

dbox

A facilitated space in a virtual environment
Laboratory for a dynamic interplay of ideas

Research team Summer 2007



Raji Prabhakaran
Yamini Pera



Alex Lin
Mobilezen Capalini



Erin Jennings
serinity Gaea



Steven de la Garza
StevenDeLaGarza Baiczo

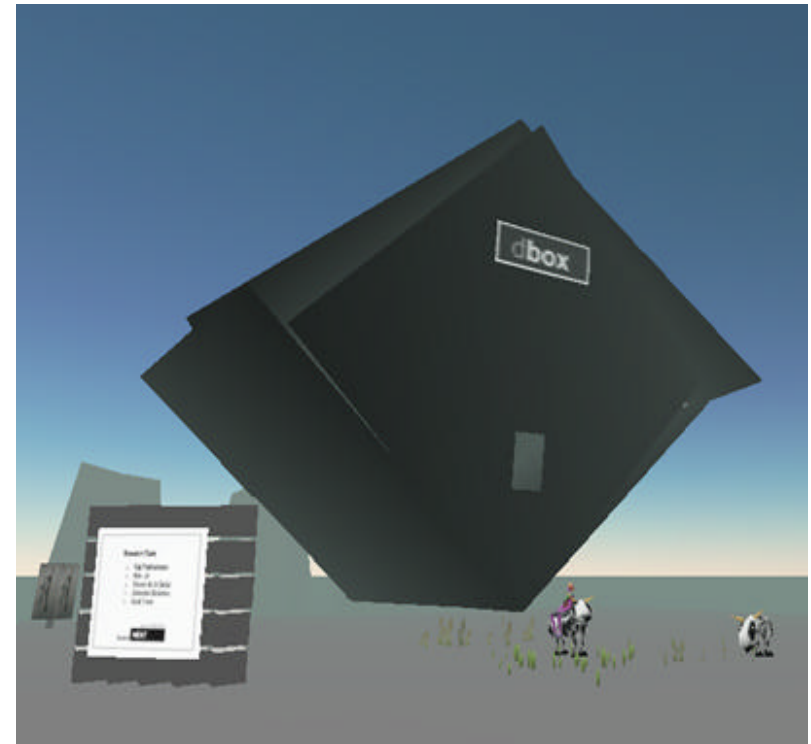


Scott Trent
scot Turk



Jumanné Donahue

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Project: To create a facilitated space (**dbox**) in a virtual environment (Second Life) to drastically enhance and maximize the exchange of data between people. (effective communication)

Premise: The **dbox** is designed to improve all structured exchanges between people where rules of engagement directly influence the effectiveness of communication.



What's **unique**?

Replacing the common meeting or conversation with a fully immersive, facilitated environment that promotes effective communication available on demand. The unique aspect of the dbox is the level of consideration and control directed towards the niche communication. Facilitated events are not unique, but providing a platform that makes these effective communication events available to all is new.

Who **benefits**?

Anyone interested in sharing, generating or exploring new ideas, collecting information or just connecting.

Steps of Project

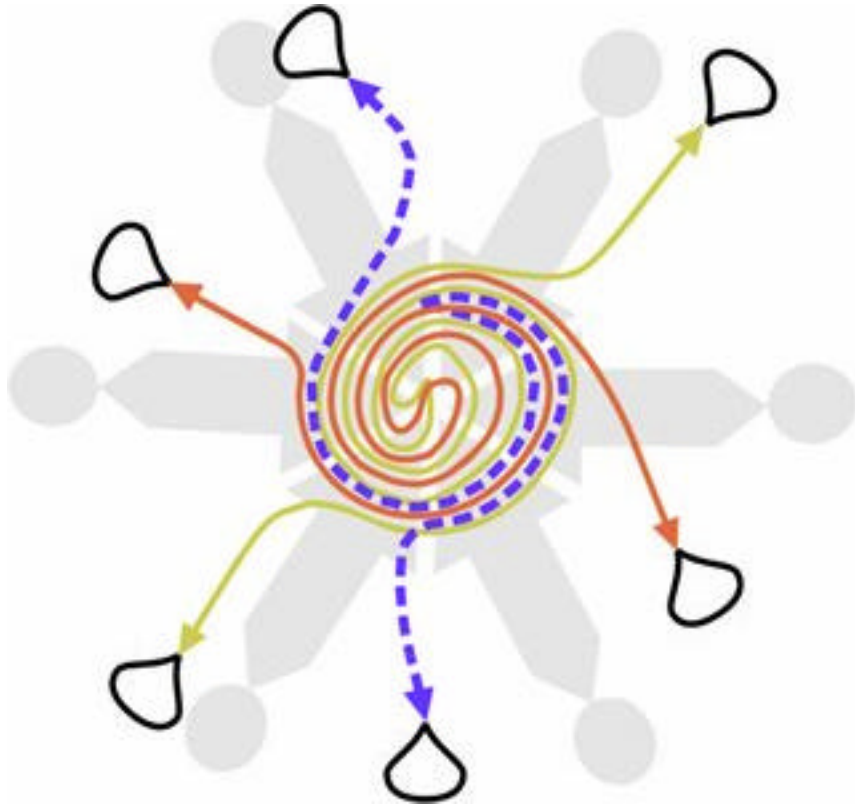
1. Develop dbox concept
2. Build dbox platform
3. Experiments
 - Effectiveness of virtual communication
 - Value of facilitated conversation
 - How much human is needed?
4. Research

Types of communication that benefit from the **dbox**:

Communication **Niches**

- Meeting space
- Creative space
- Classroom
- Think tank
- Cross disciplinary collaboration
- Brain storming sessions
- Dialogue

The project considers communication, connection, and the roles of technology, digital worlds and a virtual environment has on human interaction. The **dbox** as a tool will respond, prompt, highlight, accentuate, promote, direct, and generally facilitate a specified exchange of information: A facilitated conversation.



How the dbox works

In specific communication niches there are fundamental rules that promote a successful exchange. Some are more obvious than others for example:

1. Brain storming session the dbox is programmed to collect all ideas and post them.
2. Business meeting might display only one entry at a time and cache other comments until it's appropriate to post and limit the meeting to a set time.
3. Dialogue sessions might limit the amount of inputs into the conversation in an effort to achieve a 360 degree exchange and hear from all participants, not just one or two.

The dbox was designed with Bohm Dialogue as the communication infrastructure and then expanded to complement niche communications. Basic rules that apply to any type meeting are:

- Full participation expected
- No titles, positions, ranks
- No idea is bad
- Capture all ideas & search for original thoughts
- Listen to understand
- Seek generative discussion
- Suspend judgment
- Accept opinions are not fact
- Act as facts are not truths
- Input is facilitated to be heard



Value of Virtual Platform

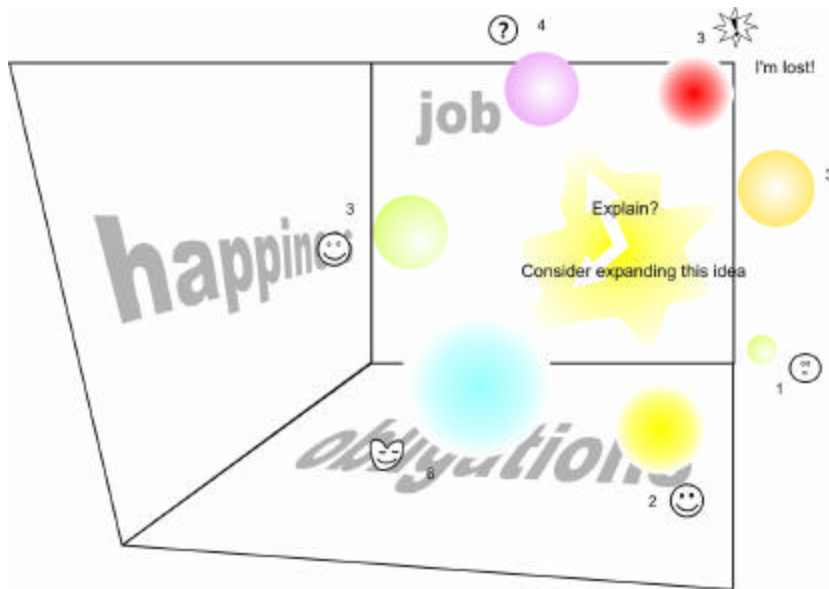
- fully immersive
- unlimited control
- unrealized opportunities

dbox Description

The dbox takes the place of a facilitator and monitors communication to keep the exchange of information focused and directed towards a pre-established objective.

The dbox can be programmed to facilitate a variety of communication niches. Using widely accepted rules of engagement

- The space is a dedicated space that participants enter.
- Interior walls will display text, images, graphics.
- Exterior walls are transparent for observers.
- Once inside, participants take on a glowing orb appearance.
- Participants will be arranged in a circular formation & rearranged randomly.
 - (This keeps attention focused to information, not the individual)
- Key words will be displayed on the walls during the exchange.
 - The words will brighten or fade according to usage.
 - Word will remain visible on the wall as long as they are used.
 - Other words will completely fade after a time of non use.
- Interior lighting will change using colors to accentuate the tone of the conversation.
 - The room & walls will begin white and change colors to indicate a start & stopping point.

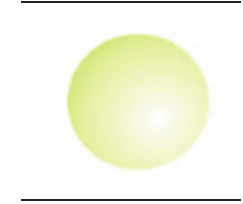


dbox Features

- Typed text appears in different regions of space.
 - o In middle of circle if dialogue
 - o Questions appear above recipient's orb
 - o Argumentative text appears behind speaker-separate from circle
- Numbers appear over each participant indicating number of times submitted input
- The space monitors/controls input of each participant
 - o Does not allow consecutive inputs & considers input ratio
 - o Can't contribute more than twice the # of participants (exm: 10 people- no more than 20%)



VS



Enrollment- Entry

Flow

Avatar - Orb

Avatars which provide a human presence with the virtual environment are shed as participants enter the dbox space. This serves multiple purposes as participants become fully immersed in the process and a sense of commitment to the conversation and disperse any peripheral distractions to the conversation.

Issue

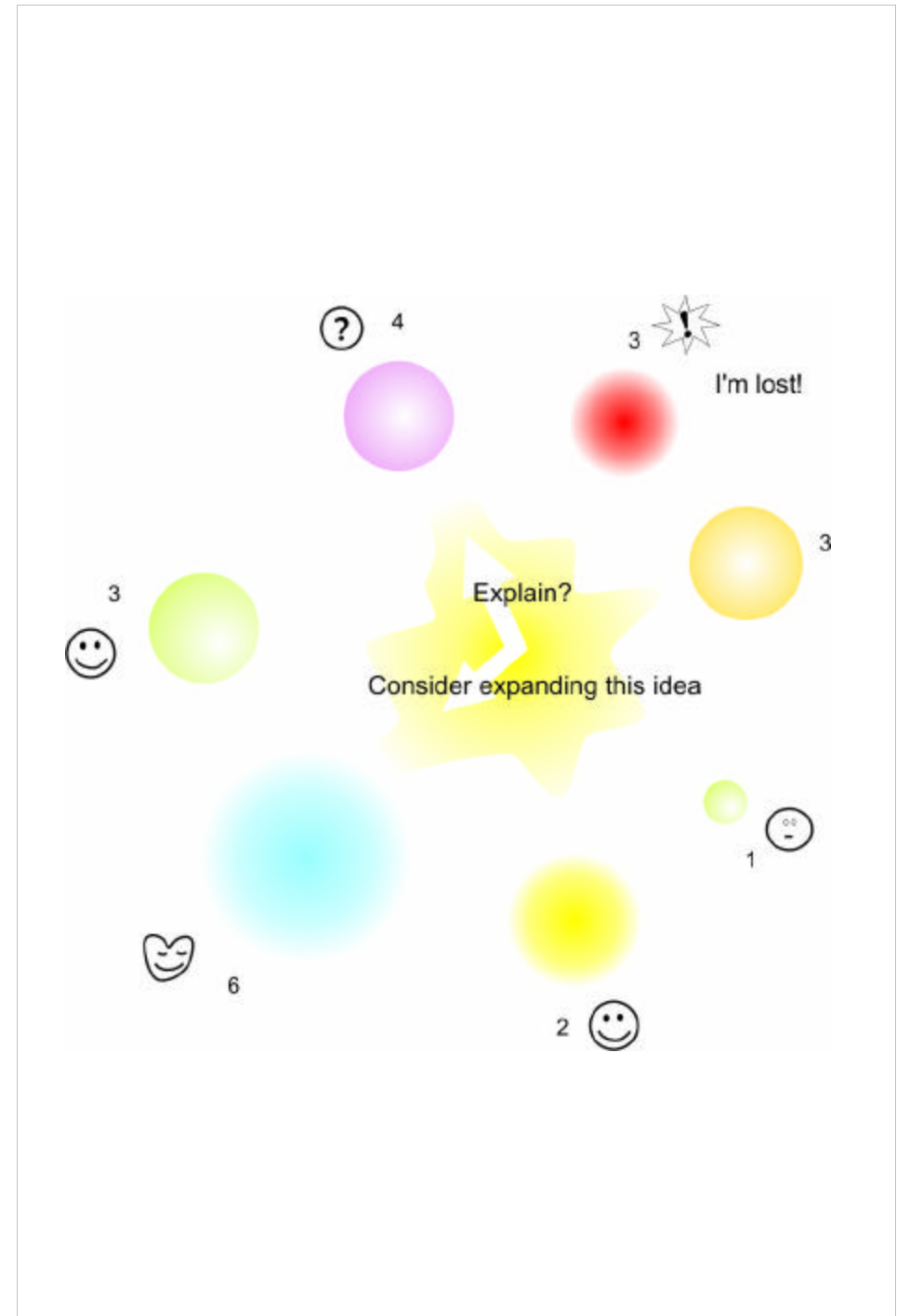
How much human is necessary to communicate effectively?
 A smile? A gesture? A point or a jab? An elevated voice or a raised eyebrow?
 How much is needed and when is it too much?
 When does peripheral information distract from the dialogue?



Participants

To participate in the dbox parties must enter Second Life as an avatar and enter a dbox portal. (dbox door)

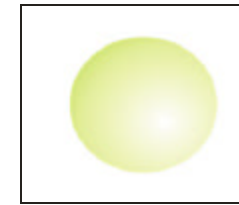
- Avatars shed their current screen presence and take on the form of glowing orb.
 - o This orb enlarges and brightens when speaking
 - o The orb will change color based on emoticon
 - o The orb will shrink each time participant hasn't spoken
- In the middle of the dialogue circle formed by participants is a light glow:
 - o The middle glow enlarges with dialogue
 - o The middle glow shrinks without dialogue
 - o The middle glow expands and connects to each speaker
 - It stays connected if participant asks a question
 - (Goal to enlarge and connect all participants at once)
- Emoticons are floating close to the participant's orb.





Emoticons are used to give additional emotional input and expressions by the orb that contributes to the conversation.

These graphic cues represent emotional intention: Happy, angry, frustrated, loving, confused, blocked, excited, and requesting clarification.



The orb displays 10 fundamental expressions that contributes to the dialogue.

- Orb

The orb is a unique feature that is counter intuitive to the virtual environment and explores the concept that peripheral information such as hair style, clothes, skin color, and even body types become extraneous information that distracts from the objective of effective communication.

10 expressions:

1. rotate
2. expand
3. shrink
4. vibrate
5. pulse
6. change color
7. glow
8. form shapes (oval, circle, square, rectangle)
9. void- hole in middle
10. jump



Access

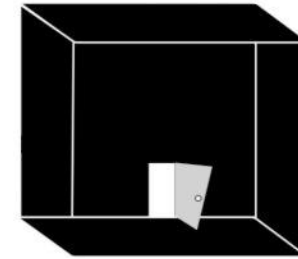
Flow Terminal - Waiting room - Avatar

Issue Availability to non-technical user

The dbox is accessible in Second Life by entering a free standing door. As a portal, the dbox door can be placed throughout the virtual world. As participants enter the door, they are transported to the dbox space.

Although Second Life is free and open to all, access is difficult. Potential users encounter issues of inadequate computer hardware and high maintenance software updates as common deterrence.

The dbox team will provide “loaner” avatars placed in the dbox “waiting room,” to give real world clients access to the Second Life virtual world.

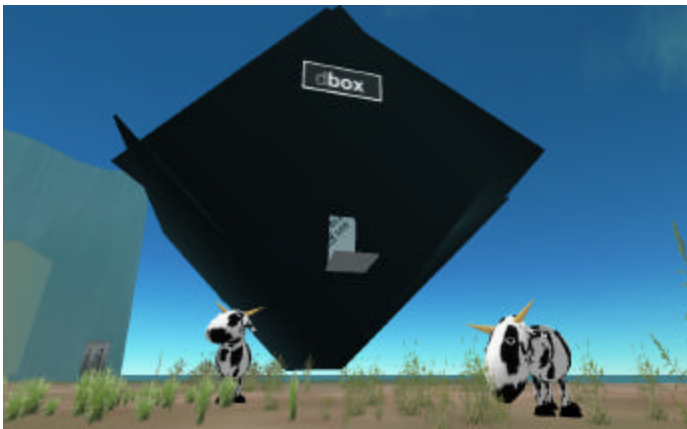


dbox **sample**: Brain storming session

1. Quantity over quality- capture all ideas
2. Organize ideas-
 - a) highlight similar data
 - b) combine duplicate entries
 - c) define emerging categories
3. Define 3 areas of emphasis
4. Stop- collect ideas
5. Further discussion to define areas of emphasis

Specific rules

- capture and display typed text
- Keep the topic of exploration prominently displayed
- Time the event
- Monitor the speed and amount of key strokes
- Rephrase the question and present 3 times during each session



Scott Trent is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas at Dallas, in the Emerging Media and Communications department in the school of Arts & Technology.

Scott Trent

The University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Technology

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