Third ASIS&T Student Design Competition: The “Truthiness” Challenge

by Candy Schwartz

EDITOR’S SUMMARY
For the third year, students attending the ASIS&T Annual Meeting were invited to compete in a design challenge, this time focusing on “truthiness.” The task was to devise a user opinion site that would distinguish fake reviews from valid and trustworthy ones. Students settled into four teams, based partly on the similarity of their shoes, and chose topics for their sites. Over two days, grabbing time between conference sessions, the teams gathered to plot out aspects of their site including system architecture, input and output features and user interaction. Teams then described the hypothetical sites to a panel of four judges, who considered creativity, impact on the problem, feasibility, contribution to humanity and quality of the presentation. As members of the winning team of Pratt + S. Carolina + Mizzou, Matt Miller, Jeff Mixer, Ben Richardson, Dinara Saparova, Andy Steinitz and Yao Zhang will receive free registration for the 2013 ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Montreal.

KEYWORDS
web sites	credibility
information architecture	competition
sentiment analysis	graduate students

despite any number of difficulties imposed by the arrival of hurricane Sandy, the annual Student Design Competition (co-chaired by Stephanie Haas, Candy Schwartz and Katie Shilton) enjoyed its third successful year at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Baltimore.

At the opening session, held on Sunday evening, the design topic was introduced. It was characterized as the “Truthiness” challenge:

Assessing veracity and trustworthiness, whether of people, organizations or documents, are difficult challenges in technologically mediated settings. Fake online product reviews, book reviews, restaurant and vacation reviews, Twitter followers, etc., are a growing problem [1]. The gaming of reputation has consequences for a range of online interactions, including commerce, social networks, political discussion and debate, and crisis management. How do we separate the wheat from the chaff? Develop a preliminary design for a review site or crowd sourced information aggregator for the setting of your choice that makes trustworthiness and reputation primary design criteria.

The designs were slated for presentation to a distinguished panel of judges only two days later. Between Sunday and Tuesday students had to develop their ideas to solve the design challenge (considering system architecture, input/output and interaction) and prepare a presentation for the panel. Students were also strongly encouraged to participate in the rest of the conference and not spend all of their time working on the challenge.

The last step on Sunday night was to form groups. The rules require that no group contain more than two people from the same program. To get to know each other, students formed groups first by a numbered count-off and then by shoe similarity (which led to some amusement). The ice having been broken, they then formed final groups and started exchanging contact information and picking a team name. Following some late arrivals and early departures, four teams emerged: iTruth (Jase Alston, Sean Burns, April Earle and Hassan Zamir), Multiple Choice (Sara Chizari, Houda El Mimouni, Glen Farrelly, Christopher...
Points were allocated for creativity of design (30), impact on solving the problem (20), feasibility of solution (20), contribution to humanity (20) and quality of presentation, including answering judges’ questions (10). All the entries were creative and thought-provoking, and the winning spot was closely contested as judges scribbled and erased notes on their score sheets and asked tough questions. Finally a winner emerged: Pratt + S. Carolina + Mizzou. Each member of the team receives free registration for the 2013 ASIS&T Annual Meeting in Montreal.

Having proven that nothing can stop the Student Design Competition, the organizers are already looking forward to the 2013 competition, and who knows what the challenge will be? Stay tuned!