(20 pts – 3 hours) Trillllllllium II! Design of a potential application

"Trillium Match"

Trillium dining area is a good place for students to meet with their friends. However, very often students just come alone for dining during their small break between classes. Sometimes you may get bored of eating alone, while many others might just in the same situation with you. What I imagined is something that can help to match such people together. A solution comes out is this "Trillium Dining Match" which can find you find a dinning partner quickly and pleasingly.

"Trillium Dinning Match" is an interactive system, aims to help people find someone to eat and talk together while dinning in Trillium. Implementation of this design requires a large wall-mounted screen at the cashier area and many small wall-mounted touch screens one besides each dinning table. People who wants to invite someone to eat together could send an invitation using the touch screen beside the dinning table, which will be displayed on the large screen in front of the cashier area. The invitation could be as simply as find someone to eat together or specified with details like "interested discussion topics", "gender preference" and so on. Those request information will be displayed on the large screen in front of the cashier. So people can see those invitation while they are waiting at the cashier, who are interested can accept the invitation and come over to the table to join a meal together with someone sending the request.

Figure 1 - Storyboard
Design Justification

At first, I came up with two ideas about this design regarding two issues in Trillium:

1) Some people come here alone but they might be willing to find someone to talk to. It would be helpful to have something that can facilitate their interaction.
2) The trash/clean up area is confusing. It would be helpful if find some fun way to inform people about trash classification.

I picked up the first idea, finally since it is a perfect fit for dinning and a long-lasting topic for people to come here both occasionally and regularly, while the second one with educational purpose could be interesting but will be less attractive when people getting familiar with it since most people are coming to Trillium quite regularly.

For the first idea, the application could be either presented as a media for people to communicate with OR as a tool helps to facilitate communication. I picked up the later one, since the dinning area is a perfect social environment for people getting together, the goal of my design is not to grab people's attention from their connection with real people around them, but to facilitate communication between people in Trillium.

I find it an interesting topic for implement a device to help people someone eat together during their dinning time. According to my own experience, I always spend my dinning time in Trillium alone in the noon, because I don't have a friend of similar class schedule with me, we are all hurried from one place of the campus to another during the day without having a chance to eat together. It was quite boring to eat alone. But things could be much more interesting if you can meet with new friends during the 15-20 minutes dinning time. I always see people eating alone too, but they might be working on laptops or reading newspapers. Something is preventing people from interacting with others: difficulties in guessing other's mind, media that block between people... What we need is something that can drive our attention and trigger the communication.

Considering the average time students could spend on this device could be quite limited, this device should be simple enough and saving more time for the real conversation between people. So I designed this "dinning matching" process with quite simple steps: "send invitation" - "accept invitation". The system would not be involved to the communication after the match is made. Something still need to consider about is how to avoid the conflicts if more people come to one invitation at a time.

Considering some people just come here for studying or having a group discussion, this device should not be annoying to people who don't need it and should not distract or interrupt people from their focused works, discussions, communication with others, etc. So there should be indicator clearly differentiate those tables that are inviting people from other tables, so people wouldn't get disturbed by errors.