From: weiser@xerox.com
Subject: "Tangible Bits"
Date: January 27, 1997 2:34:10 AM EST
To: ishii@media.mit.edu, ullmer@media.mit.edu

Dear Hiroshi and Brygg,

I recently had a chance to read your CHI 97 paper "Tangible Bits"!
Great work! In my opinion this is the kind of work that will characterize the technological landscape in the twenty-first century.

I do have a request. As a former professor with tenure I well understand the need to distinguish one's work from all that comes before. And I very much appreciate your kind acknowledgement to me. Thanks! My request is that you help me stop the spread of misunderstanding of ubiquitous computing based simply on its name. Ubicomp was never just about making "computers" ubiquitous. It was always, like your work, about awakening computation mediation into the environment. The Tabs, Pads, and Boards were simply a way to break out of the mold while still engaging traditional computer scientists -- although sponsoring Natalie to work on the String turned out to be as important as any of them!

I tried to stop using ubiquitous computing because of its misleading implication, but it keeps cropping up again, so I keep returning to it as my umbrella name for lots of work, including Things That Think. Augmented reality was in use for awhile, but again got balkanized in meaning. I have started to talk about Calm Technology as a theme, but it better names a goal than a research project. "Tangible Bits" is very nice, and maybe could serve as an overall umbrella, but then you might lose it as the name of your research project! I think we would all benefit if we could have an allegiance to some one common thing, and define our differences within that.
But we struggle with what to call that allegiance.

Anyway, great work, and I hope to visit soon and have some good chats now that Xerox has joined the Media Lab (and I am one of the two official Xerox liaisons).

-mark
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