

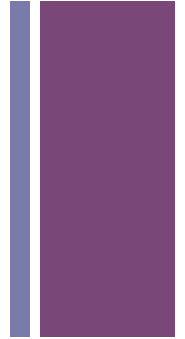


(Dis)connecting Cultures

When Collaboration Technologies
are Not Enough

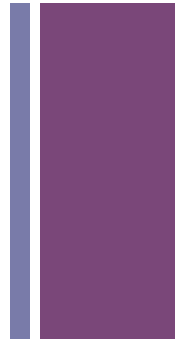
Sara Bly
November 4, 2009

+ Disconnecting Cultures... in the context of Collaboration at Work

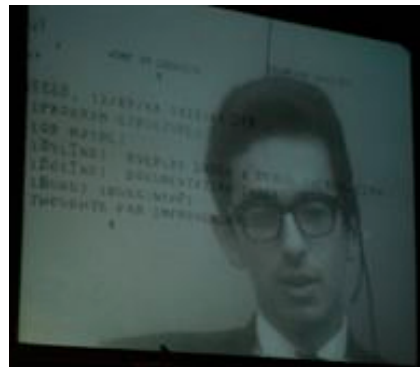
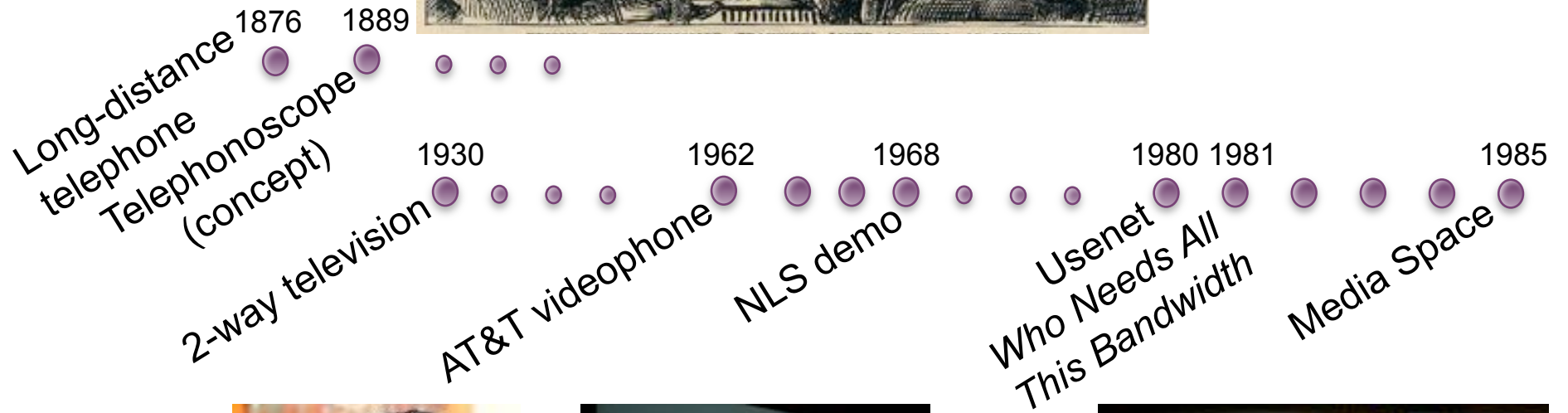
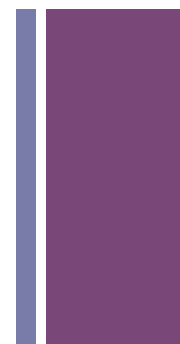


- Xerox PARC Media Space overview, an early at-work collaborative space
- When are good collaboration technologies not enough?
- Where have we come over the last 25 years?
- What do we know about connections and collaboration?

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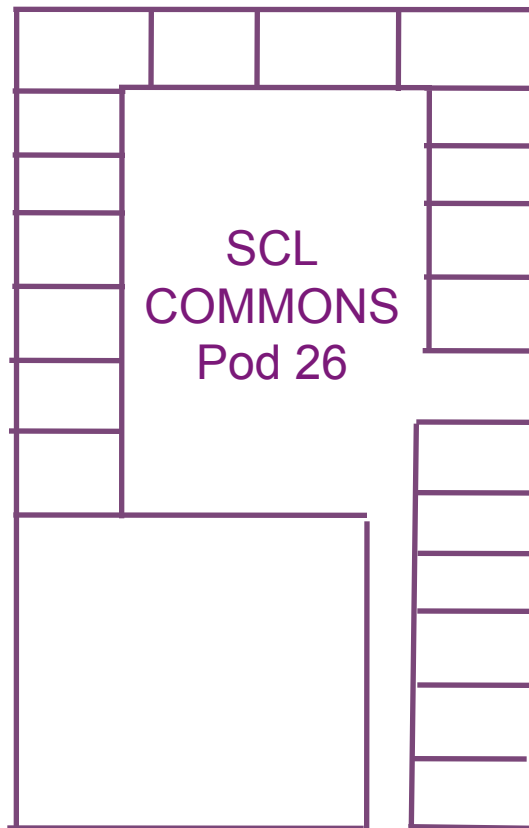
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Xerox PARC, Systems Concept Lab

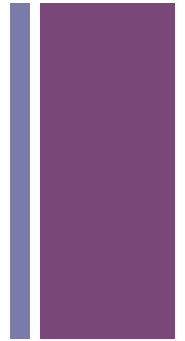
Research in long-distance collaborative work, a satellite office in Portland



Hallway



+ Media Space



- A way of working that supports a sense of community through activities, places, and technologies
- Going beyond focused task work to include background and peripheral activities as well as spontaneous and informal interactions.
- Continuously available media that becomes part of the fabric of everyday experiences.

+ The PARC Media Space included a range of places



Offices



Conference rooms



Common areas

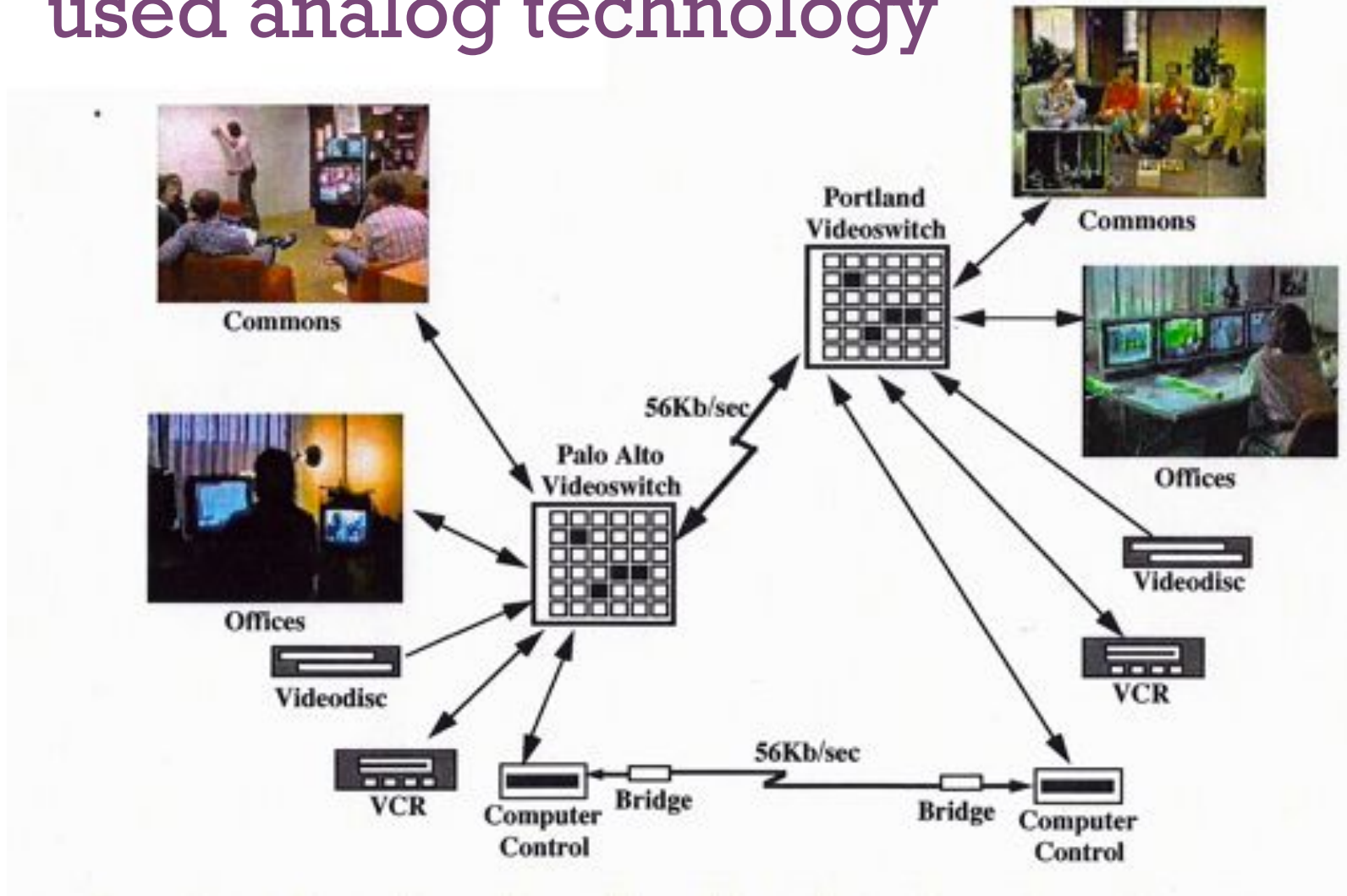


Labs



Outside views

+ The PARC Media Space used analog technology



+ A minimalist design strategy: a neutral model of use

- ***Technology disappears***

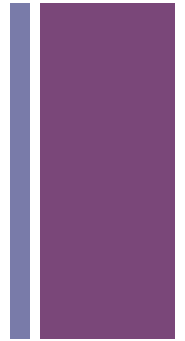
Technology can be deeply embedded into the work.

- ***Technology shifts easily to different uses***

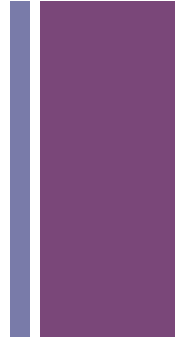
Technology can be adapted easily.

- ***Users are in control***

Technology can be appropriated as desired.

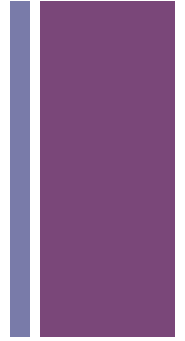


+ Media Space Lessons



- Audio – matters a lot!
- Access and Control
 - Make the state of connection available to all
 - Provide feedback monitors or windows
 - Remote camera control is not necessarily an advantage
- Integrate technologies; faces are not enough
- Face-to-face and phone are harmful analogies
- Scale: one size does not fit all
- Media Space sustains interpersonal relations, it doesn't initiate them.
- Experience is the Best Teacher.

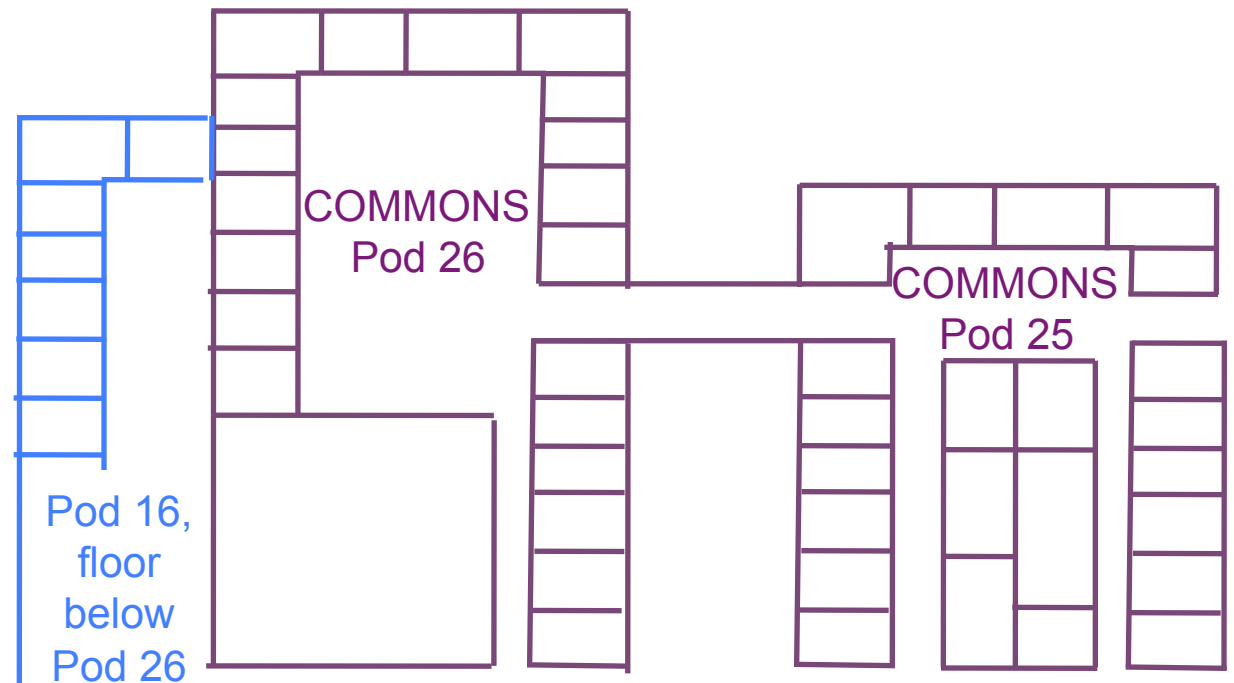
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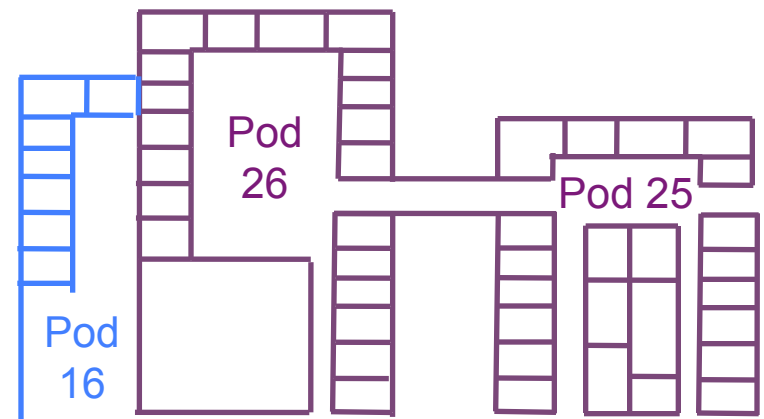
+ Transitions

- The Portland satellite office was closed in 1988
- The SCL lab in Pod 26 was merged with another lab in Pods 25 and 16.

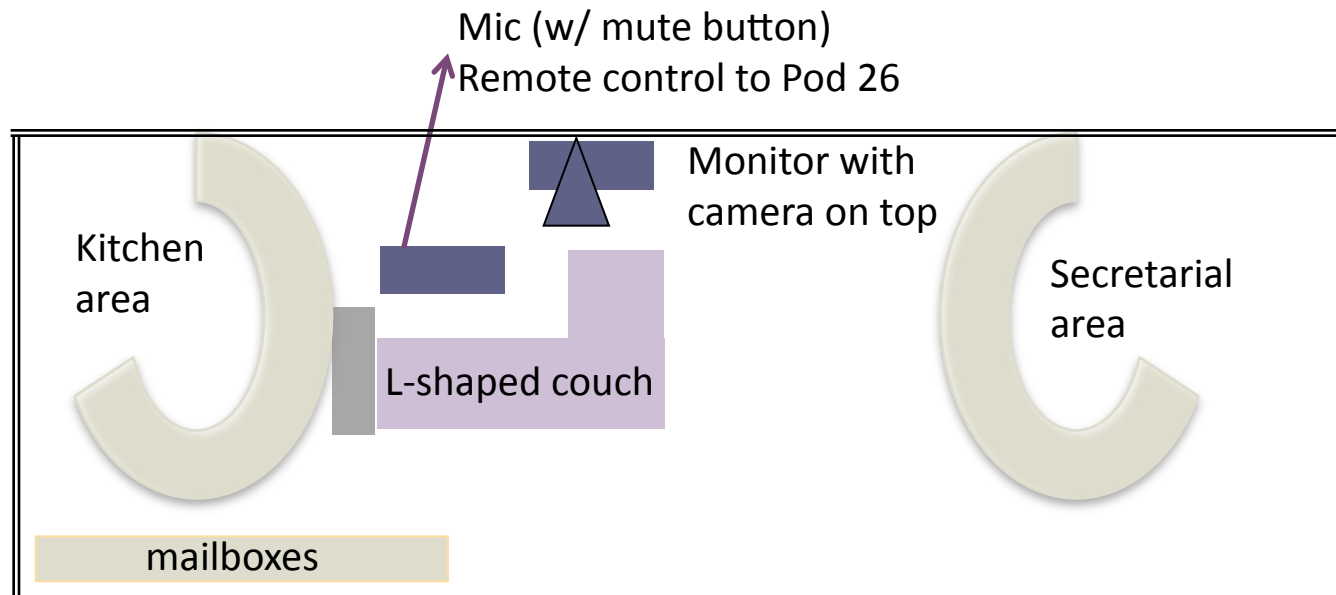


+ Expanding the Media Space

- New lab encompassed folks in Pods 16, 25, and 26.
- We were enthusiastic to continue Media Space work.
- A few Pod 25 folks asked individually to link to the Media Space in Pod 26.
- Some suggested that media space could help people across the floors get to know each other.
- We had a desire to participate in new lab as we had worked previously in SCL.



+ Media Space node set-up in Pod 16

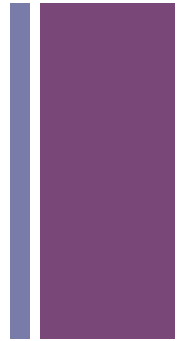


- Pod 16 node linked the Common areas between Pods 16 and 26 but view was also available to offices in Pod 26.
- Few people knew the link was being installed.

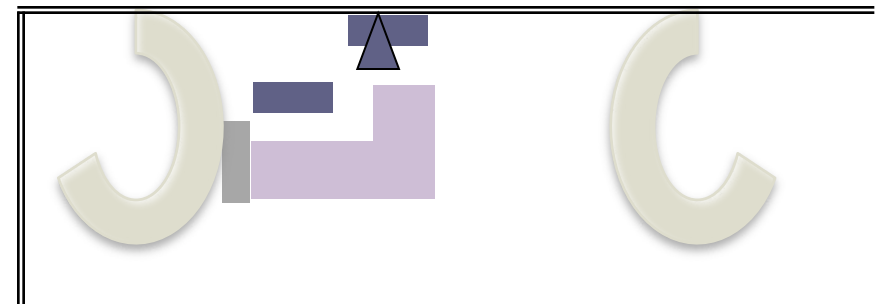


Disaster:

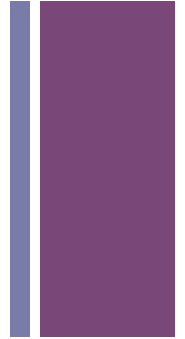
Many in Pod 16 felt very violated



- We met basic criteria (camera placement, visibility)
- What did we miss?
 - There was an overlap in acoustic spaces in Pod 16.
 - We assumed the use of space rather than observed.
 - We didn't know there were intra-group tensions.
- What did we ignore that we knew?
 - Expand, don't intrude (and never surprise people)
 - Limit technology overhead
 - Provide equal access
 - Build on existing relationships and culture

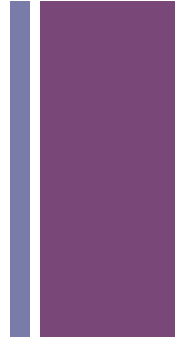


+ Repairs?



- Held group discussions.
- Evolved the technology use and placement based on participant input.
 - Focus camera on kitchen rather than couch alone
 - Disable remote control
 - Plan joint events and technology demo
- Collected data: event attendance before and after; diary; videotape meeting; email feedback
- *Office construction caused shutdown after 7 weeks.*

+ Were we just stupid?



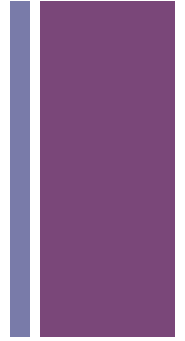
■ Yes

- Collaboration can not be forced
- “media space was not a general solution to putting remote co-workers together but a means of conjoining spaces for people with close working relations.”

■ but...

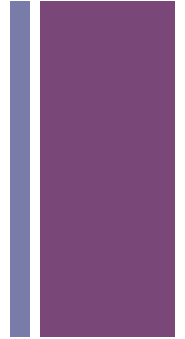
- In attempting to connect two disconnected pods, we were forcibly reminded of the disconnects within and between groups that go beyond geography.
- We were overly enthusiastic about media spaces and building community through informal interactions.

+ Lessons are still important today

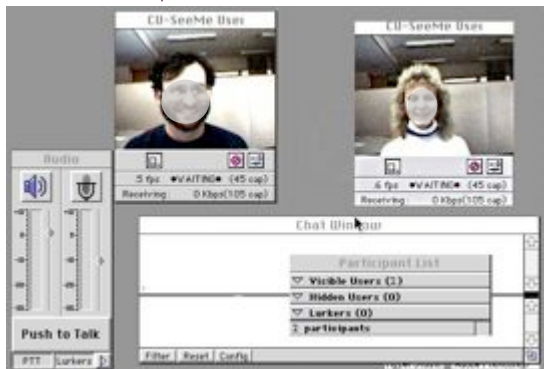
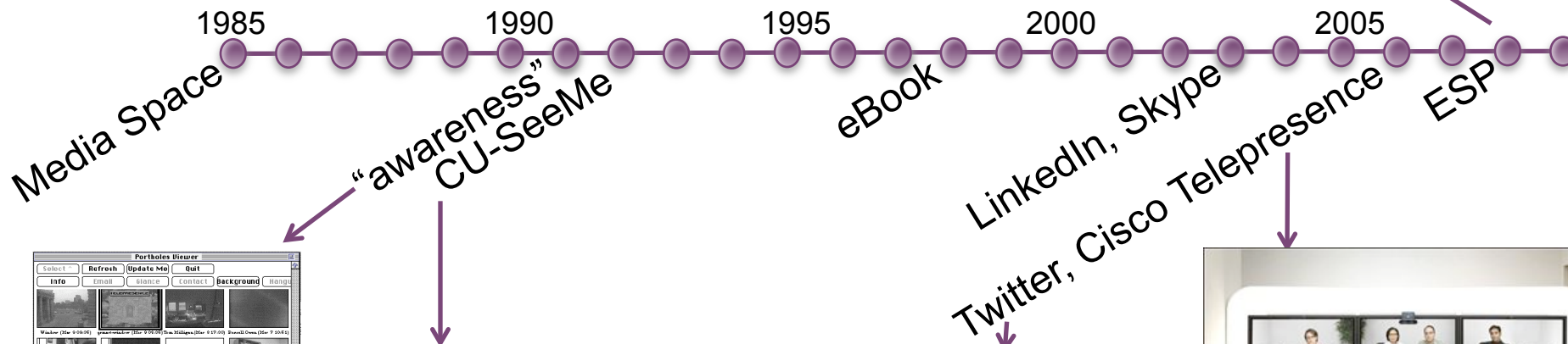
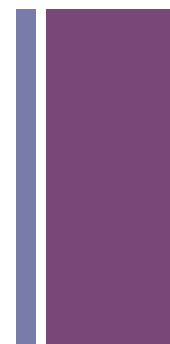


- Understand practice and culture before deploying technologies.
- Allow for participant buy-in.
- Recognize when collaboration technologies can help build communities and when they best support existing communities.
- Be aware of technology learning curve.

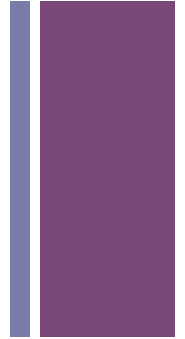
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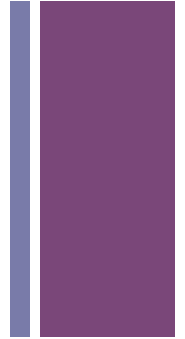


+ Today



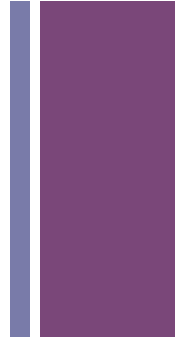
- Media Space has not gone beyond the research lab.
- Simple connections are popular: e.g. texting, Skype
- Social networking sites abound
- Complex videoconferencing systems still support business organizations.

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+ PARC/Portland Media Space



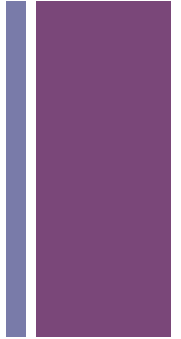
- Looking beyond the task and technologies to maintain working relationships
 - Shared process as well as products
 - Informal interactions; spontaneous communications
 - Awareness of people and events in work group
- Enable a sense of connectedness
 - Engagement and focus
 - Shared experiences
 - Shared community
 - A sense of presence



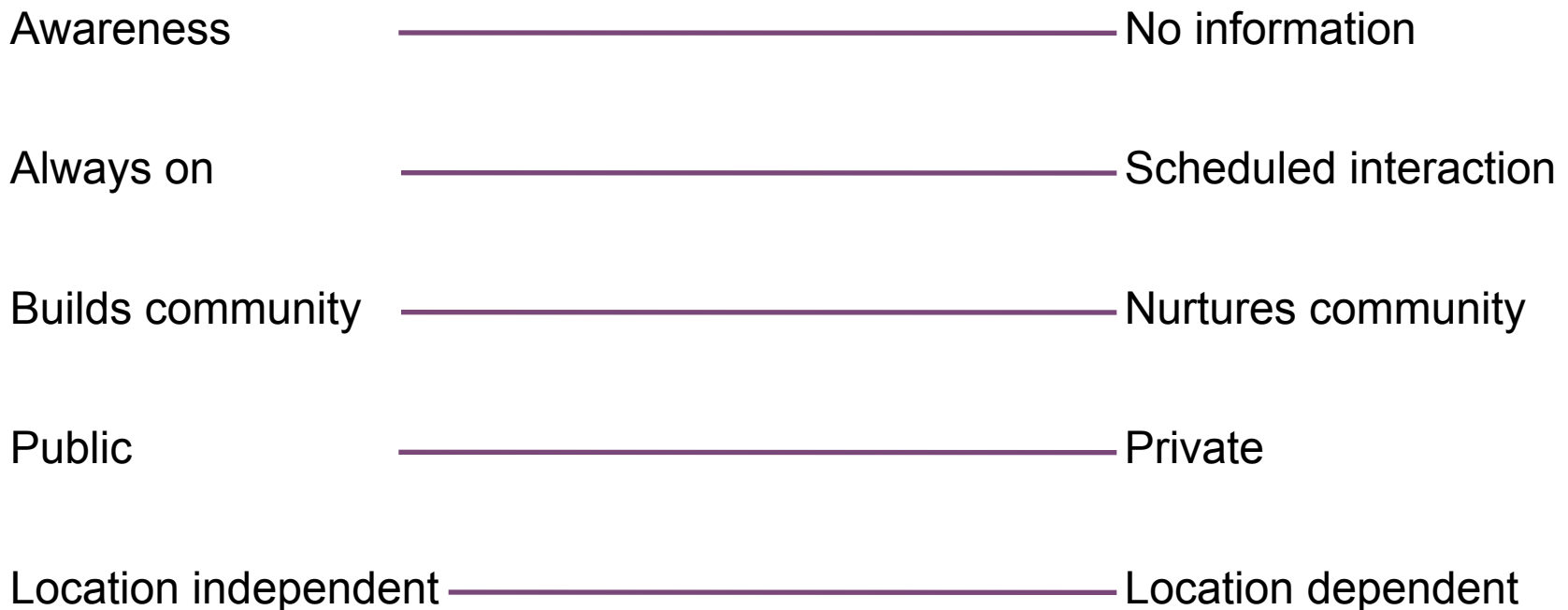
Shaping technologies for collaboration

Some of the features that define the space

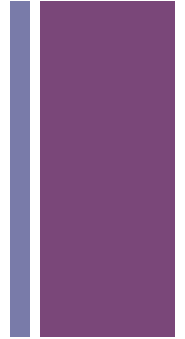
- Awareness ... No information
 - Do you know a person's availability?
 - Do you know what's happening elsewhere?
- Always on ... Scheduled connections
 - Can you have spontaneous interactions?
 - Do you have to initiate a connection?
- Builds community ... Nurtures existing community
 - Can you use the technology to get to know others?
 - Does the technology support collaboration with people you know?
- Public ... Private
 - Are you privy to others' interactions?
- Location independent ... Location dependent



+ How might we place these technologies in this space?



+ References



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+ Questions / Comments



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