

Title	知識コミュニティを活性化するインフォーマルコミュニケーションツールの開発
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Development of an Informal Communication Tool

Activating a Knowledge Community

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We have developed an informal communication tool called "Communication Leaf" which is one of message exchange systems. This system increases communication chances, and provides a context-sharing environment in the distributed community that was connected through networks. Then we had conducted user tests of this system to evaluate it.

Preceding this study, we have carried out extensive surveys about Human Computer Interaction to make research targets clear. Our targets in this study are as follows:

- (1) Our system supports communities of 5 – 20 members who share common mission or interest.
- (2) Our system realizes the mechanism that can induce the user to communicate each other.
- (3) Our system realizes the mechanism such that the users can utilize this system as unconsciously as possible.

We implemented "Communication Leaf (CL)" system in order to satisfy the objectives mentioned above. The CL system has 3 subsystems shown as follows:

- (1) Communication Leaf Server:
This server gathers messages and sends them to each sub-module. It also calculates the degree of message exchanging activities and informs it to each user.
- (2) Communication Leaf Client:
This module serves for editing, sending, and showing of items. It also shows the current status of community activation.
- (3) Community Message Board:
This board always shows community information that every member can see anytime.

It also exchange items that include followings:

- (1) Icon: A symbolic image of message that you want to send to community.
- (2) Short message: Contents of informality conversation.
- (3) URL (Uniform Resource Locator): Additional information of internet resources which related to the message.

The results of users tests and evaluations are as follows:

- (1) This system works well as a basis for informal communication among the community.
- (2) This system gives such effects as increasing online/offline communication.
- (3) Community Message Board can widen participants except client-members.
- (4) We need to improve our system more n the following points:
Function of a messaging media
Dividing functions of broadcast message and private message
Implementation of function that users can operate system in "Community message Board"

We conclude that this study can suggest successfully how to realize a prototype of an informal communication tool.