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## FUNTERFACE: RECONSIDERING THE EMAIL INTERFACE

Funterface is about rethinking everyday email interfaces whose design is inherited rather than considered. This project reconsiders the conceptual models and graphic structures traditionally used and introduces a sense of play and community into the email experience.



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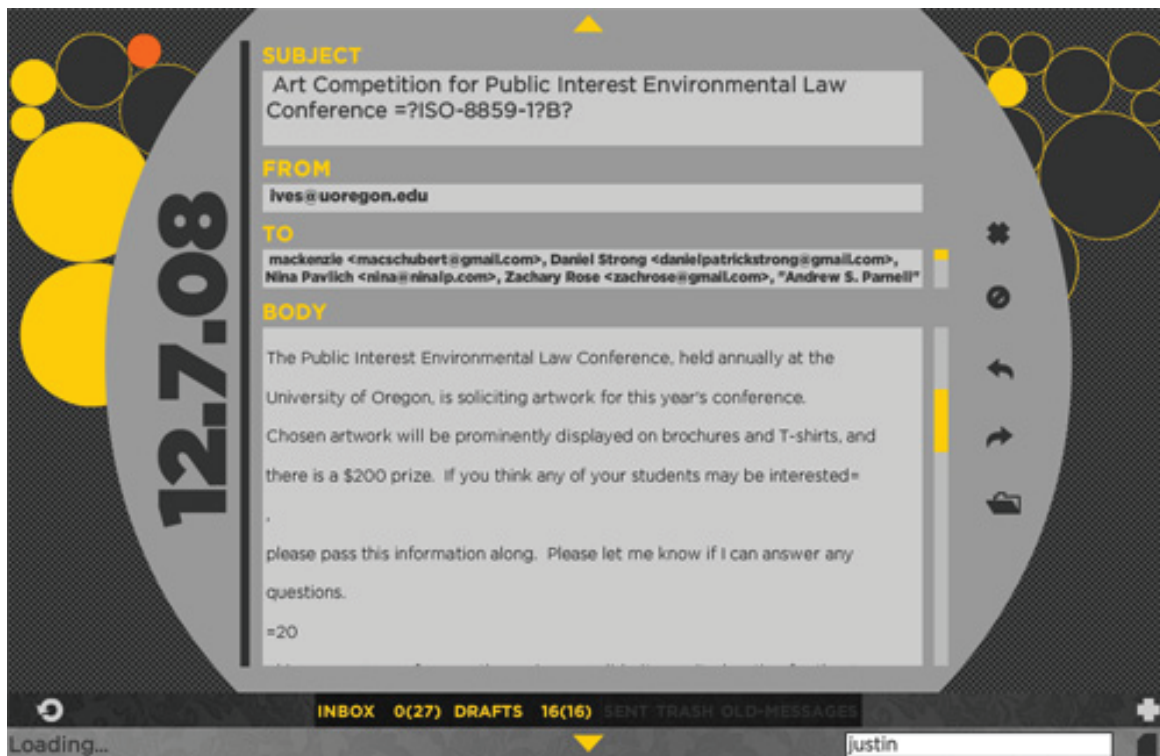
In working with the IMAP servers to prototype an email interfaces, it became clear to me that the conceptual model used currently for email interfaces relates strongly to how the IMAP servers store the data. I image that the development of email interfaces emerged from the people who developed the email servers, and have not been much rethought. The conceptual model of current email interfaces is that you have an email inbox, much like a shoe box, in which your emails are placed. You can then sort emails by date or subject or place them into subfolders, like smaller little boxes. This shoe box of emails reminds me of the shoe box of pictures one might have before they put them into a curated, chronological, photo album. The photos in a shoe box are only useful if you have to time to dump them out on the floor and go through each one.



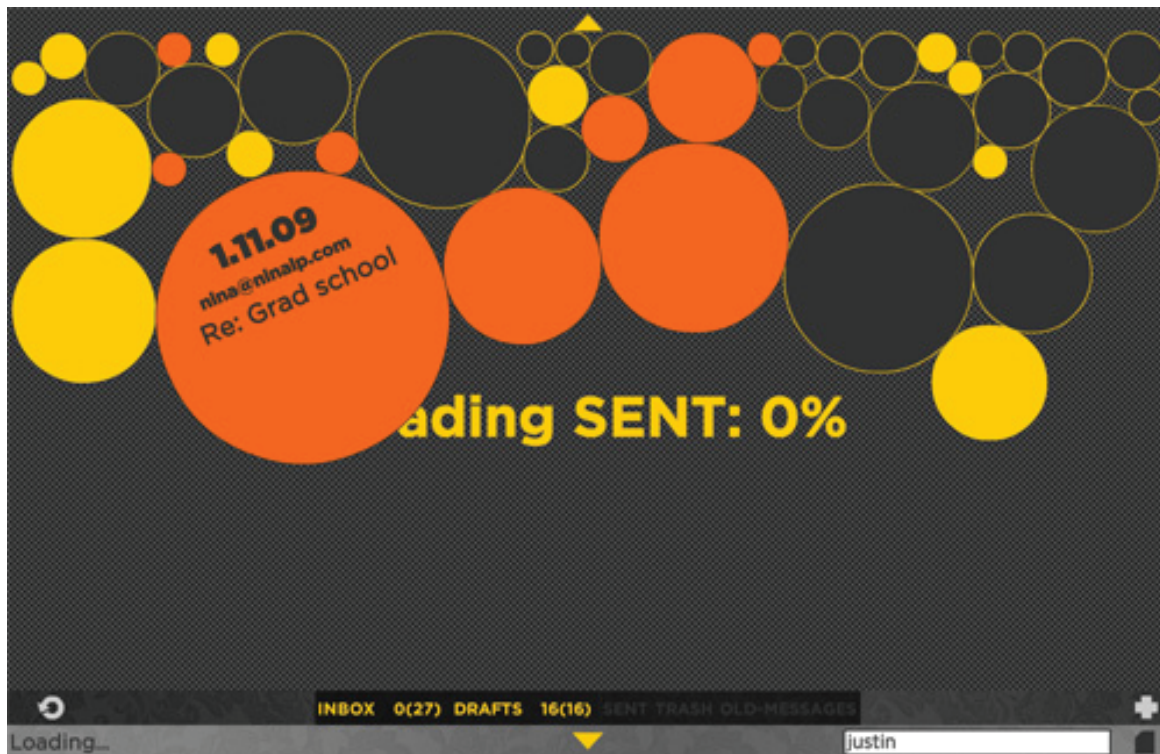
To evaluate whether this interface is ideal or not, I think it is important to ask where the value is in email. Email provides a fast, reliable, loggable medium of communication. You can stay updated quickly without the intrusion of a phone call, so it is like an announcement or message board. Also, unlike a telephone call, an email account gets recorded for later reference, which is particularly useful for things like receipts and formal letters. An email inbox is also a useful way to find people's email addresses; rather than keep everyone's email in a separate address book, email is a kind of implied address book. So we've identified various ways that email is valuable: quick communication, message board, activity log, and address book. The present email paradigm can certainly accomplish all these things, but it does not do this in the best possible way.

Further, the current email interfaces do not take into consideration the potential richness of human experience.

I suggest that there are other models that would better emphasize the valuable aspects of email and humanity of its users; the following three iterations illustrate such possibilities.



BubbleFace is a playful interface that imagines email messages as colorful interactive bubbles. The aim of this interface is to bring an element of physical play into an otherwise static, function-oriented interface.



# LinkMail focuses on two aspects of the interface: data and context.

The interface organizes the emails as a collection of information graphs. The important data of the email (which emails are unread or flagged, the number of emails in a folder, the number of emails in a month, the months that contain new emails, etc) is a fundamental part of the graphic structure of the interface.

BELOW: The user sees the contents of the Drafts folder in the month of October of 2008 in 'Grid Mode'. They instantly get a sense of how many emails they have in the folder and which ones have been sent. The info scroll bar on the right gives the user a snapshot of how many emails are in the draft folder by month.

RIGHT: For more in-depth browsing the user can switch to list view, shown in the image to the right, which gives them sender/receiver information and the subject line.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Navigation in this interface is done contextually, so controls are only made available when necessary. From within a message, the user can follow the messages 'thread' - messages with the same subject, or alternatively they can follow messages from the same 'conversation' - messages with the same sender.

(drafts)

BY DATE  
october 2008

- Justin Phillipson "Hi I'm been been months thorus perfu pum been been months thorus perfu"
- microhelp@lists.uoregon.edu "Hi I'm been been months thorus perfu thorus perfu pum been been months thorus perfu thorus perfu thorus perfu thorus perfu"
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BY DATE  
october 2008

search

hover status text

(drafts)

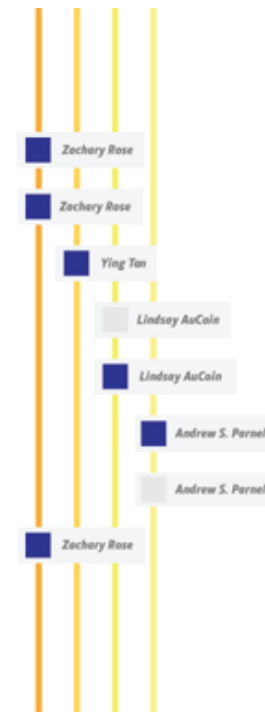


BY DATE  
october 2008

search

hover status text

(THREAD)  
Window Projections



hover status text

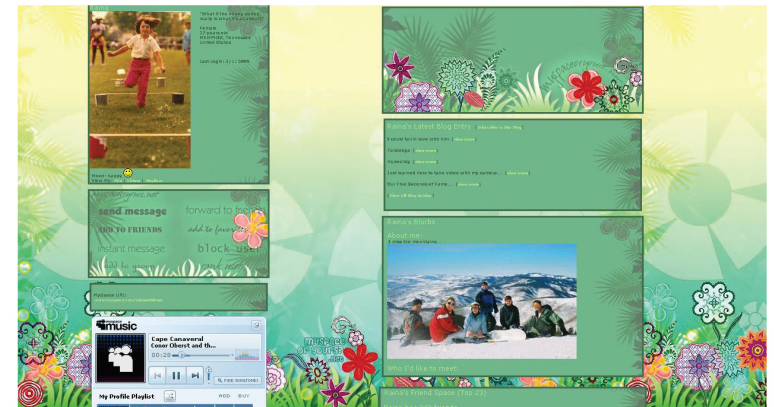
search

# Monsterface focuses on conversation, creation and community

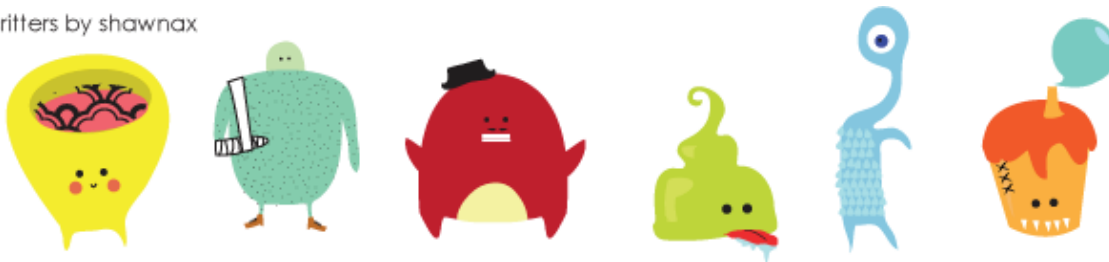
Monsterface is an interface that limits the administrative work of email by focusing solely on the 'conversation' aspect of an email. This interface has been imagined as a product for my younger and older sister. They both use the internet as a creative space to connect with friends and enjoy spending time personalizing their pages.

This interface has been developed for someone who enjoys personalizing their workspace while engaging in conversations with specific, known people through email.

This interface is not for someone who likes to organize their inbox, is in a hurry, or who frequently receives important emails from unknown people.



critters by shawnax

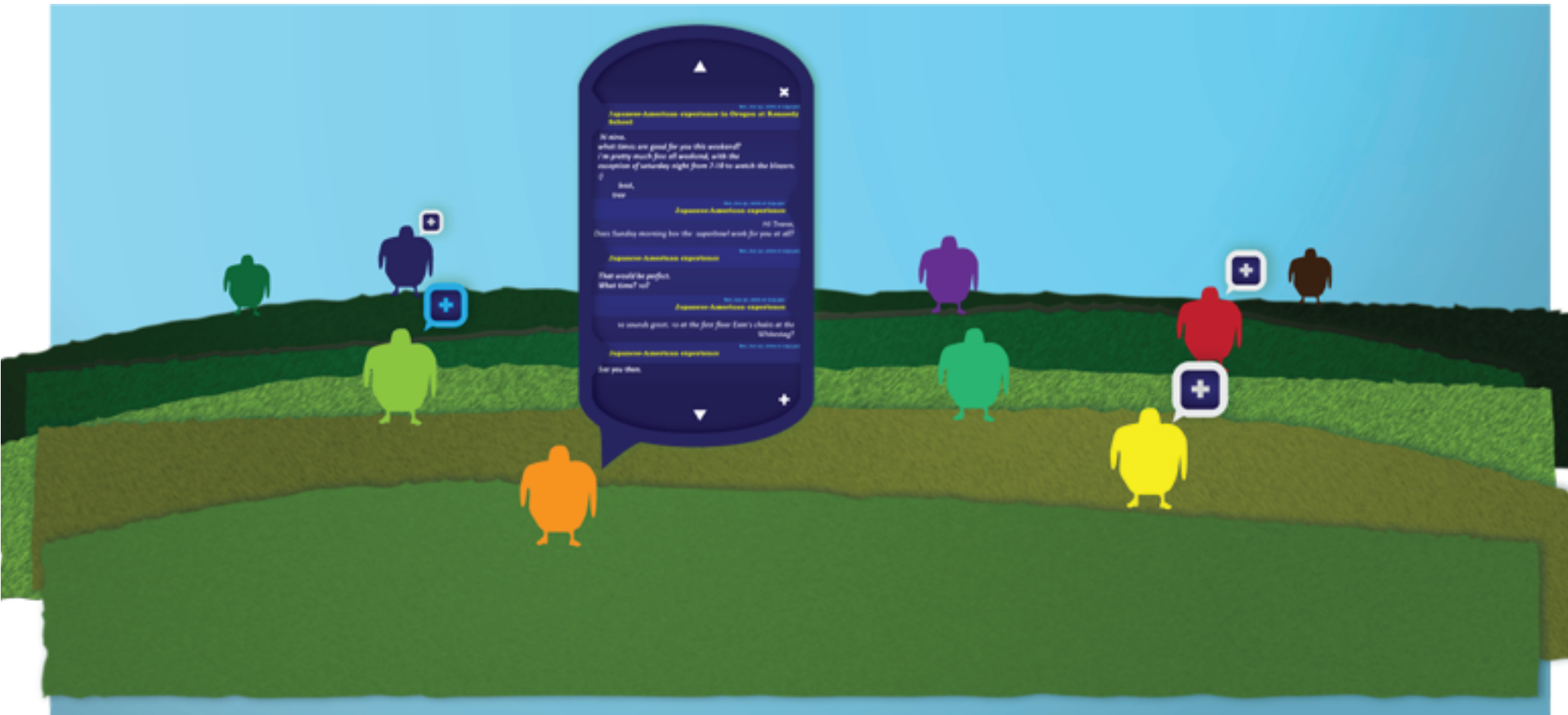


# Monsterface focuses on conversation, creation and community

The user sees their interface as a field of characters with whom they are having conversations.

The characters are placed on the z-axis (depth) based on the date of the most recent interaction with them (either message received from or message sent to).

When reading a message, the user can scroll through their entire history of interaction with that person. The only administrative action the user can take is to reply to a message. This reinforces the metaphor of email as a series of conversations where the organization of the emails is implicit.



# Monsterface focuses on conversation, creation and community

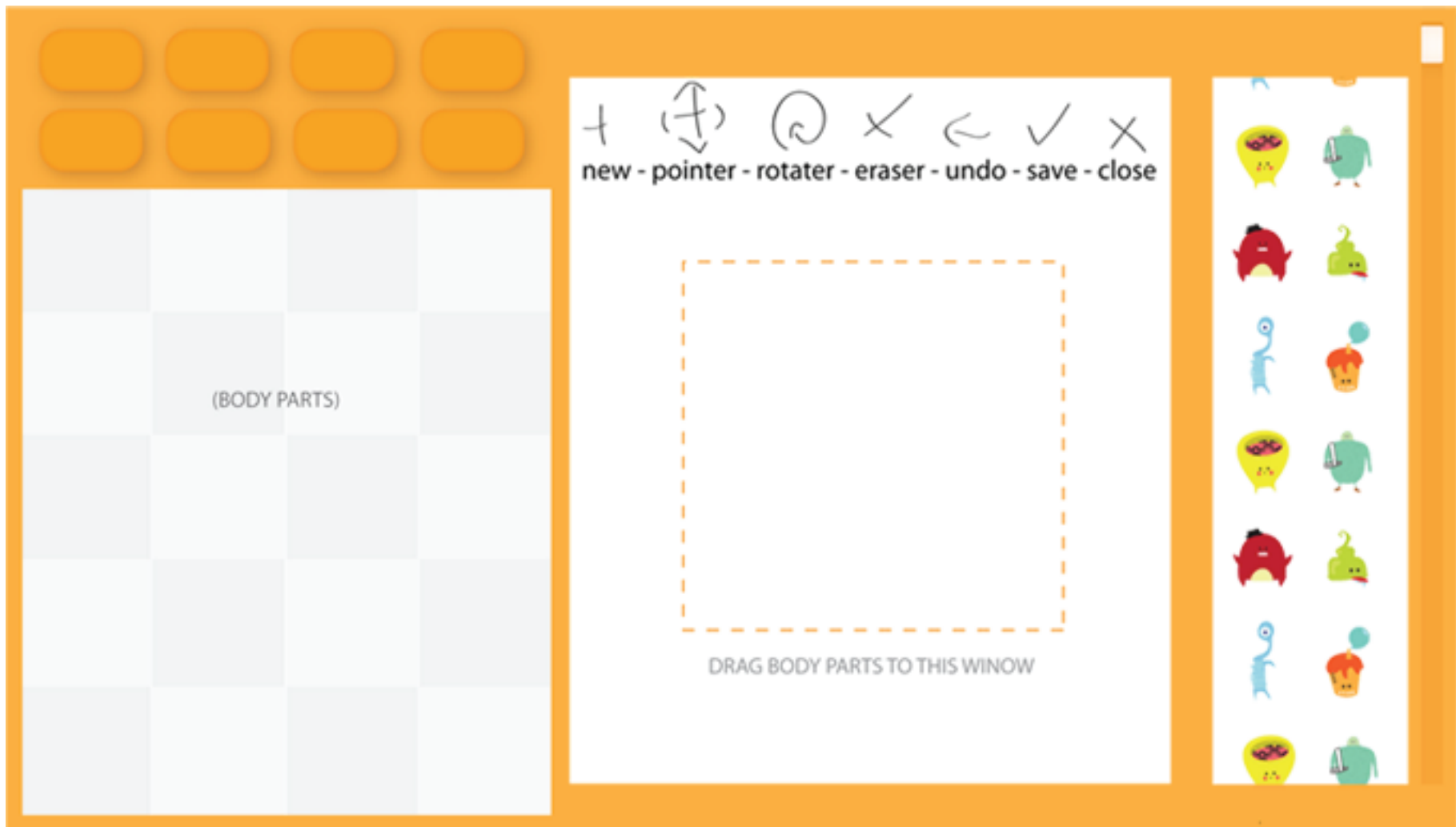
The user chooses characters, or monsters to pair with specific email addresses or groups of email addresses. The user can pair multiple email addresses with a single monster to define a group identity, such as "Fellow BFA students." Alternatively, if the user does not pair the email address with a monster, the monster will not be displayed on the field. This allow-list is an implicit way to block spam and unwanted messages, and can be especially beneficial for children, for whom spam messages could be especially harmful. Current email interfaces for children are largely marketed to parents and put the parent in the role gate-keeper. Often because these programs cater exclusively to safety concerns, they don't address interface concerns and turn out overbearing and technical. I believe that the child should be given the responsibility to be their own gate keeper, and this interface provides an intuitive, playful way to do that.

The interface is divided into three main sections. On the left is a vertical scrollable list of various colorful monster characters. The middle section is titled 'MONSTER NAME EMAILS' and contains three groups of email addresses, each associated with a specific monster icon and a name: 'DART Professors' (blue monster), 'Monr' (green monster), and 'BFA cohorts' (red monster). Each group has a list of email addresses with a small 'X' icon next to each one. The right section is titled 'EMAIL' and contains a table with columns for 'EMAIL', 'NUMBER OF EMAILS', 'DATE OF LAST EMAIL', and 'CURRENT MONSTERS'. The table lists several email addresses and their associated data.

EMAIL	NUMBER OF EMAILS	DATE OF LAST EMAIL	CURRENT MONSTERS
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	[Blue Monster] [Red Monster]
chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	[Green Monster]
emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	

# Monsterface focuses on conversation, creation and community

The monsters will be user-created characters that can be shared on a global level. To create a monster, the user can drag various body parts on a drawing stage and adjust their rotation. When the user is done creating the monster, it becomes available to everyone to use as a character to pair with an email address. This section implicitly connects the user to a greater community while also giving them space to be creative.







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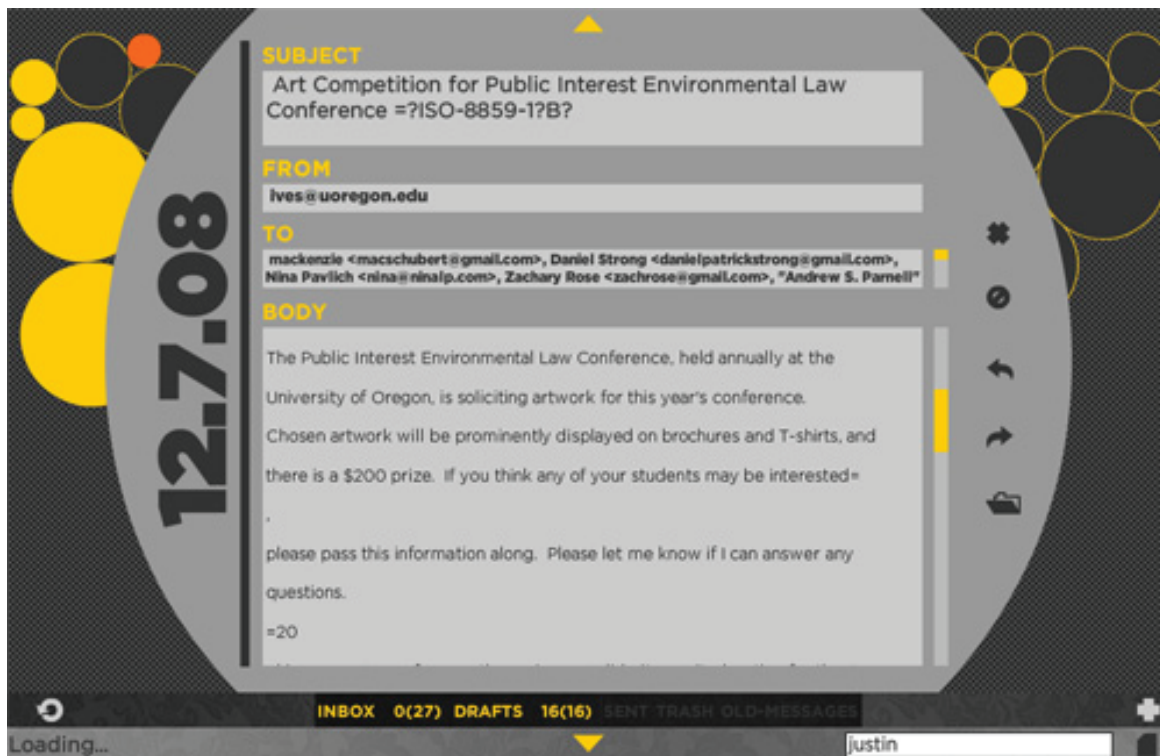
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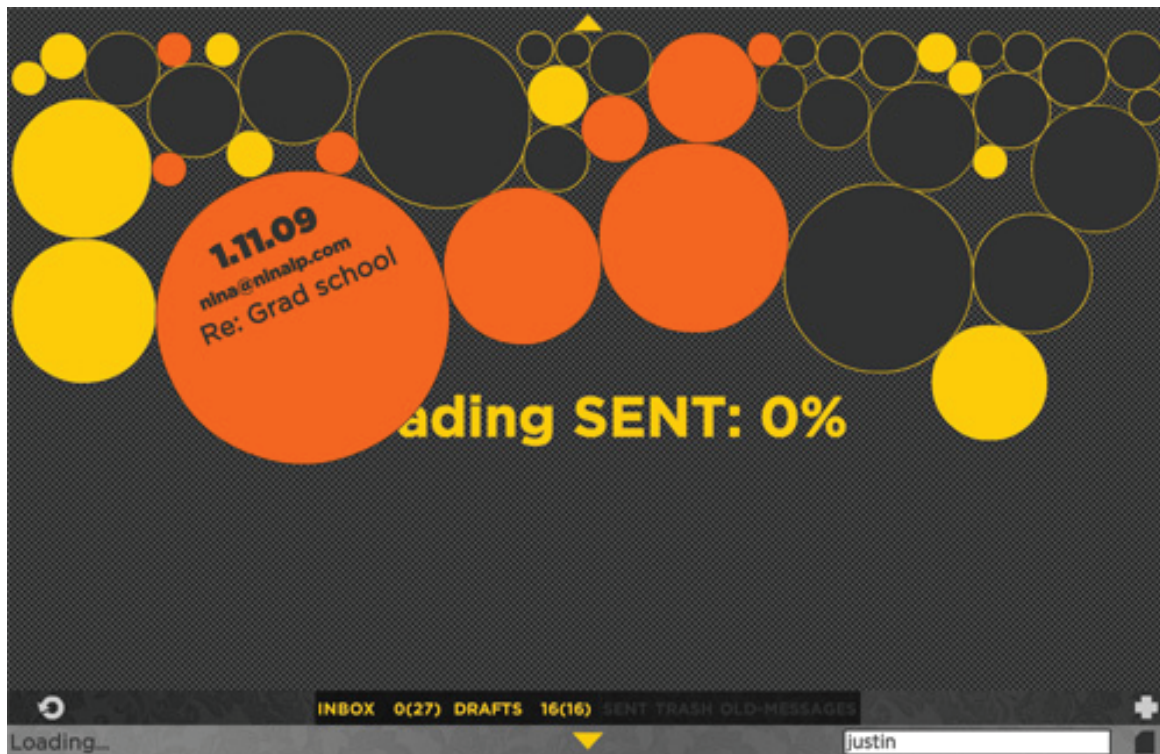


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RIGHT: For more in-depth browsing the can switch to list view, shown in the image to the right, which gives them sender/receiver information and the subject line.

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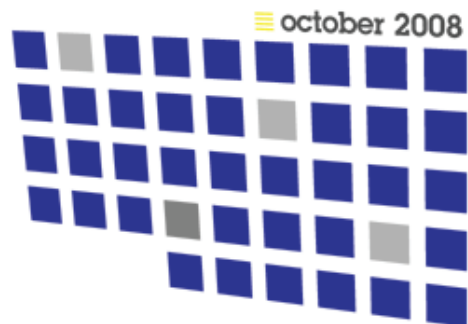
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hover status text

search

(drafts)



BY DATE

october 2008

search

hover status text

THREAD Window Projections



hover status text

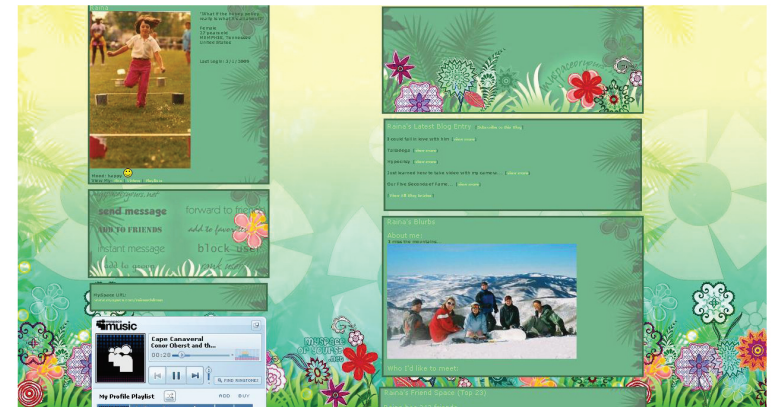
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The interface is divided into two main sections. The left section is for monster selection, showing a grid of colorful, cartoonish monster icons. The right section is for managing email associations, featuring a table with columns for 'EMAIL', 'NUMBER OF EMAILS', 'DATE OF LAST EMAIL', and 'CURRENT MONSTERS'.

MONSTER	NAME	EMAILS	EMAIL	NUMBER OF EMAILS	DATE OF LAST EMAIL	CURRENT MONSTERS
	DART Professors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li></ul>	jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	
	Moov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>chris@animateyoursite.com</li></ul>	chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	
	BFA cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li><li>zara@uoregon.edu</li><li>lansing@uoregon.edu</li></ul>	jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	
	Justia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>justin@theotherwhiff.com</li></ul>	chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	
			emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
			jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	
			chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	
			emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
			jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	
			chris@animateyoursite.com	12	2/2/09	
			emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	
			jphill1@uoregon.edu	12	2/2/09	
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			emmasoumen@hotmail.com	12	2/2/09	

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