

## The Deployable Message

Darla V. Lindberg, Faculty Architect

Jacklynn Arndt, David Niemiec, Karolina Kaczmarczyk, David Moseman, Student Team  
Pennsylvania State University

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**“Information is commerce, media, politics, science, art, education, military power, a good, a service, a dessert topping, a floor wax, porn...” *Tomorrow Now* by Bruce Sterling**

**“We’re clearly soaking in it (information). It’s abstract pervasiveness, though, should not make it any less important – in terms of scrutinizing its contents – than anything else. We ought to create enough of a critical distance from information that we can ask questions about the operating forces that bring it into being.”**

***Massive Change* by Bruce Mau**

### Abstract

The circumstances of the natural, *or unnatural*, disaster significantly challenges first response to emergencies. In the event of an emergency people and communities need critical triage, coordinated evacuation, communication, sanitary food and water, temporary housing, and disaster aid to stabilize infrastructure. All facets of every operation require reliable, redundant and robust information. Compounding the success of first response to emergency operations is the “worried-well” – roughly 3500 out of every 5000 (or 70%) affected by fear who seek medical attention, or who otherwise jam up transportation and communication systems as emergency operations attempt to move into action. The results are another kind of “pandemic”, the result of unsubstantiated media or uncoordinated information. Unfortunately the public has come to expect the media to profit from “shock value.” Therefore, a means that might otherwise be ubiquitous, affordable and accessible goes underutilized by the public in these emergency situations. “The Deployable Message” installation positions credible sources for de-sensationalized information to propose a virtual grass roots organization of means and ends to spring to action. Organized around existing, credible and sustainable local Emergency Medical Systems (EMS) and volunteer and emergency resources (Red Cross, CARE USA, UNICEF, etc.), the Worried-Well population is normalized through “soft systems” communication and media infrastructure consisting of orchestrated phone calls (networked calling trees), newspapers, news magazines (the “truth serum” approach for Time, Newsweek, etc.), television, billboards, and a web site (TheWorriedWell.com). The situation is this: in the instance of an emergency by simply **changing the purpose** of the ends of print and media technology without changing the means **everything is changed**. Going into “high alert” newspapers distribute essential survival information (in our installation the papers are pink to denote de-sensationalized information – and free!); radio, television, and the Internet orchestrate volunteers and coordinate evacuation; cell phone and GPS systems reach remote communities and families who can assist in getting information to family and friends in a networked system around the world. As medical support, disaster relief housing and other survivor aid support seek solutions in innovative and inventive deployable systems the world needs an equally innovative “deployable message.” This installation presents this information dissemination conduit as just-in-time information to the families and friends remotely and indirectly impacted by disaster – the “worried-well.”

Networked projects such as the Worried-Well are designed to be distributed information systems. The local phone book is a spatial community of services, expertise, individuals and resources organized syntactically. The largest set of data on a single social network is the Internet Movie Database linking performers who have acted together at some point in their careers. The overall power grid is actually made of three sub-networks, known as *interconnections*. One supplies power to the eastern part of the United States; another, to the region west of the Rocky Mountains; and the third supplies power solely to the state of Texas. Mapping the generators and transmission lines appear as a sprawling tangle of disorganized lines. Tracing connections between generators reveals, instead, a sophisticated network to roughly three others when clustered together generating power ten times higher for peak loads or power distribution emergencies. The goal of large computing grid projects like these can range from complex forms of interaction in the medical community (bio-informatics) – where researchers work toward the development of cures for diseases and viruses – to The Parallel Tool Consortium bringing together representatives from federal, industrial and academic sectors to take a leadership role in defining, developing and promoting parallel tools that meet specific requirements of the users who develop scalable applications on a variety

of platforms. What distinguishes these networked systems is a concern with integrating distributed resources using standard protocols and interfaces to provide capabilities that would not otherwise be available. The grid is exciting because it's an evolutionary step beyond today's Internet. It builds on the same technology that underlies email and Web browsers, but it extends that technology to allow us not just to access information as the Web does, or to send messages as the email system does, but also to tie together computing systems that may be geographically dispersed.

The "Millennium Clock" or the *Clock of the Long Now* (as it is now called) was inspired by a visit Danny Hillis made to New College, Oxford. The oak beams in the ceiling of the common room were not the original beams set in 1386. They'd been replaced at the end of the nineteenth century. The story goes that the man who built the original ceiling in the fourteenth century also planted oak trees to eventually replace the beams. Consequently, the tree would grow patiently on the campus of Oxford University for five centuries waiting to be cut down and used in just that way. Some say the story isn't true. Some say it ought to be. Good design, in any event, has always had the ability to augment human possibility. In the instance of an emergency, especially one that impacts an entire realm of our world, time folds in. Access, boundary, and community typically thought of in spatial terms becomes impressively temporal. Slow motion characterizes the shock victim's recollection of an incident and serves the human body by distancing the physical reality of pain or imminent danger. Unlike an oak tree and a beam waiting five centuries to be reconciled together, singularity of purpose generates a demiurgic artificial intelligence driving the epic event of a disaster or emergency. The intent through the "Deployable Message" installation is that architects might hone a globally civic awareness and identify systems of temporal integration and help to unite the constructed response.