Overview

Communication tools provide the forums through which members of distributed teams collaborate to create solutions to problems. The research aspect of this project is focused on discovering how communication technology facilitates and/or impedes creative problem solving among distant collaborators. To that end, the tools provided to the participant team members are carefully proscribed and team members are asked to use only these tools during their collaborative work.

In Year 1 of the project teams used group email via Gmail for one-to-many asynchronous communication, pre-scheduled video conferencing with Skype and CineSync for many-to-many synchronous communication, and shared files via Dropbox. In Year 2 of the project, the ability to have pseudo-synchronous one-to-many text chat communication was introduced via Campfire . For Year 3 we will be using the same tools as in Year 1 and Year 2 except that we will replace Dropbox with a combined file sharing and project management tool called Basecamp, and add the capacity for unscheduled one-to-one and one-to-many video conferencing via Skype.

Email

We will be using the same listservs as last year, administered by the Texas A&M Viz Lab. There is a listserv for each team, called **cit-teama** and **cit-teamb**. Students will be added to their respective listservs once the teams have been divided. They will recieve a welcome email and can then post to their listserv by sending mail to **cit-team[a/b]@viz.tamu.edu**.

Project Management with Basecamp

We will be using a web-based project management tool called Basecamp: http://basecamphq.com, which is produced by 37 Signals, the same company that offers Campfire. Basecamp is an integrated message board, task management, and file-sharing system centered around administrated "project spaces" to which users can be invited. We will create a project space for both Team A and Team B and invite students to their respective projects via email. The invitation email contains instructions for each student to set up their individual account.

Basecamp allows project participants to post and comment on messages asynchronously, in user-specified categories. A video demo of messaging capability is available at http://basecamphq.com/demos/messages. It also has the capacity for users to create task lists that can be assigned to specific individuals and generate a calendar that displays task deadlines and project milestones. A video demo of task management is available at http://basecamphq.com/demos/todos, and a video demo of project milestones is available at http://basecamphq.com/demos/milestones.

Notably, Basecamp allows for 5GB of file storage, with no limits on file types and automatic full backups. Files on Basecamp can be displayed by date or organized in user-specified categories. Individual file updates can be stored as versions, with the most current version shown prominently. There is no automatic up/downloading function like Dropbox- students will have to manually upload and download the files they are working on. This has the potential to minimize confusion when passing files back and forth between locations. A video demo of the file-sharing tools is available at http://basecamphq.com/demos/files.

Chat with Campfire

Basecamp integrates seamlessly with the web-based pseudo-synchronous chat tool we've used previously, called Campfire: http://campfirenow.com. Chatrooms for Team A and Team B will be created, and we will also have an instructor chatroom to discuss administrative issues. Students will not need a separate login for chat- the chatrooms will be accessible from within the Basecamp interface.

It is intended for students to use the chatrooms and the Basecamp messaging system to work out creative and logistical problems and share in-progress work between the 'official' videoconferencing reviews. Students can use typical real-time text chatting in addition to Campfire's real-time image-sharing tools that are integrated into the chatrooms. A video demo that shows how file uploading works within Campfire is available at http://campfirenow.com/#videos/tour_video.

Skype with Group Video

We will use Skype in the same capacity as last year during the official group videoconferences, but we will also provide multi-user accounts for each team at each location for unsupervised use among students. Students will

be free to arrange videoconferences at will, to work out any production issues they encounter.

Video Review with Cinesync

We will use CineSync in the same capacity as last year, with one license to serve all locations to be used during official videoconferences only. We will use Dropbox to share the files to be reviewed.