Tarzan in New York

...or the Quirks of Online Communication

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„Oops... I'm sorry... Hehehe“

- Freedom unlimited!?

- Nobody watches, no?

- "Assumption is the mother of all fuckups"
    - Travis Dane (the Bad Guy) @ "Under Siege 2"

- Lack of context ==> TROUBLE

N+1 sides of communication

- participant <==> channel <==> participant

Example 1: from jokes to scandal

- The sentence: "You, Sir, are an idiot"…

- …is used…

  - …in a sauna, among old friends, after half a sixpack
  - …in a phone conversation between the same friends
  - …in a text chat between the same friends
  - …in an e-mail message
  - …as a faxed official company form with a letterhead
  - …in the official form of the Rep. of Estonia, signed by the President and sent to a certain gentleman somewhat to the East

- => the same message, but a drastically different result!

Differences in channels

- Time / speed

- Direction (one-way/two-way; one-to-one, one-to-many etc)

- Capacity / throughput (the diameter of the pipe)

- Filtering (what gets through and what does not)

Right to fight (is not absolute)

- Freedom of expression throughout the history

- Censorship is actively resisted

- A new human right: right to fight…

- … and as a counterbalance, another right to demand "Take it outside"

Example 2: pot, kettle...

- An excerpt from an online chat:
  - A: „Had a great BBQ yesterday. Ham, sausages, stuff.... Yummy!"
  - B: „Bah, you eat that shit??!"
  - A: „???? !!!!! #1&%%¤##$½%# !"
  - (things go nasty)

- Why? A was from Tennessee, B from Middle East

- The only known cure: a) stay polite, b) express yourself clearly

Not that easy

- Emerging online communities developed rules – but many of them remained unwritten (and at the same time, closely followed)

- Anonymity is easy to get, hard to depend on

- Can be anonymous or pseudonymous, yet the greatest ones are known under their real names

Bartle's study

- ..Richard Bartle, a creator of the first MUD in the late 70s proposed four main types of gamers:
    - ♦ Achievers
    - ♠ Explorers
    - ♥ Socializers
    - ♣ Killers

The Proteus Effect

- Nick Yee and Jeremy Bailenson (Stanford, 2007) proposed the Proteus Effect:

    – the avatar that people use online reflects their behavioural habits, and

    – changing the avatar (e.g. by an admin) results in changes of the person's behaviour

Case study: MUME

- Multi-User Middle-earth, one of the largest and oldest MUDs still active

- A Tolkienesque world – Men/Elves/Dwarves are good and Orcs/Trolls/Black Numenoreans evil races

- In practice, it often comes out upside down:

  - Lesser numbers => need to cooperate

  - Inherent maluses => more strategy

  - Free to punish anyone for anything => politeness enforced

Different people

- People are different – but for some, it is hard to grasp...

- Many groups of people face nasty stereotypes

- The Net allows to overcome them – if we remain honest!

- *"On the Internet, height, weight, race, and gender may be unknown. Beauty doesn't impress us, nor does ugliness appall. We become our messages, purely and simply."* (Barrett & Wallace 1994)

…

- Difference can be frightening
- Internet has been different from day 1
- Filters stuff (prejudices included)
- First impression: visual ==> verbal!
- Can be someone else… or not

Cyberdating

- An important motive online

- Some stay online. Most will not

- Contact amplifier and hiding behind the screen

- Main points: HONESTY, POLITENESS, CLARITY

  - BS => disappointment and negative surprise

  - Honesty => soft landing and amplification

  - DARK SIDE: no remorse, no quarter

Case study: Meelis 'Mella' Luks

- An Estonian guy (middle-aged by now)

- Born with a profound disability (CP; outwards comparable to younger Stephen Hawking), unable to speak, dress or eat independently

- Was lucky to have a supporting home, yet could only obtain basic education (in the USSR, the "workers' paradise", people with disabilities did not officially exist!)

- For until recently, lived in the middle of nowhere (~50 km from Tallinn in rural Raplamaa)

- Started to use his foot to work (better control!), including drawing and typing (+ typewriter graphics)

Some pics

Photos: www.mella.ee
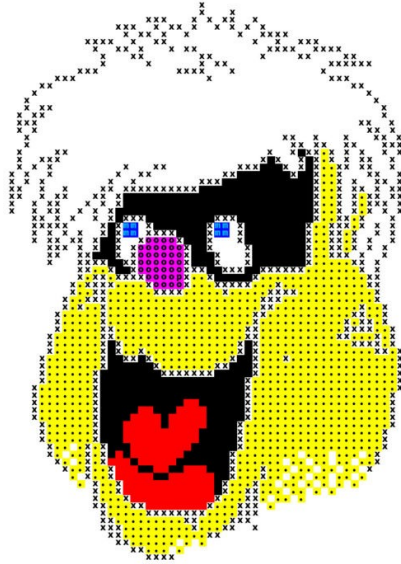
- Received his first computer in 1993 (the Estonian weirdo called Juku, a 8bit CP/M machine), learned to program

- Got online in 1995, in 1996 became the 'God' (boss) of a popular talker/chatroom at TUT

- Result: lots of friends, almost weekly meetings/parties at his home

- For a long time, communicated by writing letters on the ground with his foot - later started to use speech synthesis to talk

- For several years (around 2010), came to IT College for guest lectures to TechComm students
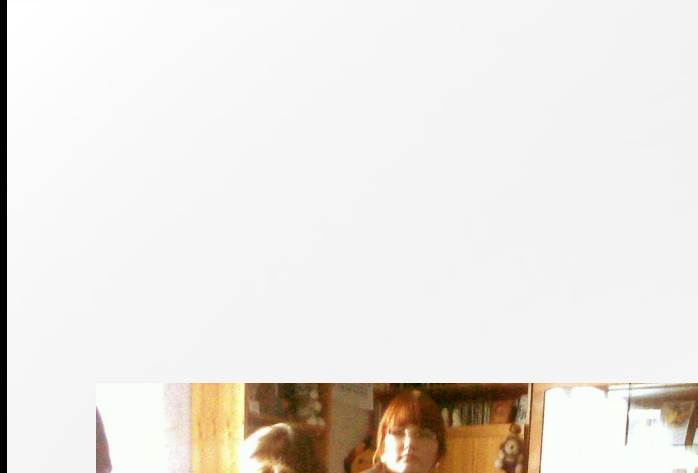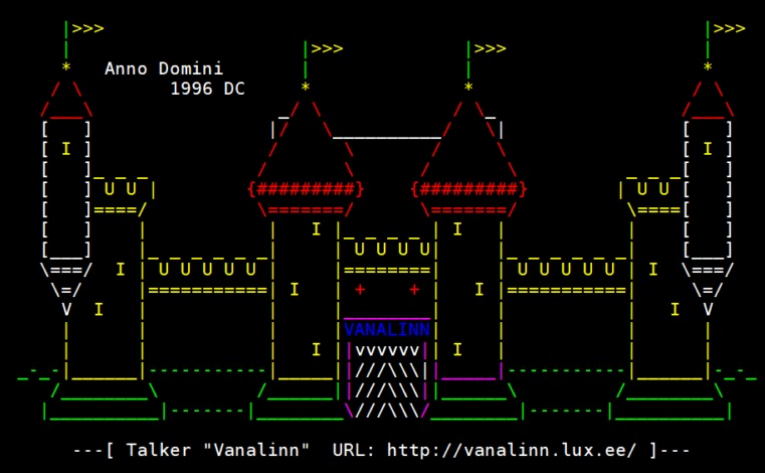
More pics

- In early 2015, met a young lady from Philippines online
- After tons of paperwork, she landed in Tallinn in 2016
- Got married in April 2016
- Moved to Tallinn in 2018
- Had their first son this winter
- ...

And more pics

Photos: www.mella.ee

Netiquette

- Net + etiquette = netiquette

- Started with lists and Usenet

- Smileys (emoticons)   >8- [   ])

- „When in Rome, do as Romans do" - but who are the Romans..?

- Some quite universal points do exist

10 Commandments (Virginia Shea 1995)

- *1.Remember the human*

- *2. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life*

- *3. Know where you are in cyberspace*

- *4. Respect other people's time and bandwidth*

- *5. Make yourself look good online*

- *6. Share expert knowledge*

- *7. Help keep flame wars under control*

- *8. Respect other people's privacy*

- *9. Don't abuse your power*

- *10. Be forgiving on other people's mistakes*

Some points from Usenet

- Read before posting

- Keep in topic

- Do not cross-post

- No full quotes to say „Me too!"

- Know top-post vs bottom-post

- No advertising except in specific places

- A cautionary tale: *the September that never ended* (1993)

Some more recommendations

- Do not attach Word files with trivial content

- After receiving a nasty e-mail, go to coffee

- Use e-mail to communicate with irritating people

- Write properly (language, caps, decorations etc)

- Giant signatures are rude

- Questions are OK, except a) trivial ones (RTFM, STFW, GYIF), b) blatantly misdirected ones ("Who's that moron?"). http://www.catb.org/~esr/faqs/smart-questions.html

- Do not e-mail stuff unfit for a newspaper cover story

To sum it up

- Thinking before saying helps

- Sorting out much later is much more difficult

- Stay yourself

- Learn to play out your strong cards

- When in Rome do as Romans do – but do not rush to run with wolves

- Know the game you are playing

- HONESTY, POLITENESS, CLARITY

Thanks