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CPS 182 Final Project Evaluation
December 13, 2002

The Probit Plan--Individual Review

PURPOSE:

This is my evaluation of my experiences working on The Probit Plan. My group partners were Lauren, Meredith, Di, and Phillip.

TIMELINE:

I joined the group a little late. The team had decided upon areas of focus before they took me on board, but we soon realized we needed to give more attention to the technical component, and so Meredith decided to focus on that, and that left me in charge of the wants/needs/goals/tussles of the elements involved.

We had a number of meetings (3 or so) prior to Thanksgiving Break. These meetings lasted for about 3 hours; one meeting lasted quite long (Like 4 or 5 hours). Meeting like this was great because we didn't just choose our roles and run off in different directions--but rather, we sat down and talked about all of the aspects of the plan and we considered many details/options, etc. Therefore, the plan itself represents our collective work, but it would be foolish to not break up research responsibilities, so the areas of research for the paper were split up.

Following Thanksgiving, we had a number of presentations. We continued to meet to prepare for each presentation. For the most part these presentations were good--nothing is going to force you to clarify your ideas and get your stuff together like knowing that you have to stand up in front of a crowd and talk about it. But, on the other hand--I feel like we did spend a good deal of time focusing on each the 3 or 4 presentations that we had--like you could spend 3 hours getting ready to put on a show to sell your project--or you could spend that time just doing more research and more thinking...total time spent preparing for all presentations must have been 12 hours per person--multiply by each person in the group and you have a very significant amount of time. I figured I'd point this out--but I am not complaining because, like I said, I do believe you have to get your ideas out into the "cold light of day."

Having met extensively to debate the merits of certain aspects to our plan, and also having met to prepare for multiple presentations, we conducted most of our research and writing individually.

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

There are two ways to look at the quality of our project. On the one hand, I think you can blow our proposal out of the water--for many reasons. Can you imagine trying to go on television and proposing more government bureaucracy? You'd get creamed. Even if our solution didn't face tremendous technical challenges--there would be detractors who would raise questions and suggest that it will never work. But the fact is that our program does face tremendous challenges, and so it would be doubly hard to make work.

So, I think its safe to say that the Probit Plan will not change the world, and that the five of us were not able to solve, in a few weeks, a complicated problem that has been gaining significance in society for many years.

But, having admitted that, I feel the project is excellent. We didn't just do a review of some field, and we didn't just write code. Instead, we took on a massive problem, and we offered a plausible solution. I'm can't say that our solution is perfect, but I truly believe that the issue of copyrights and patents will never be resolved until more people give it more attention. Just like you need to get up in front of a class and talk about your project to help clarify your work, a society needs to come out in the open and talk about its issues to make progress. I am VERY concerned that this does not happen--I feel like we as a society are going backwards--we are going back on the (modest) environmental progress we made in the 1990's, we have steadily eroded the limits placed on businesses and finance following the Great Depression, and we are at the dawn of Second Cold War. The only way progress can occur is when lots and lots of people think about what is going on around them. Unfortunately, too many people are working 70 hours a week to have time for that.

Sorry for the digression, but I guess the point is that The Probit Plan comes out and puts a solid proposal on the table. For that, I think we should be commended.

EFFORT AND PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

As I've suggested, our final result is not flawless. But, I can attest that what we have proposed is the result of a great deal of effort on all our parts.

For my part, in addition to the many discussions of the complexities of these issues with my group mates, and in addition to the preparations we made for the presentations, I assumed the role of researcher of the computer industry.

I did a lot of googling around, and I also read and re-read everything in the course readings that applied to this topic--and once done with those readings I also checked and read things referenced or linked from those readings. Still, I wanted more research materials--so I went to the library and found the Standard and Poor's Industry Survey for the Computer Software industry. It was a comprehensive review of how all the aspects of the industry, and how these companies do business.

At first I was intended to make my topic "The Goals/Needs/Wants/Tussles inherent in our Problem."

However, I soon felt that writing off of this framework would be cumbersome. Whats the difference between a Need and a Want? I was going to focus on different players (i.e. customer, businesses, and employees, ect)--but I felt this would be cumbersome as well--because everything relates to everything else. I felt that to separate it up this way would result in a lot of duplication.

So, instead, I chose to focus primarily on the industry itself. After all, employees and customers all exist primarily in relation to the businesses--and in many cases I explored those relationships in the paper. The overall theme of my section developed during the course of the project--if I had to state it in one line it would be--"The software industry exists on many level, and an understanding of its many dimensions will help explain why the rigid system of copyrights and patents is ineffective; furthermore, this understand will be useful to keep in mind when considering an alternative solution." Therefore, I feel my research/writing role was basically an industry survey--but I feel that it is a coherent piece to our overall paper.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I am proud of our accomplishments with this project. We have succeeded in placing a solid proposal on the table. The proposal is based upon the following notion, that: we must aim to strike a balance between an individual's right to profit from his/her work, and societies need for a useful pool of knowledge. I wholeheartedly believe in the value of that ideal--I admit our project isn't perfect--but I can attest that we did work many, many hours in pursuit of that ideal--and I think this is exactly the sort of well-detailed, technically nuance open-group thought that is needed if we are ever going to solve the problems of our world.