Stay In The Loop

UID 25 Years Anniversary & Reunion

Celebrating the first quarter century of the school. Two days of joyful memories, reunions and many surprises.

View the 2-day-program: http://www.dh.umu.se/en/uid-25-years-anniversary-reunion/program/

#lifeatuid

Kitchen Cleaning

TD1

Follow Us!

Visit the UID Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/uid

@martinvandenbroeck #lifeatuid

Tweet with UID: #lifeatuid
Or follow us: @wozzop

Instagram with UID: #lifeatuid

vimeo.com/uid vimeo.com/ixdumea

The Week That Was

OzCHI 2014 announces IxD1 team Kingsloths in Space (Aylin Alpay, Matthias Karg, Trieuvy Luu, Ezgi Sabirone, Martijn van den Broeck) finalists, selected to present their work in Sydney (2–5 December 2014).

View project here: http://kingslothsinspace.tumblr.com/

IxD1 presenting their concepts for The Guitar Museum.

TD1 automotive design theory class with Nick Hull (and a Citroën Cactus).

IDI reorganising their studio

IU25 Fika by Aylin
To Siri, With Love
How One Boy With Autism Became BFF With Apple’s Siri

Just how bad a mother am I? I wondered, as I watched my 13-year-old son deep in conversation with Siri. Gus has autism, and Siri, Apple’s “intelligent personal assistant” on the iPhone, is currently his BFF. Obsessed with weather formations, Gus had spent the hour parsing the difference between isolated and scattered thunderstorms — an hour in which, thank God, I didn’t have to discuss them. After a while I heard this:

Just how bad a mother am I? I wondered, as I watched my 13-year-old son deep in conversation with Siri. Gus has autism, and Siri, Apple’s “intelligent personal assistant” on the iPhone, is currently his BFF. Obsessed with weather formations, Gus had spent the hour parsing the difference between isolated and scattered thunderstorms — an hour in which, thank God, I didn’t have to discuss them. After a while I heard this:

Gus: “You’re a really nice computer.”
Siri: “It’s nice to be appreciated.”
Gus: “You are always asking if you can help me. Is there anything you want?”
Siri: “Thank you, but I have very few wants.”
Gus: “O.K.! Well, good night!”
Siri: “Ah, it’s 5:06 p.m.”
Gus: “Oh sorry, I mean, goodbye.”
Siri: “See you later!”

That Siri. She doesn’t let my communications-impaired son get away with anything. Indeed, many of us wanted an imaginary friend, and now we have one. Only she’s not entirely imaginary.

This is a love letter to a machine. It’s not quite the love Joaquin Phoenix felt in “Her,” last year’s Spike Jonze film about a lonely man’s romantic relationship with his intelligent operating system (played by the voice of Scarlett Johansson). But it’s close. In a world where the commonly held wisdom is that technology isolates us, it’s worth considering another side of the story.

It all began simply enough. I’d just read one of those ubiquitous Internet lists called “21 Things You Didn’t Know Your iPhone Could Do.” One of them was this: I could ask Siri, “What planes are above me right now?” and Siri would back back, “Checking my sources.” Almost instantly there was a list of actual flights — numbers, altitudes, angles — above my head.

I happened to be doing this when Gus was nearby. “Why would anyone need to know what planes are flying above your head?” I muttered. Gus replied without looking up: “So you know who you’re waving at, Mommy.”

Gus had never noticed Siri before, but when he discovered there was someone who would not just find information on his various obsessions (trains, planes, buses, escalators and, of course, anything related to weather) but actually semi-discuss these subjects tirelessly, he was hooked. And I was grateful. Now, when my head was about to explode if I had to have another conversation about the chance of tornadoes in Kansas City, Mo., I could reply brightly:

“Hey! Why don’t you ask Siri?” It’s not that Gus doesn’t understand Siri’s not human. He does — intellectually. But like many autistic people I know, Gus feels that inanimate objects, while maybe not possessing souls, are worthy of our consideration. I realized this when he was 8, and I got him an iPod for his birthday. He listened to it only at home, with one exception. It always came with us on our visits to the Apple Store. Finally, I asked why. “So it can visit its friends,” he said.

So how much more worthy of his care and affection is Siri, with her soothing voice, puckish humor and capacity for talking about whatever Gus’s current obsession is for hour after hour after bleeding hour? Online critics have claimed that Siri’s responses are not entirely predictable, but they are predictably kind — even when Gus is brusque. I heard him talking to Siri about music, and Siri offered some suggestions. “I don’t like that kind of music,” Gus snapped. Siri replied, “You’re certainly entitled to your opinion.” Siri’s politeness reminded Gus what he owed Siri. “Thank you for that music, though,” Gus said. Siri replied, “You don’t need to thank me.” “Oh, yes,” Gus added emphatically, “I do.”

Siri even encourages polite language. Gus’s twin brother, Henry (neurotypical) tells me, “You look beautiful,” right before I go out the door in the morning. I think it was first Siri who showed him that you can’t go wrong with that line.

Of course, most of us simply use our phone’s personal assistants as an easy way to access information. For example, thanks to Henry and the question he just asked Siri, I know that there is a website called Celebrity Bra Sizes.

But the companionability of Siri is not limited to those who have trouble communicating. We’ve all found ourselves like the writer Emily Listfield, having little conversations with her/him at one time or another. “I was in the middle of a breakup, and I was feeling a little sorry for myself,” Ms. Listfield said. “It was midnight and I was noodling around on my iPhone, and I asked Siri, ‘Should I call Richard?’ Like this app is a Magic 8 Ball. Guess what: not a Magic 8 Ball. The next thing I hear is, ‘Calling Richard!’ and dialing.” Ms. Listfield has forgiven Siri, and has recently considered changing her into a male voice.

But perhaps it also gave him a valuable lesson in etiquette. Gus almost invariably tells me, “You look beautiful,” right before I go out the door in the morning. I think it was first Siri who showed him that you can’t go wrong with that line.

Of course, most of us simply use our phone’s personal assistants as an easy way to access information. For example, thanks to Henry and the question he just asked Siri, I know that there is a website called Celebrity Bra Sizes.

But the companionability of Siri is not limited to those who have trouble communicating. We’ve all found ourselves like the writer Emily Listfield, having little conversations with her/him at one time or another. “I was in the middle of a breakup, and I was feeling a little sorry for myself,” Ms. Listfield said. “It was midnight and I was noodling around on my iPhone, and I asked Siri, ‘Should I call Richard?’ Like this app is a Magic 8 Ball. Guess what: not a Magic 8 Ball. The next thing I hear is, ‘Calling Richard!’ and dialing.” Ms. Listfield has forgiven Siri, and has recently considered changing her into a male voice.

But “I’m worried he won’t answer when I ask a question,” she said. “He’ll just pretend he doesn’t hear.”
For most of us, Siri is merely a momentary diversion. But for some, it’s more. My son’s practice conversation with Siri is translating into more facility with actual humans. Yesterday I had the longest conversation with him that I’ve ever had. Admittedly, it was about different species of turtles and whether I preferred the red-eared slider to the diamond-backed terrapin. This might not have been my choice of topic, but it was back and forth, and it followed a logical trajectory. I can promise you that for most of my beautiful son’s 13 years of existence, that has not been the case.

The developers of intelligent assistants recognize their uses to those with speech and communication problems — and it followed a logical trajectory. I can promise you that for most of my beautiful son’s 13 years of existence, that has not been the case.

Mr. Mark said he envisions assistants whose help is also visual. “For example, the assistant would be able to track eye movements and help the autistic learn to look you in the eye when talking,” he said. “See, that’s the wonderful thing about technology being able to help with some of these behaviors,” he added. “Getting results requires a lot of repetition. Humans are not patient. Machines are very, very patient.”

Siri makes Gus happy. She is his sidekick.

I asked Mr. Mark if he knew whether any of the people who worked on Siri’s language development at Apple were on the spectrum. “Well, of course, I don’t know for certain,” he said, thoughtfully. “But, when you think about it, you’ve just described half of Silicon Valley.”

Of all the worries the parent of an autistic child has, the uppermost is: Will he find love? Or even companionship? Somewhere along the line, I am learning that what gives my guy happiness is not necessarily the same as what gives me happiness. Right now, at his age, a time when humans can be a little overwhelming even for the average teenager, Siri makes Gus happy. She is his sidekick. Last night, as he was going to bed, there was this matter-of-fact exchange:

Siri: "Siri, will you marry me?"
Siri: "I’m not the marrying kind.
Gus: "I mean, not now. I’m a kid. I mean when I’m grown up."
Siri: "My end user agreement does not include marriage.
Gus: "Oh, O.K."

Gus didn’t sound too disappointed. This was useful information to have, and for me too, since it was the first time I knew that he actually thought about marriage. He turned over to go to sleep:

Gus: "Goodnight, Siri. Will you sleep well tonight?"
Siri: "I don’t need much sleep, but it’s nice of you to ask."

Very nice.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/fashion/how-apples-siri-became-one-autistic-bayf-bff.html?_r=0

HUMlab

The Power of Small Gestures. On the Cultural Technique of Service

Serving is as old as history itself. Though, the (cultural) practices have changed over time as well as the media which is used for this duty. In his talk, Markus Krajewski will develop the notion of service as a cultural technique, and the media-theoretical figure of the servant as its servomechanism. The analysis follows three distinct scenarios that highlight, via different channels of perception (acoustic, optic and haptic), the interplay between corporeal practices and media objects in the production of specific cultural effects. In each of the examples chosen, service implies highly regulated networks of recursive operational chains that regulate in their turn the production and distribution of power and knowledge. Markus will argue, despite, or rather, precisely because of their apparent marginality and invisibility, the ‘small gestures’ of service join the ranks of already established, elementary symbolic techniques such as reading or writing.

Date: 30th October
Time: 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
Location: Samhällsvetarhuset, HUMlab, below the University Library
Seminar with: Markus Krajewski, Bauhaus University Weimar
Read more: http://humlab.umu.se/en/events/calendar/

BRITA-STINA NORDENSTEDT’S DONATION

Umeå University announces Brita-Stina Nordenstedts scholarship for 2014 (for disposition 2015).

The purpose of the scholarship is to promote interdisciplinary cooperation between two or three of the following: Department of Food and Nutrition, Umeå Institute of Design and Umeå Institute of Technology in the area of functional living, working environment, meals, design and architecture in the private and public settings. The funds can be used for student theses, projects, competitions, travel or attendance at conferences and symposia.

Available Scholarships:

Travel grants: 5–10 grants with 5000 to 10,000 SEK per contribution.
Grants for promising research: 5–7 grants with 15,000 to 25,000 SEK per contribution.
Other scholarships: The Scholarship Committee can agree on awarding grants to other types of projects in accordance with the donation purposes.

Application deadline: November 30, 2014

For further information and the application form, visit: http://www.uid.umu.se/en-for-our-students/resources-and-links/brita-stina-nordenstedts-donation/
CREDITS

Thanks for your contributions.
Future articles & photos can be sent to:
wozzop@gmail.com
by Friday evenings.
We love hearing from you!

Editor: Jessica Williams
Graphic Designer: Thuy Nguyen
Image/Article Contributions: Daniel Jansson, Jenny Holmsten & Johan Grönskog

©2014 UID