

ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

# THE FIREWALL

OCTOBER 2009

COLLEGE OF COMPUTING

WWW.GTFIREWALL.COM

**CODE**  
helps your  
**EARS**  
become your  
**EYES**



**HUMANITECH**

HELPING THE WORLD ONE WEBSITE AT A TIME

**WHERE'D ALL THE GIRLS GO?**

THE COC SENDS WOMEN@CC TO GRACE HOPPER

COVER BY: JEANIE CHOI

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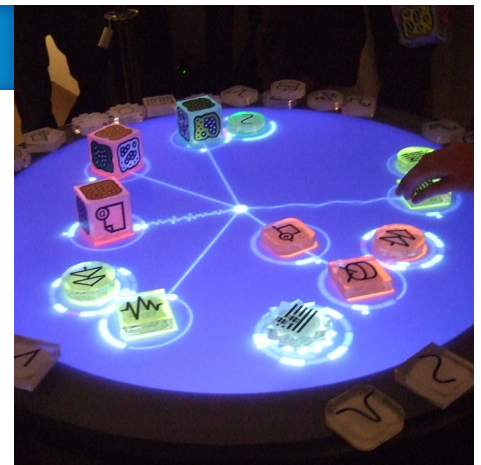


### HUMANITECH

Meet the CoC's newest student org and see what they do to help those who help those in need, all while learning more about their trade. Proof positive that "computing for good" isn't just a saying for the back of a t-shirt.

### CODE AND SOUND

While some get into computer science to escape any mention of the word 'art,' others have jumped in because they see computing as the next step in the arts. Read about projects going on at Tech that work to innovate the sights and sounds of art, all from a computer terminal.



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# THE FIREWALL ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

## THE FIREWALL TURNS ONE!



October 17, 2008 was the date when the very first issue of THE FIREWALL was released. When forming THE FIREWALL, I wanted to have a medium through which students could learn of the College of Computing's great opportunities. With over 15 organizations, the college has brilliant students who make a major impact in the computing community.

In the beginning, it was just Ajai

Karthikeyan and I who produced the first black and white issue, and ever since, THE FIREWALL has been growing to entirely new levels. We now have a team of over 20 students who not only enjoy working on this color print magazine that releases monthly, but who are also responsible for informing over 500 students in this College of everything they should know about academia, careers, and the international and local communities.

I feel blessed to have this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked with me for THE FIREWALL. This organization is very special to me, and everyone involved will always hold a special place in my heart. Ajai Karthikeyan - thank you for helping me make October 17, 2008 one of the most memorable days of my life. When I think of this magazine, you are the first person I think of, as only both of us know how much effort has gone into making this magazine a success. My amazing team of officers - Stephen Hilber, Chris Russell, Joy Buolamwini and Terris Johnson: I cannot express how grateful

I am to have such an enthusiastic and talented set of individuals. The entire FIREWALL team - you all should be proud of making an impact on the community. Cedric Stallworth, Beth Collums, and Tom Pilsch - your tremendous support and encouragement will never be forgotten. Finally, to all our sponsors and our readers - THE FIREWALL loves you!

This past year has been a great learning experience for all of us in the team, and we hope to achieve much higher goals for the organization in the future. Hopefully, we will be able to extend our readership and coverage to other computing departments in the US. In the mean time, please share your thoughts about this magazine from the past year, and if you have any comments, please send an email to [mansi@gtfirewall.com](mailto:mansi@gtfirewall.com) or visit our new website - [www.gtfirewall.com](http://www.gtfirewall.com).

Thanks and I hope you enjoy this issue!

**THE FIREWALL PRESIDENT**  
**MANSI SHARMA**

## INTERESTED IN HELPING SPREAD THE FIRE?



**WANT TO KNOW HOW YOU CAN  
CONTRIBUTE TO THE STUDENT COMMUNITY?**

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Sponsorship  
Marketing/Publicity  
Printing and Distribution

Experience is welcome but by no means necessary!



# ACM HOSTS ENGADGET HD Q&A



Students line up for  
ENGADGET HD swag

## BY JOY BUOLAMWINI

One of the things I love about Georgia Tech is how a random walk around campus can suddenly morph into taking part in some kind of interesting event. Last spring, for example, I was walking near the Klaus building when I ventured into an information session that eventually led to me getting a research position at the Graphics Visualization and Usability center. On September 11th, it happened again. While enjoying a burger at the Anime O-tekku cookout in front of Klaus, a friend of mine informed me the ACM was hosting a Q&A session with Engadget in Klaus at that very moment.

Having paid the Engadget blog many a visit to find out the latest opinions, surmises, leaks, and reviews in consumer

technology, I decided to give the event a try. The event featured Ben Drawbaugh and Richard Lawler, who both write for Engadget HD. They were in town for the

**“...A RANDOM WALK  
AROUND CAMPUS  
CAN SUDDENLY  
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EVENT.”**

CEDIA (Custom Electronics Design and Installation Association) conference, which was held in Atlanta on September 9 - 13.

Engadget HD focuses on high-end “living room” technology, such as televisions, speakers, home automation, and streaming media.

When I arrived, I noticed that ACM had secured a nice helping of Chick-fil-a sandwiches. It might seem like an asinine aside, but this was a significant moment for Ben and Richard: their first taste of Chick-Fi-La. If only there was some sweet tea around, we could have given them a true taste of the south.

The two had an easy manner about them and quite naturally slipped into an open dialogue with the audience, covering a wide range of topics while taking periodic show-of-hands polls. Unsurprisingly, in a room filled with mainly computer science



majors, responses to question like, “How many of you watch TV online, have used a Linux operating system, or are familiar with Boxee?” received slightly skewed results.

Roger Pincombe, an ACM member in attendance, said, “I was very happy with the turnout and also with the quality of the questions that students asked.

“Also, I was impressed that the audience consisted not only of students; some companies that were in town for the CEDIA conference also attended, most notably ZAGG, who gave away \$500 in gift cards as well as some high-end headphones. Ben and Richard from Engadget HD were quite entertaining, and I think as a whole the event was a great success.”

In addition to receiving gift cards, those in attendance were given the opportunity to have their blog links posted on the Engadget site. ■

## READ THE GT POST ON ENGADGET HD

Read the post Ben and Richard made about the event at  
<http://www.engadgethd.com/2009/09/13/thanks-to-atlanta-for-the-great-reader-meetup/>

You can also view pictures of the event on the Engadget website  
<http://www.engadgethd.com/photos/engadget-hd-reader-meetup/2278752/>

[WWW.ENGADGETHD.COM](http://WWW.ENGADGETHD.COM)

## What's all the buzz<sup>TM</sup> about?



At Yahoo!, big thinking comes with the territory. When your work reaches over half a billion users (that's 1 out of every 2 people online), there's no small task. We need creative minds that can take us to new places; individuals who want to positively impact their career and the world at large.

Apply today at [careers.yahoo.com](http://careers.yahoo.com)

# YAHOO!

# GOOGLE PROFESSORS

BY ABHISHEK JAIN

**GOOGLE professors**

Google plans to launch its new product, Google professors. Its an online teaching tool helping students learn through virtual professors. Google has made sure to make the college experience to be like the real thing...

CollegeStud12 is currently sleeping...

Wake up  
Go to class  
Do Homework  
Procrastinate

Grades  
PHYS101 C  
MATH123 B  
ENG121 D

The students will frequently encounter important choices. Mostly and always between Wake up, Go to class, Do homework and Procrastinate. Class grades will always be posted on the home page.

ASK Dr. Mackworth

ASK

previous questions and answers  
S: I forgot to do Homework 3. can I still get an A?  
P: No.  
S: What is Moment of Inertia?  
P: [en.wikipedia.org/moment\\_of\\_inertia](http://en.wikipedia.org/moment_of_inertia)

The virtual professors will hold their office hours at the weirdest time and mostly on early mornings.

It will have virtual classrooms where courses will be taught on virtual blackboards. Students will also be provided with virtual laptops so can surf on facebook, addictingames.com when bored.

Its just a matter of time before Google Professors replace real professors at Georgia Tech. Practically its the same thing.

-Abhishek Jain

# ERROR

BY CONNIE CHEN

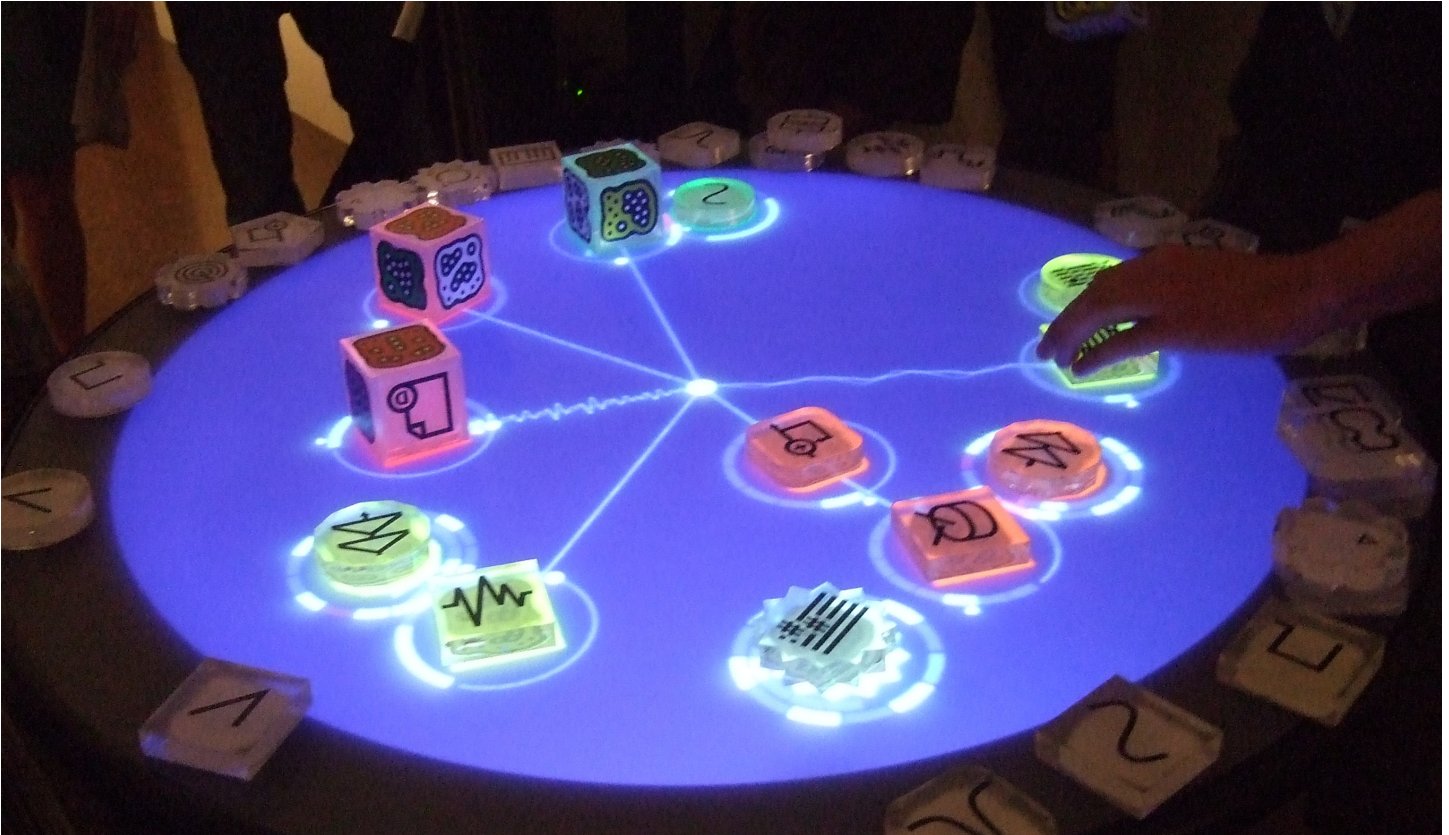
Error by Connie Chen



# WHERE IN THE WORLD

BY CONNIE CHEN





## A CODE AND SOUND DUET

COMPUTING AND MUSIC SPAWN NEW POSSIBILITIES

BY JEANIE CHOI

In addition to pure, unadulterated coding, the beauty of computer science is its ability to seamlessly merge with and supplement many other disciplines. Interested in art? Breakthroughs in computer graphics and animation have opened up new avenues of art by allowing artists to simulate dozens of textures, fluid materials like water, crowds, and hair. Have a flair for science? Many of today's latest developments in scientific disciplines like nanotechnology, biochemistry, and quantum physics owe thanks to the flexibility and freedom computing offers. Computing in science, art and medicine continue to attract attention and visibly impact everyday life. But then there are the less obvious applications of computing, and these less obvious applications have

stirred up quite a revolutionary tune.

One such application bridges the gap between sound and sight to create, in a word, the ultimate electronic DJ table. The ReacTable, with its round, stylishly blue-lit surface and brightly-colored pucks, is what you could call a visual instrument. The pucks include sound generators, sound filters (which alter the sounds coming from generators), controllers, and global objects. By implementing a simple user interface, musicians can physically create music by adding, removing and adjusting pucks on the surface. Puck properties such as frequency, amplitude, and dry/wet level can be adjusted by either interacting with the object or by touching the surface around the object. The infinite possibilities the ReacTable offers easily fulfill the

functions of the turn table and the synthesizer combined, and then some. The ability of each puck to interact with each other in infinite ways grants ReacTable a powerful flexibility that makes it a breakthrough in the hybrid field of music and computing.

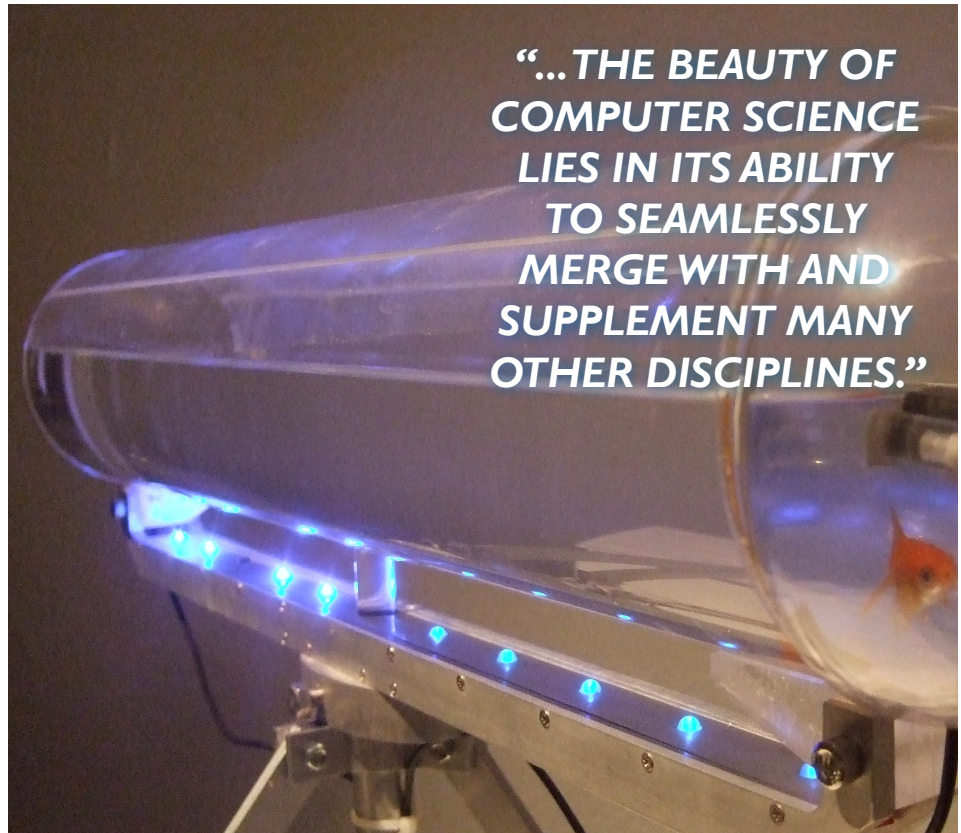
Similar projects at the interdisciplinary GVU research center as well as the Center for Music Technology (GTCMT) have also advanced the possibilities of such field-merging. While some have mixed music with technology to create new ways to interact with music, others have used sound to demonstrate the visual. Researchers at Tech continue to refine, realize and revolutionize numerous other applications of the two fields.



**(CODE AND SOUND CONTINUED pg.7)**

Star performer in a harmonious duet of robotics and music is Haile, a robot percussionist who enjoys improvising tunes next to his fellow human musicians. Rather than just recognize and spit out what he has heard, Haile is capable of following tempo changes, adjusting pitches and discerning between chaotic and melodic sounds. It can listen to music in real-time, analyze it, and come up with its own take of what it just heard. The music-appreciative robot is the result of a collaboration between the colleges of Music Technology, Mechanical Engineering, Industrial Design, the Advanced Wood Products lab and the College of Computing, a medley of the many fields Tech offers, all conducted by music enthusiast Dr. Gil Weinberg. The robot and its unique, innovative means of interacting with music is a step forward in understanding the relationship humans have with music. Haile has currently mastered the drums and the xylophone, and has been joined by fellow robot musician Shimon, who specializes in marimba.

A reverse of ReacTable's treatment of the audible and the visible is the Accessible Aquarium, where sounds stand in for the visuals. Whereas the ReacTable brings in visual elements to enhance the audible experience, Accessible Aquarium brings in sound and music to compensate for a visual experience that sight-impaired people could not otherwise enjoy. Accessible Aquarium does what its name implies: it makes the aquarium an accessible commodity for the sight-impaired by painting a soundscape based on the movement and actions of life in the aquarium. The resulting blend of sound successfully recreates that peaceful, simple experience of watching small aquatic life twitch and flutter thin fins nonchalantly while interacting with each other and responding in pleasantly predictable manners to food and glass taps. The project brings together the fields of music and assistive technology, psychology and music to create a new way of seeing.



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OTHER DISCIPLINES.”**

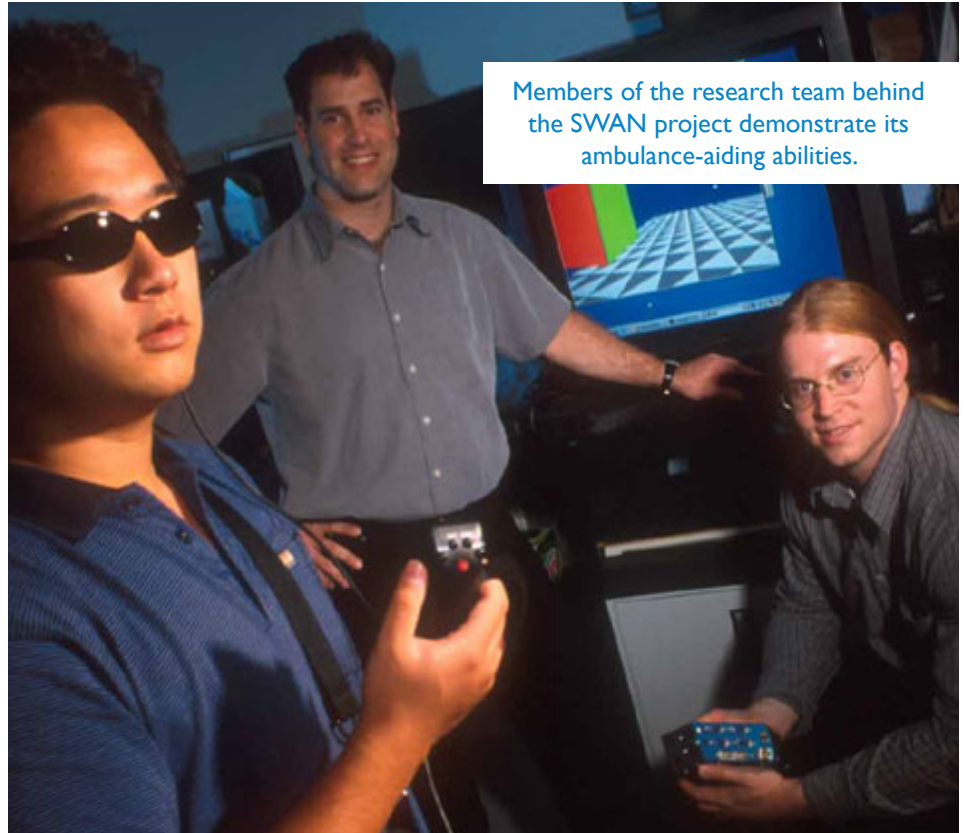
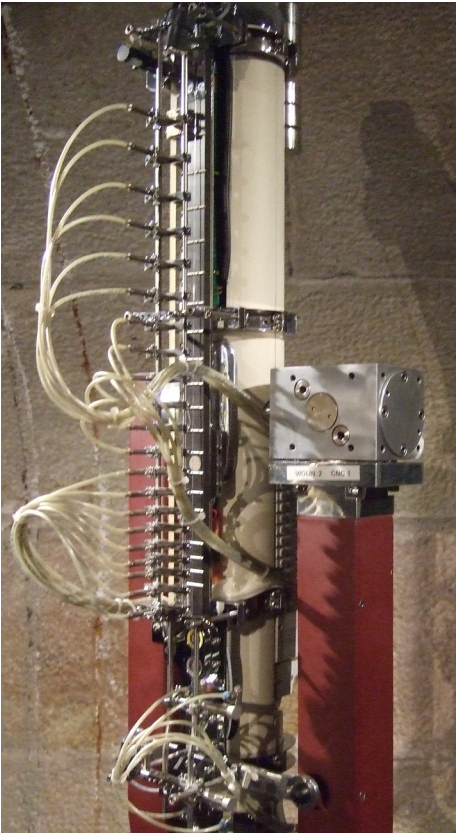
The SWAN Project, System for Wearable Audio Navigation, is another project geared towards the hearing impaired. A joint collaboration between Psychology's Dr. Bruce Walker and the College of Computing's Frank Dellaert, the project uses an intricate tracking system in a portable device to determine the location of the user and direction the user faces. The information is then relayed to the user through bone conduction headphones known as "bonephones." The bonephones allow sound to transmit through the head without obstructing the ears, allowing the user to maintain access to surrounding sounds. An audible interface (rather than the usual visual one) transmits information to the user through specific sounds. Specific sounds include:

1. A navigation beacon, which guides the user from a starting point to the final destination.
2. Object sounds, which indicate the location and type of surrounding objects.

3. Surface transitions, which alert the user to changes in walking surfaces.
4. Locations, which differentiate between buildings, offices, bus stops, shops.
5. Annotations, short messages recorded by the user about a particular environment's specifics.

The duet of computing within the field of music and sound has given birth to breakthroughs in our interaction with audio. It has spawned new innovative ways of creating music, a better understanding of music appreciation, and the use of sound to paint visual information. For the computing student who is musically inclined, there is plenty of ground left to break. The Gvu center and the GTCMT continue to compose dynamically innovative applications with sound and code.

Gvu Center: [gvu.cc.gatech.edu](http://gvu.cc.gatech.edu)  
GTCMT: [gtcmt.coa.gatech.edu](http://gtcmt.coa.gatech.edu)



Members of the research team behind the SWAN project demonstrate its ambulance-aiding abilities.



The musically-inclined robot Haile accompanies his fellow human drummers.



# ADVISOR'S VAULT OF HORROR

CS LESSONS TO BE LEARNED, LEST YOU BE BURNED

BY TOM PILSCH

ASSISTANT DEAN OF STUDENTS

In this issue of the THE FIREWALL, the advisors and I would like to introduce an occasional series of true vignettes about things CS students have done (or didn't do!) to produce major pain in their academic program. Many of these stories are humorous -- you will find yourself saying "How could they have done that ?!?" -- but these were true horror tales for the people involved!

We think you will find these stories interesting and maybe amusing, but what we really hope is that you will learn the lessons they provide to avoid having your story appear in a future **VAULT OF HORROR!**

## HORROR #1

A top CS major was getting ready to graduate

- Would graduate with Highest Honors ( >3.55 GPA )
- Had a job at one of the top computing companies
- *He had it made !*

But ...

**He forgot to register for his last semester!**

**LESSON:** Register at the end of every October and March  
... and register as soon as your time ticket opens!

1

A CS senior was planning to graduate in the fall

He properly completed his degree petition in the spring

- He was going out of the country (study abroad) for summer

He checked & signed that he understood all requirements

But ... he took a humanities requirement P/F

and ... *it didn't count for graduation!*

**LESSON:** All required courses must be for letter grade  
Only exception: *Free Electives*

## HORROR #2



# TWITTAAAAH!

## TWEETING YOUR WAY TO HELL!



BY ERIC SEMBRAT

Twitter rubs me the wrong way. I understand the idea behind Twitter, and, based on the success of preceding services like Facebook's status updates, the service is obviously one that's in demand. However, there are a few facets of Twitter that simply make the service unattractive and downright ugly.

### 1. THE BASTARDIZATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

I'm looking right at you, Rick Sanchez of CNN. Your lack of capitalization, usage of 'u' and 'w', and lack of appropriate punctuation bother and enrage me to no end. And he's not the only one. If you want to see a reason why American children are growing up thinking words like 'ur' and 'w/e' are appropriate words to use in papers, look no further. I understand the hard-limits in Twitter, but that doesn't mean you have to make yourself look uneducated and childish as a consequence. Have some common sense here and put forth some effort, there is absolutely no way you are Twittering so furiously you forget capitalization or simple grammatical rules.

### 2. FAST & FURIOUS

### TWITTERS 24/7.

Twitter accounts, just like any blog, are severely hampered when good updates (i.e. important useful updates) are slammed and replaced by completely useless updates (i.e. an update about you clapping at a social event, or telling us when you sleep or wake up). There are simply some things that no one, even yourself, want to read about. And why dumb down your own microblog simply because you can fit "I'm in bed!!!" into an update?

### 3. THE LAZINESS FACTORY.

The one thing that bothers me about Twitter is that the hard-limit in space per entry simply allows companies to be lazy. Let's take bands and music labels as an appropriate example. Just because it's easier to post update news to Twitter rather than your own publicized website doesn't mean you have to alienate 99%

of your fanbase by only posting updates to Twitter. 30 Seconds to Mars is a great example of this. I don't even see any news on their website about their new album titled 'This is War'. And yet, the news has been broken (and updated upon) on Twitter in multiple entries. It's absolutely a sad day when I have to go to microblogs rather than their own site to find the latest official news from a band. Laziness at its best.

The best way to summarize my frustration and confusion over Twitter is simply to recite a recent commercial for Sprint.

A father and son are on the porch of their home relaxing with the rest of the family. The father, sitting in a chair on his new Sprint mobile phone, is audibly narrating his typing: "I'm sitting on the patio", responding to his son's request that he "cools it with the Twitter updates". The son in turn, responds, "I know you are". ■



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# WHERE'D ALL THE GIRLS GO???

## BY CANDIS PHAM

The week of September 29th through October 3rd was a traumatizing time for the guys of the College of Computing, as the College's girl-to-guy ratio—already horrifyingly low—plummeted even lower than usual. Where were all the girls?

Simple: they were living it up at the Grace Hopper Conference in Tucson, Arizona.

This year, the Georgia Tech College of Computing, a Grace Hopper Gold Scholarship Sponsor, sent seventeen faculty, staff, and students to the conference. These included Professor Ellen Zegura, Outreach, Enrollment, and Community staff members Meredith Goodman and Jennifer Whitlow, graduate students Erica Poole, Chaitrali Amrutkar, and Nova Ahmed, and undergraduate students Victoria Au, Joy Bulloamwini, Katie Collins, Dawn Finney, Linda Huynh, Angela Mingione, Candace Mitchell, Candis Pham, Mansi Sharma, Jessica Watson, and Donna Yoo.

The Grace Hopper Celebration of

**“THE GRACE HOPPER  
CONFERENCE IS  
A WONDERFUL  
OPPORTUNITY TO  
NETWORK WITH  
OTHER WOMEN  
IN THE FIELD OF  
COMPUTING...”**

Women in Computing is a series of conferences designed to bring the research and career interests of women in computing to the forefront. Presenters are leaders in their respective fields,



Woman@CC group on the first day of the conference in their matching pink t-shirts.

representing industrial, academic, and government communities. Leading researchers present their current work, while special sessions focus on the role of women in today's technological fields, including computer science, information technology, research, and engineering.

The theme this year was "Creating Technology for Social Good." Sessions and panels covered many topics ranging from shattering the glass ceilings and stereotypes facing women in computer science to sessions about research on using technology to improve education in underdeveloped areas of the world, with particular focus on Africa.

The Grace Hopper Conference is a wonderful opportunity to network with

other women in the field of computing, learn more about the forefront of evolving technologies, connect with some of the biggest corporate companies in computing, and, of course, have fun celebrating being a woman in computer science. Oh, and just to add the cherry on top: many of the undergraduate students attending the conference got a chance to line up interviews with some of the top companies in the technical field. ■





Meredith Goodman and Jennifer Whitlow  
hard at work at the GT Booth.



Candis Pham happy about the  
delicious food at the conference.





Corey Steward snaps a photo in front of the Tower Bridge.

## CROSS-CONTENTIAL CONFERENCE

### AN INTERVIEW WITH COREY STEWARD

#### BY TERRIS JOHNSON

Corey Steward is a 4th Year Computer Science Major, Social Chair of M@CC (Minorities @ the College of Computing), and has been involved in undergraduate research for two years. I had the chance to interview him after hearing of his journey to London to present his research work.

#### WHAT CONFERENCE DID YOU ATTEND? WHAT WAS ITS FOCUS?

I attended the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) 2009 Conference. The conference is held every two years and focuses on many aspects of game studies. Several topics—like game theory, artificial intelligence design, how to use games to effectively teach children, the state of MMO games, ... how people interact with each other online. Anything

centered around videogames was fair game.

#### CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

I presented the GLITCH GameTesters research project with PhD student Betsy DiSalvo as part of the Electronic Learning Center (ELC Lab) headed by Amy Bruckman. We are focused on building the interest of African American high school males in Computer Science through video game testing. Through previous research, we have found that there is a correlation between playing video games and the pursuit of a computer science degree. Though African American males are highly involved in video game play and consumption, very few actually go on to pursue a Computer Science degree. We

are looking to use video game testing as leverage to transform their interests in gaming into an interest in computer science.

#### WHAT KINDS OF PEOPLE ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE?

Most of the attendees were PhDs or faculty from different schools. Just from personal observance, maybe a third did not have a strong CS background. They were geared more towards teaching through computer science and education [than games themselves]. There were professionals from the video game industry as well.

#### WHAT WAS THE MOST UNUSUAL



A busy harbor near the downtown London skyline.

### ASPECT OF LONDON?

Nothing was really culture-shocking. It was more like the people were friendly, they drove on the opposite side of the road, etc. Nothing surprising. The food was a little different, but there wasn't really anything unusual.

### HOW WAS THE FLIGHT TO AND FROM LONDON?

By far the longest flight I've ever had. I have never been overseas so the length of the flight was new to me.

### HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE AS A WHOLE?

It was one of the best experiences of my life. I've never had the chance to leave the country, and got a chance to meet different people from all over the world with similar interests in videogames, education, and computer science.

The chance to talk with people who are doing research in the same field was extremely valuable. The opportunity to

see the campus life of another college in another country was nice as well.

I would have to say that the best part

**“GETTING ADVICE  
AND FEEDBACK  
FROM PEOPLE IN A  
SIMILAR FIELD, FROM  
ACROSS THE WORLD...  
WAS DEFINITELY A  
HIGHLIGHT.”**

about my experience was the preparation and our presentation research work. Getting the chance to talk in front of people who have participated in similar work with education and computer science was important to me. I wanted to properly relay what I am working on and hear their questions and feedback about how we can improve our work. Getting



advice from people in a similar field from across the world and being exposed to a different perspective on our project was definitely a highlight of the conference. ■



## A MICROCOSM OF US ALL

AN OUTSIDER'S OBSERVATIONS OF THE COLLEGE OF COMPUTING COMMONS



### BY KLEE SIMMONS

I'm a bit of an outsider to the CoC. I'm a third year Polymer and Fiber Engineer (to freshmen: don't worry if that doesn't sound familiar; even some graduate students don't realize that's a major here) minoring in Computer Science and working towards a Certificate in Entrepreneurial Management. I regularly frequent the study lounges of my department, the Management building, and pretty much every other public location on campus. Passing through the library or the Student Center lounges, I would be surprised to see anything more than the backs of heads or to hear anything above a muted rumble.

All that changes, though, when I enter the CoC commons. Suddenly those

empty walls are covered with large, bright posters competing for your attention with huge ads for clubs and LAN parties.

**“SUDDENLY, THOSE  
EMPTY WALLS ARE  
COVERED WITH  
LARGE, BRIGHT  
POSTERS...WITH  
HUGE ADS FOR CLUBS  
AND LAN PARTIES.”**

At eye level, dry erase boards sit, filled with everything from childish stick-figure drawings to bits of ridiculously complex

code. Surrounding what looks like picnic benches with backs, I hear the sounds of excited (or, when an assignment is due, panicked) voices and smell the rich aromas of pizza and Wingnuts. It's like the world shifts into color.

If an entire community could be described in one image, the CoC commons embodies the CoC community. When I'm there, I am always surrounded by fun, interesting people with quirky thinking, in a relaxed atmosphere that's worlds away from any other location on campus. In a word, the Commons are the embodiment of community. That is really what impresses me about the College of Computing: exactly how much of a community it really is.



Take a second and think about it. Where else can you be guaranteed—24 hours a day—to find people in states of activity ranging from flash games to senior design projects, all of whom are willing to stop and chat for a few minutes? What other department's professors take an active role in hosting and participating in events for their students? Can you name a class outside of the CoC which has TAs from more than two different majors? What other major can lay claim to such cool events as a week of hands-on instruction by Yahoo employees or a campus-wide gaming tournament? The list goes on, but I think you get the point.

I'm affiliated with various clubs and organizations and know pretty much everyone in my major, but when I think of my community of friends on campus, I have a relatively short list. Compare this to the CoC community, though, and it seems miniscule. It seems odd to say it, since we are just dedicated and active a bunch of students as any other department, but so much of what we do is visible and aimed at helping all of us survive our time at Tech that I can't help but feel as though I could be friends with anyone I met in the College of Computing.

So the next time an upcoming test has you frazzled, or you are wondering where to go to spend a little time unwinding after a big project, or even the next time you need a sounding board for an idea you want to work on in your own time, consider stopping by the commons. ■

## SAVE THE FRESHMEN! OR THE CC MENTORS AND MENTEES PROGRAM



Ajai, Karthikeyan, Raissa Lim, and Cedric Stallworth at the mentor meeting.

### BY KARTHIK NARAYAN

The CC Mentors program is a new program that the College of Computing has started this year to help incoming freshmen become accustomed to Tech's environment. All incoming freshmen are paired with a current student to guide them through the process of helping them adjust to college and college life. Mentors help students balance time between studying and their social lives. Abhishek Shroff, an active sophomore mentor, said, "I think it's a great program especially for out-of-state students and international students, because one goal of the program is to build community with many different backgrounds. The point of this aspect is to give a foothold and a sense of familiarity to the students to ensure that they aren't overwhelmed by the major changes

involved in the transition into Tech."

Now that the program has had time to get on its feet, and the mentors and mentees have had time to settle in, we have interviewed two mentors, Ajai Karthikeyan, a junior mentor, and Abhishek Shroff to present thoughts with respect to the program.

### WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME A MENTOR?

**Abhishek:** I thought it would be nice to help people out, especially by letting them know about things that may come in handy at some point. Though people around Georgia may have familiarity with the area, transitioning to Tech is still difficult because of the many changes involved. I wanted to help people ease into their new environment.

(SAVE THE FRESHMEN CONTINUED pg. 17)

**Ajai:** There are three main reasons. First, I have been involved within the College of Computing for the past two years at Tech and have found involvement to be a great way for me to give back to the college. Second, I remember my freshman year clearly, and wondered how I managed to adjust to all the changes. I wanted to make it easier for the freshmen this year, so I decided to become a mentor. Lastly, nothing satisfies me more than corrupting the future generation.

#### WHAT DO YOU DO AS A MENTOR? WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

**Abhishek:** An obvious responsibility is to answer whatever questions mentees have. We point them to the right resources and generally do whatever we can when they need help. Other than that, we stay in regular contact with mentees and ensure that the students are mixing well and adapting to Tech life. We meet once in a

while, go to group events, and make them feel comfortable enough to want to come to us when problems arise.

**Ajai:** Mentors are assigned mentees just after students pay their deposits to attend

### “WE HELP [THE FRESHMEN] GET ACQUAINTED AND HELP THEM IN ANYWAY THEY NEED.”

Georgia Tech. As you may have noticed, this is before they even arrive at Tech. As mentors, we contact them before they arrive and answer any questions they may have regarding college. Once they reach Tech, we help them get acquainted to the campus and help them anyway they need. We provide them with a line of support for when they need it and we do also

throw monthly events to keep in touch with our mentees. Overall, the mentor’s job is to be a good friend.

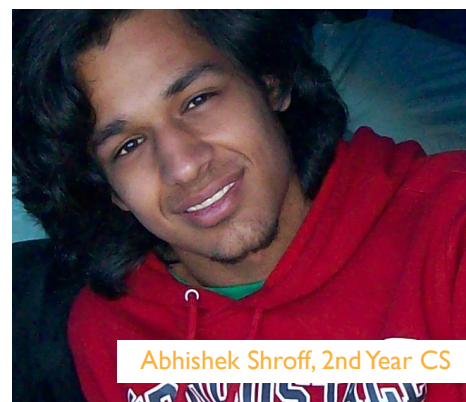
#### COULD YOU SHARE AN EXPERIENCE THAT YOU HAD WITH A MENTEE?

**Abhishek:** I was speaking to one of my mentees a few weeks ago about Google CodeJam, a programming competition sponsored by Google. Coders from around the world, students and professionals alike, compete in a series of timed rounds where programming problems are posted. My mentee thought it would be fun to participate. In one of the problem sets, he had trouble understanding a certain problem involving probability, so I explained in detail how I went about solving the problem and the motivation behind the solution.

**Ajai:** Actually, I have two. Initially, most of my mentees were the summer freshmen, since I am one of those crazy people who



Dawn Finney points to Beth Collums at the CC Mentors meeting.



Abhishek Shroff, 2nd Year CS



Ajai Karthikeyan, 3rd Year CS

stays here for the summer. To get to know them better, we went to watch a movie at Flicks on Fifth. We ended up not liking the movie very much but we had a lot of fun grabbing dinner and cracking jokes on the grass on the Fifth Street bridge.

Also, of my current mentees, a freshman happens to be living in the floor of my freshman year peer leader, and thus, both of us are in the same football block. We ended up painting ourselves all white for the white out game and became the W and Y in DWYER.

#### HOW DO YOU THINK THE CC MENTORS PROGRAM INFLUENCES THE COLLEGE OF COMPUTING? HOW DO YOU THINK THE PROGRAM WILL CHANGE OVER TIME?

**Abhishek:** I think that this is a really nice initiative that the College of Computing has taken up. Since this is only the first year, we have a lot to learn... and by we, I mean not only the administration, but also the mentors, since we are the ones who will actually perform tasks which may eventually change. Over time, we will know what approaches are effective. In the future, I am confident that this program will produce better leaders because mentoring takes skill. It is also likely to produce graduates with stronger confidence.

**Ajai:** The CC Mentors program helps create a much better informed and prepared generation of students within the college. I will say that it is too early in the program for us to know how it will change over time, but we are already thinking of ways to improve the program.

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## BACK TO THE GRIND

NOT SO FRESH(MEN) ANYMORE

**BY ASHISH NARASIMHAM**

Summer's come and gone, and school's been here long enough for you to forget what the glorious waste of time summer was. For freshmen (or at least me), the newness of college life has worn off and a schoolwork-filled schedule has replaced the carefree attitude and never-ending party line-up of that first month.

In case you've been sleeping in and missing your 8 o'clock Calculus class too much to notice, it's now been more than 7 weeks since the first day of classes came and went. By now, some of us have skipped enough classes the match skipping one for the whole semester. Others have failed their first test. Others still may have remembered a paper's deadline just in time for the professor to start collecting

them.

But let's not be so pessimistic this early in the year. After all, for each bombed quiz, there's been a party. For every all-nighter pulled to finish a paper, there's been one pulled just for the sake of hanging out with friends. Many rewarding activities have taken place in the more than two months that we've been here. Life's handed us a lot of gifts here. True, some are better than others, (Freshman Fifteen, anyone?), but life's still pretty awesome, even if accompanied by fifteen pounds of pure fat.

In all seriousness, though, many enriching activities have taken place during the school year. The Career Fairs helped kick off our college careers by letting us all

get a good look at our post-college ones, reminding us exactly why we're burning the midnight oil every other night. At the CoC Career Fair, thirty companies were represented over two days. Well-known companies in attendance included Microsoft, NASA, Yahoo, McAfee, Inc., Lockheed Martin, and ADP.

**“LIFE'S STILL PRETTY AWESOME, EVEN IF ACCOMPANIED BY FIFTEEN POUNDS OF PURE FAT.”**

Another exciting and, for many, more immediately relevant event was the CoC Research Day, held on September 25th. Students involved in doing research got the chance to showcase their work, and students interested in doing work got to see what, exactly, they'd be doing. Projects ranged throughout a double-handful of areas, with researchers of everything from cryptography to parallel computing to hardware-testing present.

More opportunities for students to get involved in research presented themselves at the UROC (look it up!) job fair. I found a research position with professor Vuduc in the parallel computing department. The professor and I are meeting during this semester to solidify plans for formal research next semester. ■

# SPOTLIGHT: HUMANITECH

ONE OF TECH'S NEWEST ORGANIZATIONS



**BY AUREL LAZAR**

A row of people with gardening hoes planting trees; a brigade of vigilantes scouring the streets for litter; a set of concerned people knocking at your door asking for any cans you'd be willing to donate. These common perceptions of community service are dry, especially cliché, and can take very little creative input. It is rather difficult to find a way to benefit the community that actually uses the skills we learn in school, and if such a way could be found, it is usually way above our current skill level.

So, too, thought Daniel Stensland, founder of one of Tech's newest organizations, Humanitech, who, after working for a number of organizations last year, saw how far behind many of them were from a

technological perspective.

"Some got lucky and knew someone who was tech-savvy, but that wasn't always the case," said Stensland. "Those other groups would have to hire the services of an

**"HUMANITECH IS...  
THE CLUB TECH  
ALWAYS NEEDED..."**

outside business, which would often result in an over-inflated price and a variable-quality product. Or, they would just ignore computers and, in doing so, miss out on a valuable resource."

In seeing how much technical help was actually needed, Stensland met with a group of friends who decided to form a school organization devoted to the melding of humanitarianism and technology, an organization which, for obvious reasons, took on the name Humanitech.

Humanitech is a relatively new organization at Tech, seeking to open its doors to the public and recruit new members. Its premise is to put to use the unique capabilities of Tech students, transforming them into an aid for the community.

Up to this point, Humanitech has devoted itself solely toward free web design, stating one of its purposes as building

# Human!Tech

websites to replace those of local community-based organizations whose current sites are unattractive, unusable, or uninformative.

“Humanitech is like the club Tech always needed,” said CM major Liz Ha. “Ever since I became interested in design, I always wanted to try my hand at making websites, but there never really was any need. Now I have a way I can practice and at the same time do something worthwhile.”

Having recently evolved from the planning stages to a state of doing things, a small group has been busy working on a website for The Drake House. Humanitech has also received requests for help from and committed to a number of other organizations, including Human Rights Atlanta, Georgia Detention Watch, Amnesty Atlanta, and Georgia Rescue and Restore.

“Humanitech appealed to me because I’ve always wanted to improve my skill in web design, and now I finally have a group to push me to learn more through experience than I’ve been motivated to do in the past,” said Erica Penk, 3rd year CM. “There’s also the fact that we’re helping out non-profit organizations, so it’s a win-win situation.”

Humanitech welcomes anyone, because it wants to be an educational process for everyone, even the Tech student who is interested in web design but needs to learn first. Through working in a group, discussing and seeing what needs to be done, students not only learn better for themselves but can also develop a portfolio of projects that are

not academically related. The learning isn’t always about the design aspect, but

**“HUMANITECH  
APPEALED TO ME  
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MY SKILL IN WEB  
DESIGN...”**

also about the development. One of its students, Bryan Berry holds PHP / MySQL classes in the commons a few times each week to teach those that are interested and want to know more.

At the time I wrote the article, they weren’t doing backend classes, but now they are. Uh. But it’s fine if you don’t plop it in. Change it around, put the words “backend” instead of PHP / MySQL, whatever. It’s up to you guys. Actually I just pretty much wanted to mention that Humanitech is also teaching backend classes and a student named Bryan Berry is leading them. If you find a better place I’d love to see it in there.

Having made its debut not too long ago, the club is still looking at expanding and growing. The concept of being able to learn web design processes while working for a non-profit organization is an idea that appeals to multiple people, and, through that, the club hopes to grow to a point that it can handle multiple projects simultaneously.

“In addition to working with current organizations with their technical

and digital needs it is also a goal of Humanitech to provide education on using computers to populations relevant to our cause. Although there’s a large emphasis on web design and development right now, our projects are in no way restricted to it,” said Stensland.

Humanitech currently meets Thursdays at 7:00pm in room 304 of the CoC Building, where members, old and new, get together in groups and discuss progress on certain aspects of whatever project they may be working on at the time. Learning skills in the creation of frontend and backend structure, Humanitech members come out better educated and more satisfied because they are able to give back to something that really matters to them with something they enjoy.

“I see Humanitech as an organization that best represents the potential of Tech students,” said Ha. “We have web developers and web designers working together, as in the real world, to help build websites for organizations. There is no better way to expand my horizons, help non-profit organizations, and perform community service in a way that is enjoyable and fun for me.” ■



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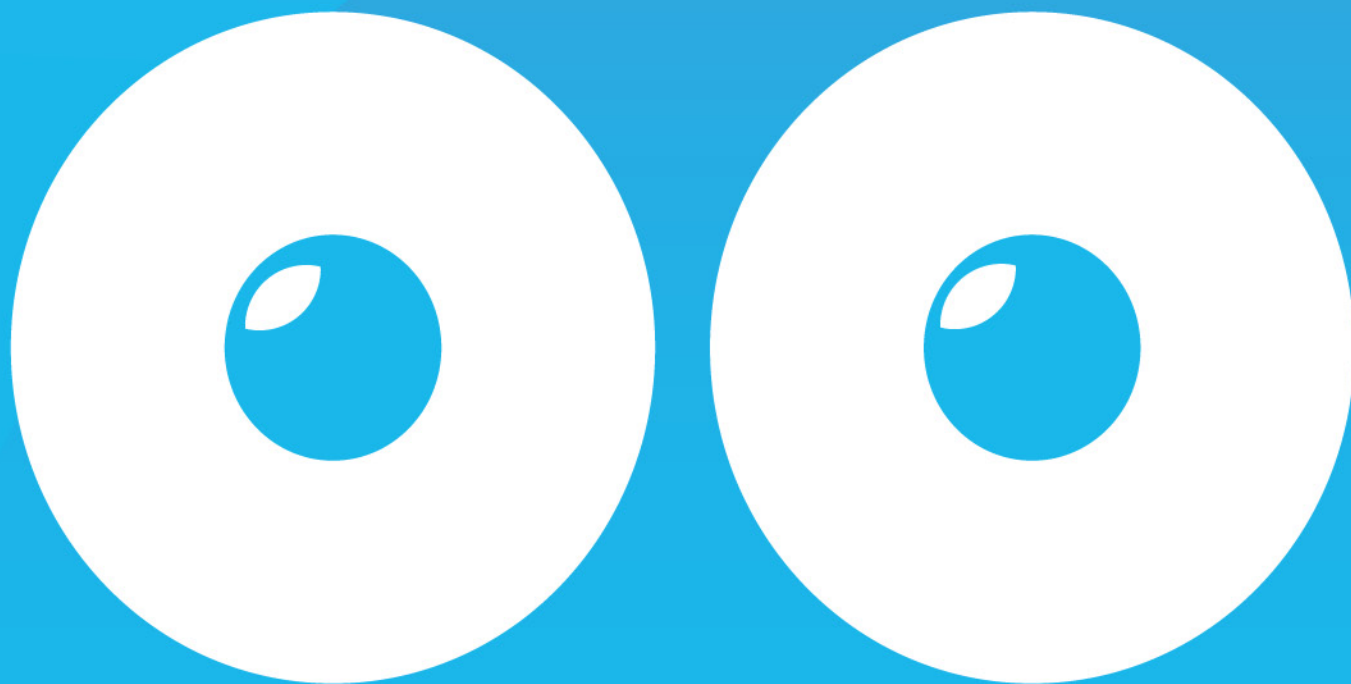
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