



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

18th September 2007

History of Participant Interaction Messaging

1979 to 1995

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to note the different stages in the development of messaging techniques between participants within larger conferences, notably **prior** to subsequent possibilities of interactive computer facilities. Whilst developments in computer technology now offer many new facilities, especially groupware and community intelligence facilities, these early experiments raised issues which remain unresolved.

Of particular interest is how participant involvement can be elicited and sustained -- especially in the case of people with different cultural and technical backgrounds. A detailed account is provided by Nadia McLaren (*Participant Interaction Messaging: manual and guidelines*, 1992).

Of perhaps greatest interest is how insights can be successfully captured and juxtaposed, particularly if the volume of communications of secondary significance is high. Such questions relate to the issue of how such communications can enable larger groups to self-organize in a manner which is subsequently rated as critical to the transformative value of the event.

It is appropriate to note that despite the experiments listed below, participant interaction remains a challenge for meeting organizers who may perceive it as a threat to a pattern of relationships they prefer to impose -- notably to give prominence to themes and speakers decided in advance, rather than in response to insights emerging during the course of the event. So whilst the use of mobile phones and laptops by participants is now a common feature of large conferences, the process whereby participants interact without the mediation of the organizers or their facilitators remains undeveloped. Participants continue to leave meetings without encountering the people they would have found to be most beneficial and perhaps the justification for their investment in long-distance travel.

Although the very first experiment noted below enabled participants to recognize their position on a thematic map in relation to the interests of other participants on the same map, such visualizations have not been explored by conference organizers or facilitators -- despite the technology now available (see *Complementary Knowledge Analysis / Mapping Process*, 2006).

Sequence of experiments (in date order)

Society for General Systems Research: International meeting (London, 20-24 August 1979)

- Set up by Stafford Beer and Gordon Pask as a succession of participant input rounds processed and mapped using cluster analysis techniques.
- Participants: ca. 250
- Language: English only
- Input: typescript
- Results written up by Anthony Judge (*Metaconferencing: discovering people / viewpoint networks in conferences*, 1980)

United Nations Environment Programme, Information retrieval - Infoterra Meeting (Moscow, 2-5 October 1979)

- Arranged by Ashok Khosla and coordinated by Anthony Judge
- Participants: ca. 150
- Title: *Interaction Bulletin*.
- Issues: 7. Messages:
- Language: English, French, Spanish, Russian translations
- Input: typescript

Findhorn Community: Annual conference (Findhorn, October 1979)

- Coordinated by Anthony Judge
- Title: *Participant Interaction Bulletin (PIP)*
- Participants: ca. 200

- Language: English
- Issues: 8. Messages: 185
- Input: typescript

United Nations University (Goals, Processes and Indicators of Development Project): Networking Sub-Project Meeting (Brussels, May 1979)

- Coordinated by Anthony Judge
- Experimental use of e-mail input into the EIES system
- Language: English
- Participants: ca 20
- Input: onto e-mail conference

Union of International Associations: World Forum of Transnational Associations (Brussels, June 1980)

- Coordinated by Anthony Judge and Eyvind Tew
- Title: *Interaction Bulletin*
- Issues: 8. Messages: ca. 100
- Language: English, French
- Participants: ca. 250
- Related to a computer processing meta-conference exercise
- Input: typescript
- Description by Anthony Judge (*Metaconferencing possibilities: discovering people / viewpoint networks in conferences*, 1981)

Findhorn Community: Annual Conference (Findhorn, October 1980)

- Title: *PIP*
- Participants: ca. 200
- Language: English
- Issues: Messages:
- Input: onto an Apple system

International NGO Conference: The World We Choose (Paris, 17-20 December 1991)

- Coordinated by Robert Pollard
- Title: *Da Zi Bao*
- Issues:
- Participants: ca. 500
- Input: by PC notebook into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software

UNCED Preparatory Conference (New York, March 1992)

- Coordinated by Robert Pollard, with support from the French government through the Environment Liaison Centre International
- Title: *Da Zi Bao*
- Issues: Messages:
- Participants:
- Input: by PC notebook into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software

Earth Summit: Inter-sectoral Dialogue (Rio de Janeiro, 1-2 June 1992)

- Coordinated by Nadia McLaren, with assistance of Anthony Judge
- Title: *Da Zi Bao ISD*
- Issues: 12. Messages:
- Participants: ca. 100
- Language: English only
- Input: by PC notebook into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software

Earth Summit: Global Forum (Rio de Janeiro, 3-12 June 1992)

- Coordinated by Robert Pollard; English edition by Nadia McLaren
- Title: *Da Zi Bao*
- Issues: Messages:
- Participants: ca. 20,000
- Languages: English, French, Spanish, Portugese
- Input: via 8 a network of terminals into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software
- Description of process by Nadia McLaren (*Participant Interaction Messaging: manual and guidelines*, 1992)

World Futures Studies Federation: Congress (Turku, Finland, September 1993)

- Coordinated by Nadia McLaren, assisted by Jon Jenkins
- Title: *Viewsletter*
- Issues: Messages:
- Participants: ca. 400

- Languages: English only
- Input: via PC notebooks into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software

Parliament of the World's Religions (Chicago, September 1993)

- Coordinated by Nadia McLaren, assisted by Anthony Judge and Robert Pollard
- Title: *Your Voice* a participant interaction messaging system based on 50-word messages supplied by participants whether through "suggestion boxes" or as part of a questionnaire. The final reflections from the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders were also incorporated into the final issues of *Your Voice* -- indeed it was the only vehicle for them:
 - 12 issues of *Your Voice*; on PDF; or conclusions only *Reflections from the Assembly of Religious Leaders*
 - a more useful set of PDFs was produced by Robert Pollard (*Your Voice - Parliament of the People*)
 - Using a brilliant "Participant Interaction Messaging" design prepared by Nadia McLaren, a set of twelve communal newsletters entitled *Your Voice* was produced on-site, an average of two per day. Participants-at-large were able to contribute thoughts, opinions, and responses to proceedings via messages written by hand on "post-it" notes, or given verbally to newsletter managers. ... The newsletter team paved a well-trod path between the Palmer House and a local copy facility to keep stacks of newsletters supplied to participants, free of charge.... Using this same interactive messaging system on the second day of the Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders (the only time allotted during the Parliament for active conversation among leaders) the twelfth issue of *Your Voice* was dedicated exclusively to the ideas of these respected guests. Ironically, *Your Voice* #12 became the only substantive record expressing the views generated freely and spontaneously by the Assembly itself. (Wayne Teasdale and George Cairns, *The Community of Religions: voices and images of the Parliament of the World's Religion*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016, pp. 52-53)
- Issues: 12.
- Participants: 6,000
- Input: via notebooks into Robert Pollard's *Da Zi Bao* software
- Description of the event by Anthony Judge, with reference to the process (*Learnings for the Future of Inter-Faith Dialogue*, 1993)

UNESCO, Division of Philosophy: Rencontres Philosophiques: What do we not know? (Paris, 14-17 March 1995)

- Coordinated by Jeanne Gruson
- Title: *Tribune*
- Issues: 11. Messages: 142
- Participants: 400
- Languages: English or French
- Input: using word-processing software

International Peace University: Open Forum (Berlin, 3-30 September 1995)

- Coordinated by Heiner Benking and Farah Lenser
- Title: *Da Zi Bao: Views-letter*
- Issues: Messages
- Participants:
- Languages: German and English
- Input: onto word-processing software



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