Cooperative Work on the Web

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Developing a Framework for Understanding What People are Doing Now with Web 2.0 Technologies

This poster presents the preliminary results of the national survey of knowledge workers about their use of publicly available, Web-based services to support cooperative work. These Web-based services, such as Google Docs or Basecamp, account for many of the new technologies used in the workplace. We asked knowledge workers to report on their use of publicly available online services (PAOS) and the specific activities they performed.

We found that, on average, our group of professionals were using PAOS for 20% of their work day, most frequently to manage and coordinate work on a collaborative project. We found that most participants also had their email application open for the majority of their work day (95%), but instant messaging was either used frequently or not at all.

While these results do not provide definitive findings, they will help guide future studies for understanding the work practices mediated by Web-based services.

METHODS

Surveys were posted to six technology-focused groups from major U.S. metropolitan areas for meetup.com, an online interest-based group for meeting people of similar interests. In addition, three national special interest groups of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) were targeted. Research team members joined these groups and then posted links to the survey on the member boards. 176 responses were received.

Over the period of four days, survey responses were collected online with a University of Washington Catalyst Tool. The survey was configured to allow only one response per user and did not collect any personally identifying information from the respondents.

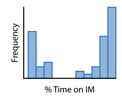
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our results suggest that PAOS are important for enhancing cooperative work, but more research is needed to understand how these services are used in conjunction with other technologies.

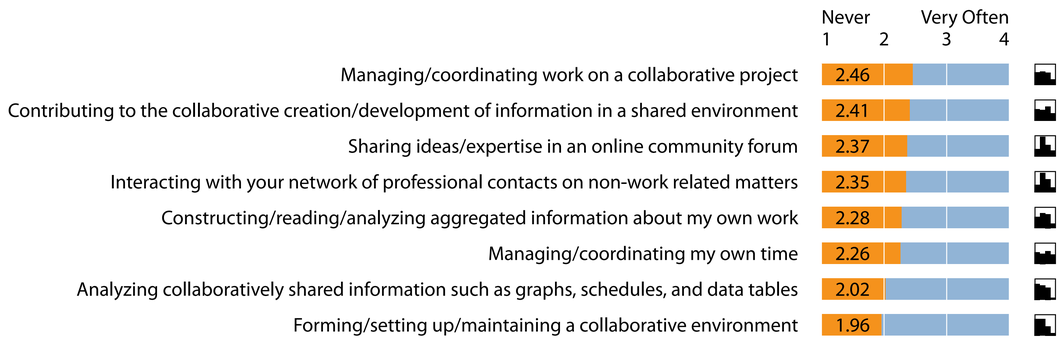
We plan to expand this pilot study to a wider audience of knowledge workers and refine the questionnaire to observe any correlations between work practices and demographic factors.

Understanding the work practices mediated by Web-based services will guide our research group to create a dashboard technology for self-analysis and monitoring of cooperative work efforts.

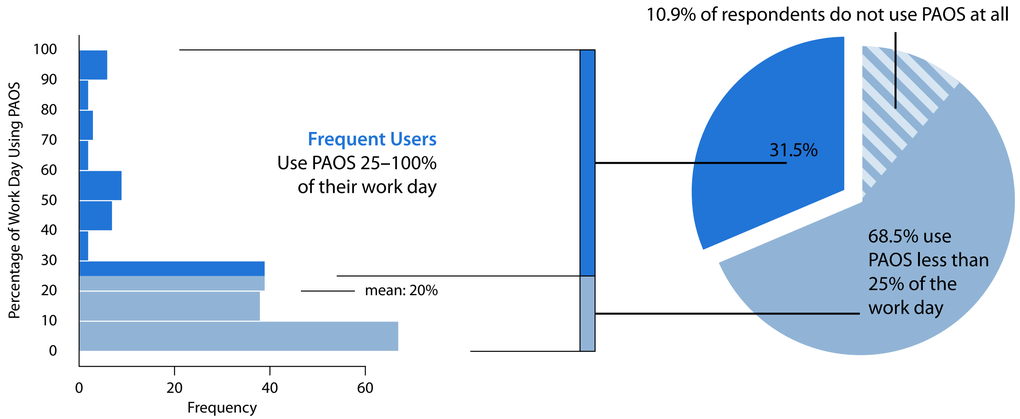
Our respondents' averages

They've celebrated	They've used the Internet for work for	They have an email application open	They have a browser open	They work from an office in	They use instant messaging
42.9	11.6	95%	82%	67%	
SD 11	SD 4.5	SD 15	SD 26		
birthdays	years	of the time	of the time	of cases	always or not at all

How often do you engage in these online activities?



How often do you use publicly available online services at work?



% of Time PAOS Used During Work Day

These results suggest that PAOS are prevalent in the workplace, with most (89.1%) using these services at least once. However, 31.5% use PAOS for 25% or more of their work day, most often to contribute to the creation of information in a shared environment.

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