

Collab Sketch

Multi-Platform Collaborative Sketching on the Internet

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Being overwhelmed by computing technologies, we are forwarding more and more of our skills into area of "thinking by head". Our designing capabilities are turning into capabilities of "how to work with very intelligent technology". The processes of human brain, nevertheless, are different to the processes in computer. Designers are said to think by hand. As architects we are looking for final forms that not only fulfil the technical requirements, but are beautiful as well. Therefore sketching is one of the skills that belongs to an architect in order to design and particularly to work in a team. The workshop will accordingly focus on sketching on electronic devices in comparison with sketching on paper. Is it actually possible to switch to tablets when sketching? If yes, which application is the best to use? In order to find that out, there will be a test of three applications: Collab Sketch, Queezy and FlockDraw. The participants will be sketching on-line and helping to find the best way of communication by sketch. By drawing they will become a part of the research, their work will be post-produced and exhibited at the welcome dinner.

Keywords: *Sketching, Internet-based Collaboration, Digital vs. Physical*

Figure 1
Sketch produced
with Collab Sketch

INTRODUCTION

Collab Sketch [1] is a program for sharing and manipulating sketches via the internet. It was developed by Kateřina Nováková at Czech Technical University in Prague, in collaboration with ETH Zurich, Chair of Information Architecture. Collab Sketch is multi-platform, working on Android, iPad, and Windows. People can sketch, share their sketches, and work on sketches made by other people - which forms the technical basis of this workshop.



WORKSHOP OUTLINE

In the ColLab sketch workshop participants shall experience a real-time sketch collaboration. (If there is enough participants we can break a record in the number of users of ColLab sketch bring connected to one session.) This experiment shall test the possibilities and potential of such a co-working plus it has the aim of testing the social level of remote collaboration. Two types of co-worker settings will be simulated: In-place and remote collaboration. In the collocated setting maximal number of collaborating participants may be tested together with the actual contribution of sharing sketches and working on the sketches made by somebody else. Firstly, sketches will be switched voluntarily, secondly, they will be switched after 2 minutes. In the next run, sketches will be switched after 10 minutes and finally, participants will be asked to switch sketches as many times as they can within 30 minutes. After this testing, users will be interviewed.

In the remote-simulated condition several questions may be posted and may be answered by observation of the participants. First of all, what streams are crucial for architects when collaborating remotely. What is the importance of audio, video and sketch channel in the remote collaboration? Again, what is the maximum number of participants working in one sheet? Does ColLab sketch system of collaboration rise the eventual possible number of sketching participants in the design session?

Here, the influence of the used devices must be mentioned. It is assumed that participants will be using their own laptops, tablets and even mobile-phones. The last mentioned cant be recommended if not using stylus. Derived from previous testing drawing on Smartphone with the use of finger is so inconvenient and imprecise so that it can not compete with any bigger device with a stylus. Anyway, testing devices may not be the core of the workshop.

The workshop will start by several drawing games, so that participants learn how to draw on their devices but also loose fear of drawing in front of other people. After that a serious design session will

take place, where the output should be one design with the touch from everybody throughout the design process. The first task will be an easy piece of furniture with a special function (e.g. a chair for a witch-/magician/president), in the second task, architecture shall be designed. Again, it will be a something special with a specific function (Madonna's house, public toilets in Vienna, a lookout tower in the Dead Valley or Robinson's shed on a desert island). To that end, we will be using not only ColLab Sketch but also Queekey [2] and FlockDraw [3].

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

All results and especially the process of collaborative drawing will be exhibited at the end of the day. This is possible because the ColLab sketch program is recording the processes of sketching in each sheet. There will be a questionnaire offered to the visitors of the exposition of the ready sketches in order to evaluate the results in a qualitative way. For quantitative results time will be measured: the time spent by sketching and the time spent by talking. Also time spent by organising the session itself is important and will be measured. The whole session will be recorded by a camera.

REFERENCES

- [1] <http://collab.bitwise.cz>
- [2] <http://www.queekey.com>
- [3] <http://flockdraw.com>