Using Technology to Cope with Information Overload

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Information in its most restricted technical sense is a message (utterance or expression) or collection of messages in an ordered sequence that consists of symbols, or it is the meaning that can be interpreted from such a message or collection of messages. Information can be recorded or transmitted. It can be recorded as signs, or conveyed as signals. Information is any kind of event that affects the state of a dynamic system. The concept has numerous other meanings in different contexts. Moreover, the concept of information is closely related to notions of constraint, communication, control, data, form, instruction, knowledge, meaning, mental stimulus, pattern, perception, representation, and especially entropy.
Problems

- Information Overload
- Information Overconsumption
- Information Distractions
- There’s an App for that
Information Overload

- When you are pushed information at a rate that is faster than you can deal with it.
- List serves/Mailing lists
- Advertisements
- Phone calls
- Emails
- Instant messages
- People walking into the office
- Meetings
Overconsumption

- Casual Web Browsing
- RSS Feeds
- Twitter
- Google+
- Facebook, and other Social Networks
- Web Searches
- News Websites
  - Reddit, Fark, etc ...
- Conferences, Seminars, Webinars
Informational Distractions

- Any information that causes you to stop working on what you are doing or lose your train of thought.
  - Anything that “side tracks” you
  - Advertisements
- Information to alert you that there is information that you need to deal with.
  - Email notifications
  - Numbers on application icons
  - Push notifications
  - IM alerts
Applications
There’s An App For That

- Having an App for Everything is a double edged sword.
  - **TRUE**: It is always best to use an application that is designed for the task at hand.
    - You'll end up with a more refined application for that task, without the bloat or additional options needed in more generic applications.
  - **FALSE**: It is always best to use an application that is designed for the task at hand.
    - If you don’t use an application often enough, you have to relearn it each time you use it.
Applications for Dealing with Information

- Applications are only part of the answer. “Life Style” changes are important.
- Find 1 or 2 primary applications for most of your information
- Find 1 or 2 secondary applications for the rest of your information
- Tertiary applications should be information gathering but not organizing.
- Don’t overlook the web browser
Syncing

- If you use more than one device or one computer your information gathering applications should sync.
- You should never see the same information twice.
Application Problems

- If it takes longer to put the information into an application than it takes to write it on a piece of paper, find a new app.
- Buy (or Donate to) your applications to get rid of advertisements.
Everything Buckets

- Everything buckets are where information goes to die.
- An application that is designed to hold all of your information.
- You have to remember your Meta data (information about information) for everything buckets to work properly.
- The Information problem is compounded with not only having too much information, but now you have to remember that you HAVE the information and what the information about that information is for the original information to be of any use to you.
- Usually has "micro types" for passwords and offers encryption on some level
- Stores everything in a proprietary database.
Evernote

- Cross platform.
- Syncing
- Free and paid versions

- Stores photos, PDFs, plain text, rich text
  - Avoid using it as an Everything Bucket
- Searchable, tagging, very easy to organize.
Dropbox

- Make use of the file system!
- Sync files between devices and computers.
- Create a “notes” folder, and put other folders in there for organization.
- You can store ANY type of information in files
- Many mobile apps use dropbox for syncing
• 1965 called, they’d like their Everything Bucket back.
Hipster PDA

- Pen & Paper
- Sometimes technology ISN’T the solution
RSS Readers

- Google Reader
- Syncing
- Desktop Clients
  - FeedDemon
  - Reeder
  - NetNewsWire
- Turn off notifications!
- Use with time shifting
Twitter Clients

- Syncing
- Tweet Marker
- Multiple Accounts
- Similar interface on all your devices
- Use with time shifting
Information
Life Style
Changes
Prioritize Information Sources

• **In person**: can't ignore easily

• **Phone**: easily ignored, but generally important enough to deal with promptly

• **Instant message**: more urgent than email. Send your message and wait. Instant Message doesn’t mean instant response.

• **Email**: not urgent. deal with email in batches through the day
Trim Information Sources

- Some Information sources cannot be trimmed.
- Use filters in software that provide them to highlight important information
- Remove redundant information sources
- Remove information you don’t really care about (“Mark All as Read” syndrome)
- If websites offer specific RSS feeds, subscribe only to the ones that you are interested in
- Use multiple twitter accounts to organize feeds and keep useful information separate from distracting information
- Utilize google circles and only show feeds of people that are useful to you NOW.
Time Shifting

- Instapaper (http://www.instapaper.com/)
- Read It Later (http://readitlaterlist.com/)
- Apple Reading List (Built into Safari and iOS)
- Bookmarks and syncing
- Notes (evernote, text document in drop box)
Page Cleanup

- Instapaper
- Reader in safari (Built in)
- iReader in Chrome (https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/ppelffpjgkifjfgnbabaaldcehkpaqmlbc)
- Readability in Firefox (https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/readability/)
Hope Reigns as Americans Prepare to Ring in 2012

By DAVID B. CARUSO Associated Press

NEW YORK December 31, 2011 (AP)

Times Square was awash in hopeful sentiments as it began to welcome hordes of New Year's Eve revelers looking to cast off a rough year and cheer their way to something better in 2012.

For all of the holiday's bittersweet potential, New York City always treats it like a big party — albeit one that, for a decade now, has taken place under the watchful eye of a massive security force.

Pessimism has no place on Broadway. Not on New Year's Eve, anyway. The masses of tourists streaming through the square for a glimpse of the crystal-paneled ball that drops at midnight were there to kiss, pose for silly snapshots and gawk at the stages being prepared for performers like Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber.

Some revelers, wearing party hats and "2012" glasses, began camping out Saturday morning, even as workers readied bags stuffed with hundreds of balloons and technicians put colored filters on klieg lights.

"Everybody's suffering. That's why it's so beautiful to be here celebrating something with everybody," said Lisa Nicol, 47, of Melbourne, Australia, after securing a prime spot next to the main stage.

Houston tourist Megan Martin, 22, staked out her space with her boyfriend at 10:30 a.m. She said the party ahead would be worth sitting on cold asphalt all day in a spectator pen ringed by metal barricades.

"I've wanted to see it since I was a little girl," she said.
Ad Block Plus

- Chrome: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/cfhdojbkjhnlbpkdaibdcddilifdd
- Safari: http://safariadblock.com/
- Internet Explorer: http://simple-adblock.com/
Passwords

- 1Password (https://agilebits.com/1password)
- All Platforms (Desktop and Mobile)
- KeePass (http://keepass.info)
- All Platforms (Desktop)
- LastPass (https://lastpass.com)
- Cloud/Browser based.
**Email**

- No magic applications to help with email. Stuck with Groupwise client at work.
- At home, choose a client that works for you
- Delete what is no longer important
- Use filters to move advertisements to a folder and mark them as read.
- Don’t get notified of new email. No popups or unread counts.
- Don’t send replies that are meaningless, just sends information to the other person that they don’t need and have to deal with.
- If applications or websites email you notifications (like facebook, twitter, google+, amazon, etc) remove those notifications.
The Web Browser

- Use about:blank or your favorite search engine as your home page. No distractions when you start up your browser.

- Cloud Computing
  - Privacy Pitfalls
  - Use it their way
  - Google Reader/Mail/Calendar/Docs

- Group/Project Management Applications

- Remove Google+ Notifications that show on every google page
  - Block Plus: (http://nikcub.appspot.com/posts/blockplus-a-browser-extension-to-block-google-notifications)
To Do Lists

• Don’t spend more time managing your to do lists than it takes to do the tasks on the list!
  • 2 minute rule
  • Asana
  • Remember the Milk
  • Todoist
  • Tada - lists (http://tadalist.com/)
  • Toodel-Do (http://www.toodledo.com/)
Basecamp

- Project Oriented
- Libraries have an account
- To do Lists, Tim Tracking, Milestones, File sharing, white boarding

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Asana

- Task Oriented
- Free
- Can share projects between accounts
- Can have personal and professional projects on one account (and only grant access to certain projects to other people)
- Mobile App
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