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Vision Statement

What world problem are you concerned about?

I'm worried about the barriers that our interconnected devices are erecting. It is intensely easy to get both lost behind a screen and talk with people with no regard to physicality or distance. Our own smartphones lack the simple personal effectiveness of childhood walkie-talkies, which guarantee a modicum of proximity. We as a species are in danger of losing our lives and experiences behind the glow of monitors.

Why is this problem important?

We risk stagnating as a species. Humanity needs contact to survive. Increasing contact increases humanity.

What aspect of this problem seems particularly important to you?

I am terrible with names, introducing myself, recognizing people I come in contact with peripherally.

How could a new software system help to solve this aspect of the problem?

Many of our more modern cellphones have a built-in short range radio of sufficient complexity: Wi-Fi. I posit this can be leveraged to passively collect information regarding people you come into repeated contact, but do not know. Only a small amount of information needs to be gathered (a MAC address or some other unique identifier) to build a list or table of people we commonly are in proximity with. In addition, this can be used to identify other non-cellphone devices such as access points, laptops, tablets, etc. The more frequent and closer proximity can be used to filter up these encounters, and perhaps give an avenue for social interaction. This could be used to in large crowds to do a sort of "Hotter/Colder" type of proximity detection. Kids could know when dads are pulling up in the driveway. Friends could use this to find each other at large concerts. Repeated contact is the key.

A project by the MIT Media Lab used older Bluetooth enabled cellphones, but the range is so limited with BT. The phones lacked processing power.

Why do you think that this idea will make a big impact on the world?

I think it will make small impacts on people in a personal way. Which sometimes is all you need to make things better.

What sources did you use in writing this Vision Statement?

<http://reality.media.mit.edu/serendipity.php>

<http://www.kismetwireless.net/>