

## MAPS Summer 2003 Summary

Well, summer is over so quickly again. I think this was my most productive summer yet. Well, at least it felt that way. The following is a recap of the highlights. For more specific information, see the individual monthly recaps (May, June, July, August).

Probably the most interesting and exciting thing for me this summer was my trip to Atlanta for the RESNA conference. I was probably the youngest person there, but I had fun and learned a lot. More specifically, the RESNA conference exposed me to a large portion of the community who support the people we're developing our tools for. Although the conference didn't necessarily apply directly to our research, it applied to the people we're doing the research for, and that was well worth it. (Not to mention the fact that it was paid for! Yes!)

I guess I was most excited by the fact that, as an undergrad, I was able to participate in something that not only affected the outside world, but that was actually helpful and exciting to the outside world!

While presenting at the RESNA conference, our project was surely one of the most popular, especially considering we were way in the corner of this giant ballroom of the hotel where the conference was. When Stefan left me to be in charge of presenting our project to any passers-by, I was nervous. And the first couple of times, I stumbled over my words, hoping desperately that Stefan would return soon enough to make good of my fowled presentation. But, alas, he did not. What happened next was pretty amazing. Stefan returned and soon there were so many people coming by that both Stefan and I had to present. The amazing part to me was that I actually got the hang of it. And by the middle even, I was doing presentations like I had always known how. It felt really great for a number of reasons. Not only was I proud and no longer nervous, but I discovered how easy it was to talk about the very thing that I had spent so many hours creating! We all love to talk about ourselves, and our creations are no different. I think that the best thing about what I've been a part of is that it really will help people. I know this because all of these professionals (occupational therapists, assistive technology people, etc.) we're coming up to our project and telling us what a relief it was to see that someone actually cared about doing things right. And I sincerely hope that someday MAPS will really help lots of people.

Another thing that I learned/realized/was reminded while at the RESNA conference was that we are researchers, not product designers. This has its pros and cons. It's nice because we don't have to compromise anything because of time issues. And, if someone were to take our research and make it into a product, it would be really awesome. A down side would be that we don't always move things all the way to fruition. This isn't really a draw back because then we can focus our time and efforts on other important issues that maybe no one has ever thought about.

I got a lot done with the GUI this summer including debugging and adding new functionalities. Since I've done so much of the coding on the GUI, it's kind of become my baby. Much less to say I enjoy doing work on it, so was happy to improve it. I hope that I'll still be around when we get to adding the user modeling and error correction stuff to the GUI, because that will be another whole new fun adventure.