, our methodology for studying experience and affect, and our results.

How to use Healthii

Healthii uses a set of four discrete dimensions (busy, enjoyment, stress and health), and three finite values (not, quite, very) within those dimensions to reflect personal well-being. A person's well-being status can be represented by an avatar or a numeric code. Users can update their own state and view their past states, or view their friend group, as seen in Fig 1. Updating Healthii can be achieved through Facebook by radio button (see Fig. 2), or through Twitter. Updating via Twitter involved adding the hashtag #healthii, and then encoding one's state into the numerical representation, for instance #healthii(3222:CHI!) would represent 3=very busy, the three 2s for "usual" enjoyment, stress and health, and "CHI!" as the reason.

Methodology

We wished to understand whether the approach of discretised well-being would be used and valued, and in what way that value was experienced. Drawing from user experience and affective computing [6][5], we conducted a mixed methods study combining participatory design and a longitudinal study. Over a

Figure 2. (a) Facebook or desktop input of four well-being dimensions is via radio button, and represented by an avatar and numeric status. (b) An example update via Twitter.

not quite very

Busyness

Enjoyment

Stress

Health

not quite very

More?

Use this to clarify your status, e.g. busy because 'papers', or add an extra mood, e.g. 'tired' (max. 10 characters)

2222

finally tracking down this bug #healthii(1123:hunting)

five week period we met weekly with our ten participants to discuss experience, feedback and anecdotes, refined the design to ensure optimal experience, and ended with an individual survey.

Results

There were 358 updates over five weeks, mostly via Twitter. For a full discussion of results see [1], but we were encouraged to find participants reporting anecdotes of value in self-reflection at the time of update as well as over time, in group awareness, and a desire to continue using the tool.

Healthii: Conclusions and Future Work

With positive instances of reflection and awareness, there was a desire for richer representations of group state over time, something we are currently investigating with a public awareness wall in our lab.

Summary

The two projects presented examine aspects of status updates that aren't currently widely considered: status feedback for understanding online identity and perception, and well-being updates for value in self-reflection and social awareness.

At the workshop and in future work, we wish to explore the opportunities and implications of considering microblogging as more than a short burst information channel, with questions of how to get more *into* the value of a status update, as well as more value *out* of the channel.

By utilizing the reflection and awareness seen in these two projects, we hope to consider how to enhance the

personal/social experience *online*, as well as how technology may mediate an enhanced experience *offline*.

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