

Habitat

a range of connected furniture for awareness of daily routines and rhythms between distant family members

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In family relationships, awareness of daily cycles and routines (or more importantly, deviation from these patterns) is particularly important. This awareness helps to convey reassurance and a sense of context for communication, and it provides a means for background synchronization of rhythms between those in the bond. Habitat explores the potential of using household furniture as a network of distributed ambient display appliances for conveying this kind of awareness between family members separated by a distance.



The current Habitat system comprises two geographically separate, networked café or kitchen tables. Each table integrates a computer, an ISO-standard RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) tag reader, and a video projector.

Unique RFID tags are embedded in objects typically placed on kitchen tables at each site, such as cups, plates, books, and so on. Placing these items on the table causes messages to be sent to the remote table, which displays a graphical representation of the objects. The system operates in both directions, conveying impressions of presence and activity around the tables at each site.

When items are removed, their representations at the far end fade away slowly, enabling in a single glance an impression of the recent history of events and overall daily rhythms around the far table. The system is designed to operate reliably 24 hours a day and can handle multiple tagged objects simultaneously at each site.



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