

Design Domain

Proposal for 2017-2018

Information as Human

Mara I. Childs
Interaction Design Year III
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2017–2018 Theme Bodies
Identities
Action
Engagement

Introduction

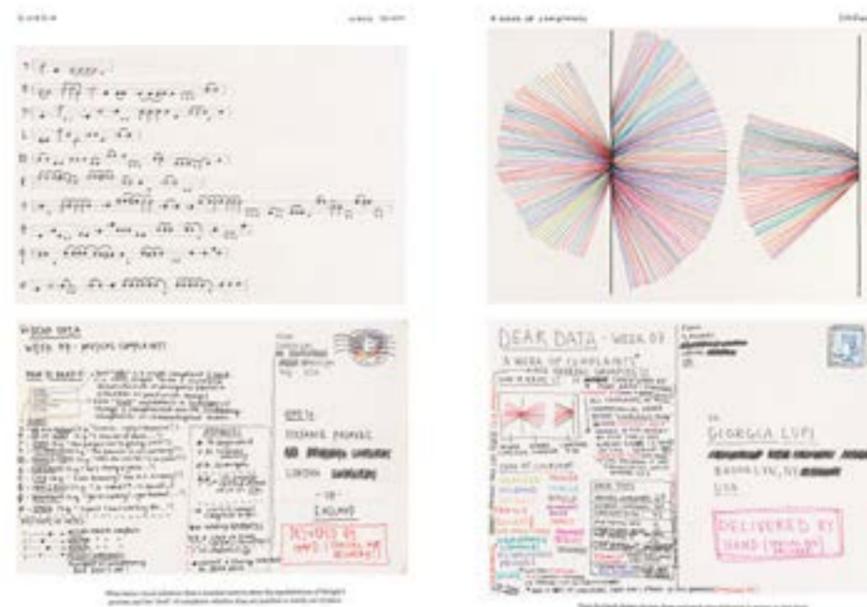
What is information and how does it play a role in human identity? Is a human identity information in itself and is information alone a human identity? Who holds the authority to define one's own identity? *Information as Human* explores the marriage between the delicate everyday experience and robust potential of data visualisation to depersonalize the personal identity born from metrics of a living being.

Inspiration

After my initial exploration gave a cursory analysis of Bodies, Identities, Action, and Engagement, I found that I kept coming back to this obsession I have with data collection and visualisation, both analog and programmatic, and employing vulnerability to expose the human experience. Considering the Identities part of BIAE, I thought immediately of two projects that have recently left a strong impression on me. *Dear Data* by Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec delightfully utilizes data drawing to show quotidian and idiosyncratic aspects of life as meaningful information. *Forty Days of Dating* by Jessica Walsh and Timothy Goodman is a social experiment that demonstrates incredible honesty and is quite revealing in many ways. Both share a voyeuristic curiosity for others' lives and experiences that exemplify identity.

Links

<http://www.dear-data.com/theproject>
<http://fortydaysofdating.com/>



Dear Data is an analog data drawing project consisting of weekly correspondence between Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec chronicling their own personal life data.



DAY TWENTY-EIGHT / LETTERING BY JOE HOLLIER

Jessica Walsh

Did you see Timothy today?
Yep!

What did y'all do together?

Tim met me near my office for a quick coffee at a place called Bats. I have a date packed with meetings, and I really

Forty Days of Dating is a project that was carried out by New York-based designers Jessica Walsh and Timothy Goodman in which they maintained and recorded a synthetic relationship.

“It is ironic that the term ‘information’ is itself ambiguous and used in different ways...”

as-thing
as-knowledge
as-process

Michael Buckland is an emeritus professor at the UC Berkeley School of Information. The following includes excerpts from the abstract from his paper, *Information as thing*, as well as paraphrased pieces of his contentions that serve a purpose in this project.

What is the difference between information and data?

Three meanings of "information" are distinguished: "Information-as-process"; "information-as-knowledge"; and "information-as-thing", the attributive use of "information" to denote things regarded as informative. Types of information are classified as data, commonly on a computer; text and documents; and objects. Belkin & Robertson (1976), limited information to what is intentionally told: "Information takes at least two persons: one who tells (by speaking, writing, imprinting, signally) and one who listens, reads, watches." Though nobody observes me at every point of every day, if I'm to take on the role of the former and presuming there is somebody to assume the role of the latter, does my identity when reduced to data become information? Can I become both the former and the latter and therefore validate my own identity as information if nobody else can corroborate said data?

“The young people of today think of nothing but themselves.”

Peter Hermit
ca. 1274

millennial (*noun*) — a person reaching young adulthood in the early 21st century known for being lazy and entitled in the workplace, buying avocado toast in lieu of becoming homeowners, and killing industries from paper napkins to golf to marriage.

Why am I making this self-centric?

While millennials are currently being blamed for the downfall of everything, I will perpetuate the millennial stereotype of being self-centered and embrace narcissism for the purpose of this project. Simply put, it is easiest to gather data about myself and not only do I know exactly what I am thinking at all times, I am the best person to articulate my selection process in what I choose to disclose in the data collection stage. Furthermore, it feeds the simple idea that there is nobody else in this world whose primary job is to keep track of you—it must be yourself.

Generations by Birth Year

Generation X

Millennials

Generation Z

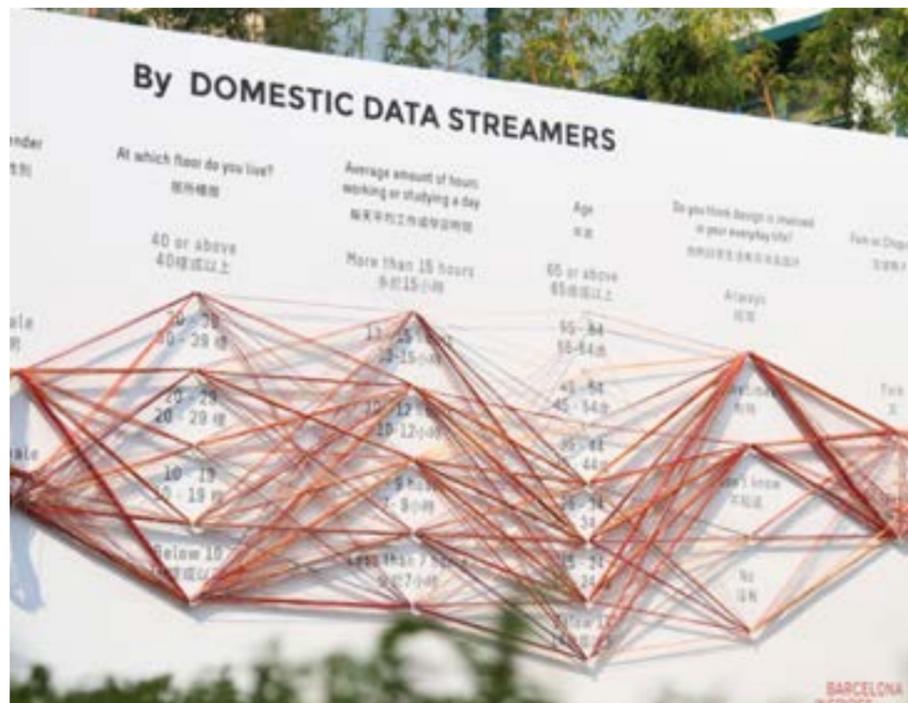


Precedents

Links

<http://feltron.com/FAR14.html>
<http://domesticstreamers.com/>
<https://everydayexplorers.co/>

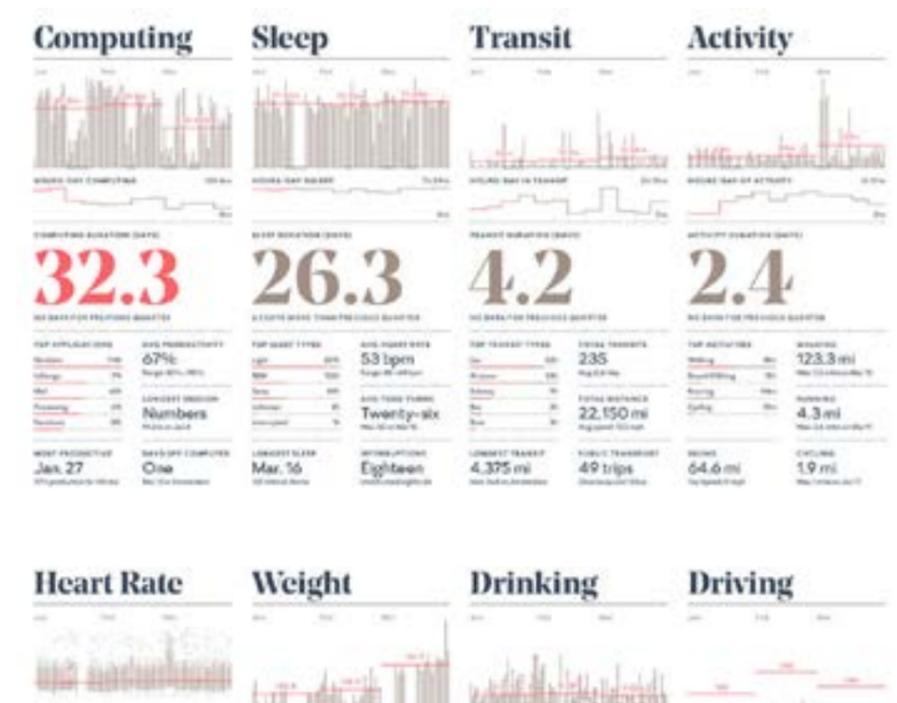
Typically speaking, three examples of similarly minded projects spoke to me. These three projects all exemplify data expression and data journaling with regards to humans and humanity on an intimate level, but generally serve less exploratory purposes. Domestic Data Streamers works with organizations and thus deal with external sources of data and audiences; Everyday Explorers is analog and creatively minded, yet employs constraints through the use of preset diary entries and prompts; Personal Annual Reports are actually the closest to what I may be attempting to create, though they are perhaps too structured and overly functional.



Domestic Data Streamers is dedicated to data storytelling by "bringing emotions to data, simplifying complex information and generating knowledge."



Everyday Explorers Co. is a project born from the Adobe Creative Residency of Christine Herron. Its focus is documenting everyday life and travel in creative and meaningful ways.



In **Personal Annual Reports**, Infographic designer Nicholas Feltron creates stunning visualisations of his own life statistics and presents them in a polished, corporate-like report.

Tangibility

Though important and functional for the purpose of the project presentation, part of the deconstruction is tied to a depersonalization—this may exist electronically. By allowing it to be physical or digital, I remove limitations depending on my experimentation with data representation.

Specifications

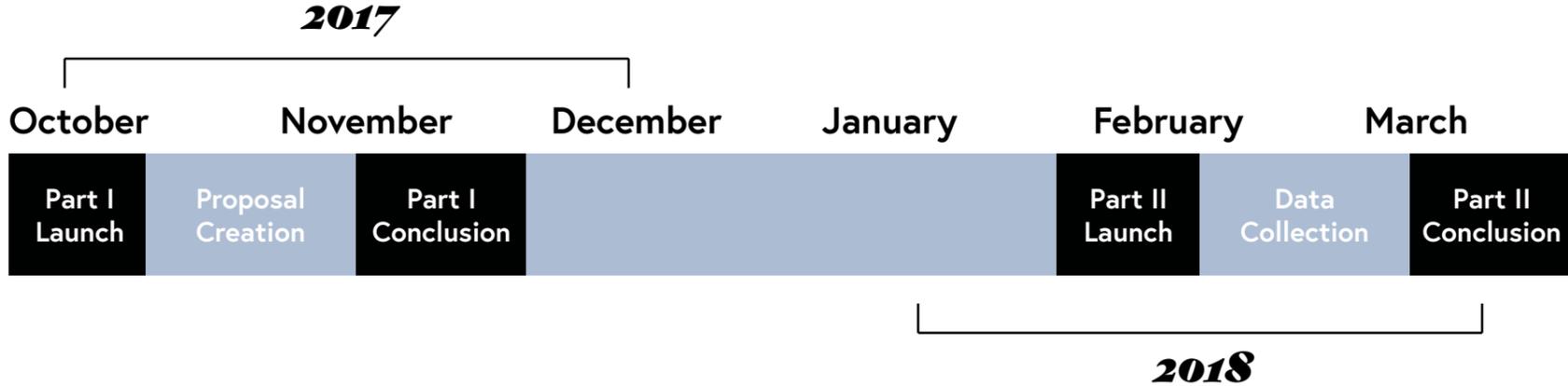
Without completely and explicitly defining the output of this project, I will attempt to give specifications that will guide in my final creation. Firstly, this project will be an presentation of an aggregation of data collected about my own life that is expressed visually. Secondly, the data will extend beyond what one may consider "normal" personal data, e.g. height, weight, eye color, etc. Thirdly, data from quotidian aspects that may seem extraneous in any other general context will be brought to the forefront. Presumably, visualisations will be presented in a two-dimensionally rendered format (no three-dimensional, tangible visualizations) either physically, e.g. a book that resembles an encyclopedia, or electronically, e.g. a report-like navigable webpage or document. Regardless, visual aesthetic will be important as it lends to the identity of the project, and thus an extension of myself.

Anticipated Tools

R Studio	Data processing and visualisation creation	I can use R with libraries such as dplyr and plotly in order to manipulate and represent data programmatically. Things such as averages and summaries can be communicated through methods such as bar charts, scatter plots, and histograms.
Pen and Paper	Data collection and analog data drawing	Simple pen on paper can be for both recording data and creating non-electronic hand-drawn pictorial elements or other visualizations.
Procreate (iPad Pro)	Data drawing	Potential uses for this can be for data visualisations that are quite illustrative in quality, and feature all hand-drawn elements.
Adobe Illustrator	Digital visualisation creation	Illustrator is good for data visualisations that prioritize aesthetic and/or do not deal directly with data that is relatively quantitative.
iPhone X	Data collection	I can record data using applications such as Notes, Voice Memos, and Camera to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

Timeline

- 30 October 2017 Design Domain Part I launch. Symposium.
- 17 November 2017 Design Domain Part I conclusion. Proposal submission. Open studios.
- 13 February 2017 Design Domain Part II launch. Data Collection to follow.
- 02 March 2017 Design Domain Part II conclusion. Project submission. Open studios.



Process

One

Determine points of data collection and potential directions with different considerations. Previously, I've discussed things such as doors walked through and first names of romantic interests; I'd like to be far-reaching and leave this stage as open as possible.

Two

Select points of data collection to move forward with, set a time period when appropriate, and begin data collection either through real-time recording or recall. Should recall be involved, consider implications of fallible memory and justification for inclusion.

Three

Analyze collected data and determine how best to represent the data. Consider different interpretations of insights and perhaps adjust representations or repeat representations as necessary. This is most likely the most time-intensive stage and leads to the intended exploration.

Four

Develop visual language that is reflective of my personal identity in order to further steep the project in narcissism. (Not a joke.) The self-centric identity is inherently married to the visual language as all elements are selected and executed by myself, however, the definition is important.

Five

Construct the deliverable, whether that is a physical or digital product. At this point, most attention will be given to expressing the visual language through applications that have yet to be fully determined.

Six

Complete process documentation and analyze the given implications of specific data excluded from the final product and any reasoning behind such exclusions. Included in documentation will be the reflection regarding the project as a whole.

Exploration

Ideally, this project will work to deconstruct what it means to be human by reducing a human identity into two-dimensional renderings of information about them; it will suggest limitations of a data-defined identity. Addressing privacy, the human at hand is me, and information will be sourced from myself. While I will draw boundaries as I see fit, being aware of where I find these boundaries will be a critical part of how I inform my identity.

In the information age, corporations use personal data for reasons that vary from targeted advertising to facilitation and authentication and mostly limit the amount of information retained (and it's largely voluntarily reported). However, as smart home and IoT products, especially voice-activated ones, gain popularity, things such as voice recording parsing are brought to an extremely ethics-based conversation of what's an appropriate use of data and what disclosure is necessary.

Extensively, do these profiles of individuals that corporations hold document or validate a human existence? What level of data provides a complete human identity? Is it possible for documentation to encapsulate an entire identity? How is identity related to existence and experience?

Limitations

I recognize that while I've initially posed many questions, I'm not sure that the scope of this project (mostly determined by time constraints) is equipped to address these at a connected conceptual level. Part of the project is certainly a bit humorous in the same way the the Feltron Annual Reports report banal pieces of data in an elevated profile. Literally, I'm limited by my own fallible human memory for points of interest that I haven't been actively recording since birth (impossible). Additionally, I'm constrained by my own personal experience with and perceptions of data. My reflection will likely include more once I've been through the rest of the project.