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# Entertainment Media at Home – Looking at the Social Aspects

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**Introduction**

Historically, experiences of computing and computational devices themselves were largely restricted to the office. In recent years, however, there has been a proliferation of other kinds of domains and usage practices. From forms of public and urban computing, virtual/real gaming, mobile handsets, wireless infrastructure and even the ever present visions of smart-homes and digital lifestyles, increasing computational technologies and experiences thereof have found their ways into new domains. These nascent ubiquitous computing technologies have brought with them the potential for remarkable change. However, these new domains also suggest new challenges and new dilemmas. For instance, any exploration of the role of new information and communications technologies in the home highlight some of the critical disconnections between the ways in which such technologies are produced and the ways in which they are consumed, naturalized and rejected. Clearly, the home is far too broad a topic for a single

workshop, so we propose to narrow our focus to entertainment technologies. In so doing, we hope to unpack some of the underlying assumptions, success metrics and design decisions that are mobilized when the home becomes a site for computational intervention. In particular, we are interested in exploring the ways in which some of the particular cultural valences of work and productivity are applied to domestic arenas. The discourses around efficiency are a strong case in point.

The eliding of home to efficiency is often attributed to Taylor's principles of scientific management. In the early twentieth-century, his principals were applied by American domestic economists, in an attempt to rationalize production and labor within the home – that is, to make the home more like the factory. Notions about time management, mechanization, task simplification and automation have been influential into the design of domestic technology ever since. In this workshop, we want to explore counter-narratives of domestic technology consumption – ones which depart from efficiency and its narrative echoes. While the notion of the home as site of leisure is well rehearsed terrain in some social sciences disciplines and certainly finds strong resonances in the productions of new technologies for the home, we feel this topic merits further study.

Researchers like Bell, Kaye, and Gaver have challenged the appropriateness of a single-minded focus on efficiency [1]. Bell and Kaye for example encourage designers to value experience over efficiency [2002], whilst, Gaver's work argues a similar point with his call to develop technology for *ludic* activities [2]. This argument is based on Huizinga's notion that humans are playful creatures - *homo ludens*. Gaver

writes, "There is a danger that as technology moves from the office into our homes, it will bring along with it workplace values such as efficiency and productivity at the expense of other possibilities. People do not just pursue tasks and solve problems, they also explore, wonder, love, worship, and waste time" [2]. In this workshop, we propose to provide a critical reading of entertainment technologies within the home.

The home is increasingly being filled with entertainment technologies to allow for the watching of TV and movies, listening to music, and playing of games. These include more mature technologies like CD players, VCRs, and DVDs and range to the latest game PCs and consoles, Personal Video Recorders (PVRs like TiVo or Sky+), iPods, video-on-demand, and software to store and categorize home media. In addition to these mainstream technologies we also wish to include other novel entertainment technologies such as robotic pets, interactive furniture, or forms of domestic social networking.

As these forms of entertainment technology continue to multiply we need to remember that each of these technologies are situated into existing households. The home network might be used for entertainment, but as we learned in "The Work to Make the Home Network Work", technologies require set-up and maintenance [3]; this would then hold true also for game systems and stereo components. The addition of technologies into the home changes domestic divisions of labor, distribution of roles and responsibilities and the relationships between family members and the outside world. The goal of this workshop is to discuss how the introduction of entertainment technologies into the home is changing the dynamics of family life, and there larger social

effect. For instance, what are the social consequences of the increased option for time-shifting or creating of individual entertainment? How are family dynamics changing according to new technologies? These are some of the significant questions that we propose to discuss in this workshop.

These questions remain largely unaddressed in the literature. We see a number of ethnographic studies looking at usage of domestic technologies, including work on TVs [4] and set-top boxes [5], PC use [6], music sharing by iTunes [7]. While there was work done looking at the consequences of the PC to society and family life [8,6] we are not seeing comparable work done looking at the consequences of new entertainment technologies on family and broader social structures. In addressing these issues we wish to bring in a range of work by others. Relevant work includes; Blythe and Monk and Schwartz-Cowan discussions of gender divide surrounding domestic work [9], and Livingston's work on gendered differences in terms of what features we look for in new technology.

While entertainment media has been addressed in some of these studies, there is still an eminent need for addressing home media technologies in the light of new development and ubiquitous computing technologies growing into our homes. For example, although we have lived with TV for over half a century, new recording and replaying devices such as personal video recorders challenge the notion of the TV media life cycle. Furthermore, home networks are increasing, wireless as well as wired, giving rise to the distribution of media to all rooms in the home. Of, course our focus is not just on PVRs but the broader category of entertainment technologies each of which change the homes into which they are situated. The same holds of

music, games and other media. By organizing this workshop we aim to allow researchers to develop a better understanding the dynamics of home and family life into which these technologies are situated.

### **Goals of the workshop**

In light of this surge of interest in entertainment technologies in the home there is a significant need to discuss how they relate to social structures. By organizing this workshop we hope to encourage HCI research in this area and promote better design for home media technologies. The workshop aims to bring together both researchers and designers of home media technologies, specifically with an interest in future development of home media. We hope to attract participants with ongoing or future plans for research and development of home media technologies, who will participate actively in the workshop. In particular we have the following aims:

1. Ethnographic and other studies of new and existing entertainment technologies, or studies of home life that are applicable to entertainment technology
2. Sociology and anthropology research looking at technology use and adoption terms of gender, family roles, as well as regional or racial differences
3. Discussions of social and cultural implications of new media, including the consequences of time shifting, profiling, and individually tailored media
4. Discussions of how these issues vary across cultures to ensure the output of this workshop is applicable to domestic technology researchers across the world

### **Format**

We hope to attract anthropologists, sociologists, designers, and socially inclined technologists to get a variety of views voiced during the workshop. Since the workshop will be mainly discussion, we hope to

generate interesting discussion between participants with different approaches and viewpoints. The workshop day will be divided into introduction, small and large group discussion. The morning session will focus on understanding the literature and current methodological challenges that exist designing entertainment technology for the home. The afternoon session will discuss aspects of the relationships between these new entertainment technologies and social issues. Topics that are relevant for the workshop include but are not limited to:

- Discuss the methodological challenges of gathering data on home appliance use and strategies for these to be avoided
- Discuss the current research being done in the area of entertainment technologies. Identify strengths and weakness of the current research, and areas where additional research is required.
- Discuss the sociology and anthropology research looking at technology use and adoption terms of gender, family roles, as well as in terms of regional, cultural or racial differences
- Discuss how new media technologies are affecting family structures and gender roles within the home.
- Discuss how these issue vary across cultures to ensure the output of this workshop is applicable to domestic technology researchers across the world
- Discuss the social and cultural implications of new media, including the consequences of time shifting, profiling, and individually tailored media

Finally, we aim to bring together people with similar interests and foster future collaboration between participants, for in example in the shape of a special journal issue of home media technologies.

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