

21w.789 Communicating with Mobile Technology

Assignment 1: Generative Research Study

Due: 12 Feb, 2013

The goal of this assignment is to conduct a 1-week field study in your domain of interest. This study should provide key insights that will help in identifying possible applications and services to create for your semester project. This is a group assignment to be conducted with your teammates.

First, choose a domain of interest. This can be anything from Music, Photography, Video Sharing, Experience Sharing, Urban Computing, Mobile Persuasion, Health and Wellness, Fitness, Shopping, Alarm Clocks, Travel, Location Sharing, Social Computing, to any other topic area that interests you.

Second, enumerate your research questions. What do you need to know to understand how people approach your topic area today? Which aspects of the domain are the most interesting to you (e.g. learning about new music or how people select music to play for a given situation, etc.) How might a person's context (e.g. location, who is around them, weather, etc.) affect their interactions?

From your research questions, choose the methods most appropriate to answer them. Choose (multiple) from:

- Observation: Watching people perform tasks in your domain of interest
- Home/Site Tours: Having people guide you through their places of interaction in your topic area.
- Diary Logging: Having people keep a log of times/places/situations where they do something you are interested in.
- Interviews: Asking people about specific recent times they did something in your domain area. Understanding details of those interactions. (You likely want to use this method in all cases, likely in combination with one of the above.)

Perform a study with 3-5 people using the method(s) you have selected. While doing so, take notes on index cards or post-it notes, noting the exact quotes of what your participants say or direct observations of what they are doing. Do not try to analyze what they are saying or doing, just write exactly what is said or done (often it's easier to audio/video record interviews and write these notes later to get the quotes properly transcribed).

Come to class next week with at least 75 notes from this study on separate cards or post-its. We'll teach methods for analyzing these notes and arriving at new concept ideas based in the data. Please do not discuss potential application ideas with your team or what you think the data might be telling you. This will be the focus of the next class.