Remembering Rob Kling

AOiR Toronto, October 2003
Communication Regimes and Digital Images

Understanding communication regimes, digital photography and the internet

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Overview of project

- Broadly: IT and Social Change
- Specifically: Changes in communication regimes with the introduction and adoption of digital photography and internet transmission of images into communication regimes with existing systems based on “wet” photographic technologies
Social Informatics

Social informatics (SI) is the systematic, interdisciplinary study of the design, uses and consequences of information technologies (IT) that takes into account their interaction with institutional and cultural contexts. Thus, it is the study of the social aspects of computers, telecommunications, and related technologies, and examines issues such as the ways that IT shape organizational and social relations, or the ways in which social forces influence the use and design of IT.

- Kling 2001, Encyclopedia of LIS
Manipulation of Photographs
The Case of the Cottingly Fairies
Manipulation of Photographs

- Photojournalism
Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights

The White House makes sure he's always ready for his close-up.
LA Times photographer Brian Walski was fired for this manipulated image in April 2003. The soldier and the group of people were taken in different shots.

San Diego’s North County Times issued an apology for removing the name of their competing newspaper from this image in July 2003.
Manipulation of Photographs

- Photojournalism
- Investigators / Police Forensic Photography
Fair and reasonably accurate representation

FIGURE 1: The photo on the left had an inaccurate white balance setting, causing excessive blueness. This is not the way I saw it. A one-click correction with Nikon Editor makes it a “fair and reasonably accurate representation” of what I saw.

FIGURE 2: Modifying the daytime photo on the left to make it appear as if it were taken at dusk is an interesting creative touch, but too much alteration for an evidence photo. It is no longer a “fair and accurate representation” of what I saw.

The social and the technical are not meaningfully separable.

Theories of social behavior can and should influence technical design choices.

System participants are embedded in multiple, overlapping, and non-technologically mediated social relationships, and therefore may have multiple, often conflicting, commitments.

Sustainability and routine operations are critical, and must play a key role in determining design.

- Kling et. al., 2003
## Tensions in Digital Image Manipulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tension (either to manipulate [+] or not to manipulate [-])</th>
<th>Photojournalism</th>
<th>Evidence Photography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Desire for ‘fame’ or widespread publication of image</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Technical manipulations to better convey what photographer saw</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Deadline pressures to get the right image quickly</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Possibly, but not in most cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strong regime pressure not to manipulate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fear of loss of job / career</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stigma within profession if uncovered</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Tensions in Digital Image Manipulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tension (either to manipulate [+ ] or not to manipulate [- ])</th>
<th>Artists</th>
<th>Family / Hobbyists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ Desire for ‘fame’ or widespread publication of image</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Technical manipulations to better convey what photographer saw</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Possibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Deadline pressures to get the right image quickly</td>
<td>Not usually</td>
<td>Not usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strong regime pressure not to manipulate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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Socio-Technical Interaction Network (STIN) Framework

- What are the pressures and impediments to adopting digital techniques?
- Who is newly involved when communication regimes become digital?
- Which formerly involved actors become excluded?
- What conflicts arise?
STIN Framework (cont.)

- How do changes in involved actors change:
  - The process?
  - The types of communications?
- How are outside actors affected?
- Regarding alteration of photographs:
  - What are the pressures to manipulate?
  - What are the impediments?
STIN Framework (cont.)

- Elements of STIN Analysis
  - Social construction of technology (SCOT)
  - Actor-network theory (ANT)
  - Deeply embedded social relationships
  - Actors embedded within disciplinary matrices
References

