

CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study:

Impact of Community Visualization on User Motivation to Contribute in a Peer-to-Peer Resource Sharing Environment

Researchers:

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The aim of this study is to investigate the usability and the effects of visualizing the peer community of a peer-to-peer resource-sharing environment. This is accomplished through experimenting with a peer-to-peer file-sharing program (Comtella) targeted at graduate students and researchers. Comtella allows users a limited number of users (typically within a research group, a class etc.) to share research papers stored digitally on their local computers with other users of the network. By exchanging papers, users build up relationships with other users, thus forming communities of shared interests. A graph-visualization of the peer network is included in the interface. It allows the user to see the other peers currently on-line, their areas of interest, amount of papers they are contributing, as well as their relationships within particular communities of interest.

Potential Benefits:

The possible benefits to the participants will be more reliable access to research papers, provided by university libraries, the Web, and the users themselves. It will allow the users to make use of the search efforts of their peers, which can lead to a synergy in a group's efforts to stay current in their knowledge of research literature.

Potential Risks:

It is hard to envisage any risks or side effects of the usage of the system. The papers that are shared are publicly available on the web anyway, and we don't envisage copyright issues. If we become aware of any negative effects during the study, we will inform immediately the participants or interrupt the study. We may discontinue a participant's involvement in the study if they use the environment to communicate offensive, copyrighted or inappropriate materials. In the event of a participant withdrawing from the study, his / her data will be deleted and destroyed insofar as possible.

Storage of Data:

All data will be stored anonymously and is available only to the investigators involved in the study. All data about the user will be stored securely for a minimum of five years,

electronic data on a password-protected computer system, and any additional on-paper data by Dr. Vassileva.

Confidentiality:

The anonymity of the collected data and the privacy of the subjects will be completely protected, and the information obtained from this data would be used only in theses, journal articles or conference publications written by the researchers. Only aggregate data will be reported in publications; the names and identities of the participants will not be published in any form.

Right to Withdraw:

Each participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time; this will not affect the participant's academic status. In the event of a participant withdrawing from the study, his / her data will be deleted. The participants will be advised of any new information that will have a bearing on the participants' decision to continue in the study.

Questions:

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board through the Office of Research Services (966-2084), or through Julita Vassileva (966-2073).

If you wish to acquire information on the results of the research once the study is completed, send a request to Julita Vassileva at jiv@cs.usask.ca.

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Researcher)