

**TECHNIQUE.TALK:**  
**AN ONLINE COMMUNITY FOR *THE TECHNIQUE***

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## *Technique Credo*

*“This paper is the voice of the student body and the servant of its interests. It is the champion of all causes that will contribute to the development of the institution in numbers, influence and character...In a word, the Technique desires to serve as a timesaver, a conserver of energy and spirit, a power behind every college movement.”*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Technique is the weekly newspaper of the Georgia Tech student body. Published every Friday during the regular school year and biweekly during the summer session, it claims to be “the South’s Liveliest Newspaper” (tagline). It is run entirely by Georgia Tech students. According to the staff manual, “We do this because we want not because we are part of some journalism program or need the English credit. We enjoy contributing to the wider campus community and the satisfaction that come from seeing a finished product in print and being proud of a byline.” (Technique Staff Manual, 2005)

The Technique has an online presence at <http://www.nique.net>, which contains archives dating back to 1996. Currently, however, the content of the web site duplicates the regular print publication, with the exception of the ads, which are not allowed to run on the web site due to a Board of Regents policy [12].

The Technique staff manual stresses that “We are online and at the forefront of technology. When it’s practical, we adopt new technologies and ways of working that can help us most.” It is not surprising, therefore, that the Technique has been considering implementing an online blog for some time.

Blogs have gained in popularity among many newspapers as a way to involve readers more with the paper (Moos, 2005). In a recent example reminiscent of Oldenburg (1999), John Robinson, editor of the Greensboro News & Record, explained its decision to make blogs a central part of its site: “Editors here want the newspaper and its Web site to become a virtual town square, a trusted place where people can read and write the news, share information, talk to each other and engage in community building” (Robinson, 2005). News & Record’s online editor Lex Alexander explained what he calls a new paradigm of journalism: “To use the metaphor most frequently applied, journalism, as traditionally practiced, has been a lecture, almost completely one-way, from journalists to readers. But it’s changing now to a conversation between and among journalists and readers, one that breaks down artificial barriers between us and readers and involves unprecedented levels of transparency in how we do our work” (Alexander, 2005)

Principled motivations aside, the implementation of a newspaper blog can often prove to be challenging. It is particularly tricky at a student newspaper with part time staff, where staff roles often shift every year. For example, while the editorial board of the Technique came up with the idea of implementing a blog a year ago, they never reached a consensus on what the blog should be like; today, a year later, there is still no progress on this front.

In this paper, we seek to design a blog for the Technique according to the nine principles of community building outlined by Amy Jo Kim and other relevant theorists and practitioners. Fortunately, the Technique editorial board has welcomed our participation and we were able to obtain input and assistance from the majority of the editorial staff throughout the course of this project.

## METHODOLOGY

The potential audience for an online community based on the Technique is large (although finite) and heterogeneous. Because our audience is so diverse, we were reluctant to base our data collection solely on an arbitrary sampling of “undergraduates” or “Technique readers.” Instead, we began by identifying the major stakeholders in the design – the Technique staff, likely contributors, and casual readers. We then collected data from these three distinct groups, varying our methodology and focus with each group.

Members of the first group, the *Technique Staff*, are intimately familiar with the Technique’s culture, content, and inner workings. We thought it likely that the staff would become the initial group of moderators for the site. Furthermore, the staff’s prior discussions of the Technique’s online component would provide valuable insight and raise questions we had not anticipated. We interviewed a total of six editors, in pairs or individually. We selected interview participants based on their availability and role within the organization. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour. During these interviews, we sought opinions on current readership, desired features, potential constraints that arise from existing social or cultural structures, openness to change, and personal preferences. We also inquired specifically about the participant’s stance in the ongoing blog discussion.

Members of the second group, *Likely Contributors*, were selected from those readers whose Letters to the Editor have been published within the past year. We believed that these readers would be more likely to become active contributors or leaders within the community, and thus could provide insight into issues relating to conduct, leadership, and article content. We conducted three interviews in this group, with students who had been on opposing sides in recent debates on gay marriage and Coming Out Week on the editorial page. Each interview lasted

approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Nonnecke & Preece (2000) found that the rate and manner of participation in a community can vary widely based on topic. In soliciting information on community design from potential leaders, we tried to account for the variety of potential subject matter but were limited by the students who responded to our emails.

Finally, members of the third group, *Casual Readers*, were selected via walk-up surveys in the CoC Picnic Area and the Student Center. When possible, we surveyed students who were visibly reading the Technique. Our goal was to better understand how to draw traffic to the Technique blog, in terms of content, community features, and demographics (see Appendix 1 for survey). We collected a total of 30 surveys in three separate sessions, the majority on paper but with a few participants completing an online version. Our survey design was limited by an architectural issue – the online survey system was limited to 10 questions, so we were forced to make some questions more open-ended than was desirable.

We relied on quotes and responses to a set of standard questions to drive our design process. For our survey data, we tallied and charted information on age, sex, year in school, blog experience, reading time & frequency for the Technique, and topics / features of interest.

For background research, we looked at a variety of different newspaper blogs and college newspaper Web sites. We also sought input from Rosemary Wells, Publications Manager for the Student Publications; Rodney Ho, who writes several blogs for the AJC.com; and Gary Wolovick from Georgia Tech Legal Services, who is helping us to research the legal issues involved should the Technique choose to implement our blog.

## **DESIGN & RATIONALE**

In this section, we outline and articulate our design choices for the Technique.talk

community based upon Amy Jo Kim's nine principles of community building (1998).

### **Purpose of the Community**

According to Jennifer Lee, the Focus editor of the Technique, the idea of a blog first came up in January of 2004, and has been discussed several times during both editorial board meetings and regular staff meetings since then. According to Lee: "There are lots of things we have to consider. Two of the most important are – how should we be responsible for the content that goes up on the blog, and also in what way would it be helpful? We're not sure how much our readers would actually participate in something like that" [I3].

Lee's first concern, echoed by every editorial board member with whom we spoke, is a non-trivial one that refers to liability. Georgia Tech takes a hands-off approach to running the paper, with no faculty advisor or any censoring of content. The burden of liability lies with the Editor in Chief, since he/she must give final approval for the paper's content. An online forum, where people would be able to post what they wanted, could potentially endanger the Technique's mission. The moderators of AJC.com's blogs handle this by carefully screening the comments posted by readers; they even restrict the posting of comments to business hours from Monday through Friday. The Student Press Law Center cites Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which protects ISPs from liability from content provided from other sources, as extending to student media trying to start online student bulletin boards or open forums (2000). However, without direct advice from a lawyer, the possibility of being sued remains a primary concern with the Technique's editorial staff.

Lee's second concern pertains to the amount of participation such a community would attract. A sense of connectedness between the paper and its readership is something that the Technique staff actively tries to solicit, with weekly open staff meetings on Tuesday nights and a

low barrier to entry to becoming a contributing writer. However, former online editor Karl Guertin points out that “The first thing that every new writer wants to know when they join the Technique is how they can write editorials. After they realize that they have to put up with at least a year as a writer and then have to become an editor, the prospect becomes somewhat less appealing and a number even leave” (Guertin, 2004).

Currently there are five avenues for reader involvement with the Technique:

- 1 *Letters to the editor.* Every community member is allowed to write one letter a semester. Most letters are written in reaction to a story or another letter to the editor. Recent letters have addressed gay marriage, student elections, evolution and the “coolification” of the library. Letters must be signed and must have a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification purposes. Editors reserve the right to edit for style, content or length, and letters not considered to be of “valid intent” can be rejected (Letter Submission Policy, Technique). Editors reported that they typically do not receive many letters and they only edit for length. Sarah, one of our interview subjects, notes that the time, length, and formality required for writing a letter to the editor has often prevented her from voicing her feedback. The letter that she did finally submit this semester required four to five hours, over the course of many days, to complete [I4].
- 2 *Sliver.* Sliver is a random assortment of brief quotes collected from people through an input box at nique.net which sends the sliver to a database. Slivers are then picked by the advertising manager in order to fill blank ad space. A sampling include:  
  
*“Wangs are more interesting than tacos when you have one.”*  
  
*“Noel is gorgeous. Oh my god. He’s so beautiful!”*  
  
*“whats the complement to a 43 degree angle? My you’re looking “acute” today.”*

- 3 *Interactive polls* on nique.net, with results published in the paper version.
- 4 “Tech Up Close,” an extreme close-up photo that readers are invited to identify, alternating with a caption contest for photographs.
- 5 *Joining the staff.* Any Tech student is eligible to become a staff member of the Technique, with no formal application process. While unsolicited articles are not accepted, once a writer is on the mailing list of the section editor, they can volunteer to write an article on a first-come/first-serve basis based on seniority. Editors, especially for the focus and entertainment sections, actively encourage their writers to suggest story ideas. Once the new writer has written 3-5 articles, they are eligible to become a staff writer, a paid position that entitles them to \$8 per article. At the end of each year, writers can apply for section or assistant section editors as well as senior staff writers. The editor in chief also applies for his position and must go through an interview process by the Student Media Board. Then the editor-in-chief interviews all the would-be editors and makes those hiring decisions.

We believe that the current models of interaction between the Technique and its readership are insufficient for the student body to voice their feedback. Either the interaction is very limited (e.g., polls and caption contests), or the barrier to entry is too high and involves a significant level of time commitment (e.g., writing a letter to the editor or becoming a staff writer). The need for an open forum for students was stressed by Britton, one of our interviewees. Britton, in his capacity as president of the College Republicans, has been both quoted in the Technique and published through numerous letters to the editors, signed by him as well as under the guise of other members of his groups. He mentioned that at many of their events, people would “come up to us and start losing their minds.” Britton attributed this to what

happens when people feel like they haven't had their voices heard and stressed the importance of having an open forum for debate that does not reflect the opinions of the Technique editorial staff [I5]. According to Lessig, "In the United States at least, there are few places where you can stand before the public and address them about some matter of public import without most people thinking you a nut or nuisance. There is no speakers' corner in every city; most towns do not have a town meeting. "America offline," in this sense, is very much like America Online – not designed to give individuals access to a wide audience to address public matters" (1999). Jennifer Schur, the Executive Editor of the Technique, sees the blog as a tool that will increase the Technique's online readership, increase their sense of community, and allow students and faculty to feel more connected to the paper and its content [I6]. This vision is shared by the Technique's editorial board; however, editors expressed a diversity of opinions regarding details such as the tone of the blog, moderation, and user involvement. For example, while some editors feel that a typical post should have a tone similar to a letter to the editor, others feel that it would have the informality of a Sliver.

We define our audience to be primarily undergraduate students at Georgia Tech, since that is also the primary audience of the print version. In addition, the entire editorial staff and the majority of writers who attend meetings regularly are undergraduates; this is reflected in the content and scope of the paper. Graduate students do read and contribute to the Technique: this year there are two staff columnists and at least four writers and photographers who are graduate students. Other potential community members include faculty members wanting a perspective beyond "The Whistle," alumni who want to stay in touch with campus news, and parents; however, these groups do not constitute our target audience.

Most Technique readers scan each section of the paper, and usually don't read from cover

to cover. Based on our survey results from a pool of 30 people, most readers spend anywhere from 10 minutes to an hour reading the Technique each week. When questioned about the features they would like to see in a Technique blog, 55% indicated that they would be interested in suggesting articles for the print edition; 52% indicated that they would like to comment on articles from the Technique; and 41% indicated that they would like to access comments made by friends. Factors cited by students that might affect their contribution to the blog included time constraints, ease of use, and relevance of content.

### **Gathering Places**

The key gathering places in the Technique blog community will be the five primary sections patterned after the print publication of the Technique – News, Opinions, Focus, Entertainment, and Sports. These areas are clearly marked on the upper-left hand side of the page (see Figure 1) and serve to orient newbies as well as to help users easily find appropriate content and conversations. The content that appears in each section might include: references to stories from nique.net; postings by editors, moderators, and selected users; and posts from the Technique editorial board floating story ideas and soliciting feedback and potential sources for upcoming stories.

Each week, a reference to front-page stories from each section of the print edition will be automatically posted to the front page of the blog, creating an overview of the site content. The full story published on nique.net will link to the respective post on the blog so that readers may go to the blog to comment. The remainder of the stories from each section will be available from the main section pages of the blog. This system, similar to the one successfully employed by Slashdot.org, allows users to have an overview of the primary topics, but also allows for

conversation or debate to take place surrounding all stories covered by the Technique each week, not just ones selected by the editorial staff.

In addition, we will have a “Story Ideas and Suggestions” section, which will allow users to directly interface with the Technique editorial board. In this section, users will be able to submit story ideas and leads for the staff to follow. Also in this section, users will be able to submit posts regarding general feedback to the Technique. Many of our interview subjects, particularly those on the editorial staff, were excited about this aspect of the online community. Jennifer Schur said: “I imagine it as an interstate between the Technique and its readership. Right now there’s no way for the readership to tell the people on the staff, or to submit input other than to email or to write a letter to the editor... If there was a link where people could do that – it could increase ownership that the student body feels over the student paper. And it would let us service the community more.”

Members will be allowed to extend the space of the community. However, as Amy Jo Kim notes, “this is not... an excuse for uncontrolled, undifferentiated growth; members should earn the right to customize the environment by demonstrating appropriate behavior and ongoing commitment to the community” (1998). In keeping with this principle, new sections to the community can only be added by moderators with the approval of an editor.

Finally, we will also have an advanced feature that will allow more seasoned users to create a customized view, with the ability to select and display only sections of personal interest (see Figure 5). This personal filtering system is similar to those used by Slashdot.org and Yahoo!, which allows users to create a customized “My Yahoo!” page. Figure 5 illustrates one example of a customized home page on which the user is only interested in seeing new posts in the Entertainment, Sports, and Opinions sections, respectively.

## **Member Profiles**

In order to ensure accountability for behavior in the community, we plan to institute a registration system where users must enter their real name and Georgia Tech email address in order for the system to verify that they are a registered student. As part of the registration process, we allow the user to pick a pseudonym, in order to balance the need to hold students accountable and reward good behavior while maintaining a certain aspect of privacy. Because our audience consists of the GT community, we can take advantage of this existing infrastructure to vet new users as legitimate participants. In this respect, our access policy bears more similarities to Harvard's closed-access than Chicago's open-access model, as discussed by Lessig (1999). The values reflected by this design imply a more controlled and consequential environment, necessitated by our requirements to limit liability and uphold the Technique brand.

Once registered, users can then create a more detailed profile, including optional information including their year, major, campus organizations, Web page/blog, IM, and possibly a photograph, although the latter could prove problematic both for privacy and moderation purposes. For this and other user-contributed content, we must rely on our users to report violations of the site's Basic Code of Conduct.

In addition, information available through the profile will include the user's posting history with permalinks to relevant postings. The user can also see his or her rating, based on how others rate his/her comments (similar to systems employed by Slashdot.org and Amazon.com). For example, a new user might have a rating of "Buzz", while a highly rated user might have a rating of "MegaBuzz." Finally, group affiliations also give users the option of adding or changing groups so that it is possible to filter all posts and comments on the blog by contributions from different groups to which the user belongs.

## Leadership

We expect that in the early days of the blog, the community would be primarily led by the Technique editorial board. Editors will have initial control over content and moderation. However, as the community grows, we hope to cultivate a base of responsible contributors who become eligible to make postings and to help moderate the site themselves.

At the basic level, any registered user is allowed to make comments to posts. Users will be able to either *cheer* a comment if they think it's good or *report* it if it looks like it violates the code of conduct. If a user receives 10 cheers, he/she will be offered the ability to submit posts. Posts still have to go through an approval process by moderators. They are not edited, but the moderator can approve, reject, or give reason for revision (e.g., edit for grammar or length). At the next level, if the user has had 5 accepted posts, he/she will be given the opportunity to apply to be a section moderator, with approval from a Technique editorial board member. Moderators would have the right to approve posts for their sections and delete comments as they see fit. The suggested application process would be composed of simple questions, such as "Which section would you like moderate," "Why are you interested in applying," and "What do you think makes a good post for this section?" Once accepted to the role of a moderator, the user would have to agree to an additional code of conduct. Hypothetically, anyone may submit a post if there are enough moderators, but while the balance of liability, extra work for editors, and reader participation is being worked out in the initial phase, only submissions by members deemed "safe" would be allowed in the queue.

One issue that arises within this model is the mixed model for compensation. Currently, editors receive a weekly stipend for their participation, which can often involve all-nighters editing and laying out the paper. Moderating the blog would create unpaid "overtime" work.

Moderators and posters from the community would receive no monetary compensation for their time. Amy Jo Kim notes, however, that “Volunteers often make the best hosts... volunteers always appreciate being acknowledged for their leadership and commitment, so be on the lookout for ways to reward them” (1998). In other contexts, long-time users who take on a leadership role without compensation have become upset. However, we believe that the limited responsibilities of moderators, the higher levels of privileges given to them, the youth of our audience, and the necessarily rotating nature of the moderation staff will mitigate this effect somewhat. Another factor to note is the final control of editors over moderator decisions. In the (hopefully) rare case that a moderator approves a post that is considered to be a violation of the site’s policies, an editor has the ability to delete that post from the blog. One would also expect that, as the ultimate authorities in the blog, it is the editorial staff’s responsibility to resolve conflicts between moderators.

## **Code of Conduct**

### *The Foundations of Conduct*

In formulating the rules of acceptable conduct for the system, we must first consider several constraints that these rules and their enforcement must satisfy:

- The legal liability of the editor-in-chief for content in the current print edition, and our uncertainty of how that liability would translate to a Technique blog, may lead a moderator to reject reader-submitted content that appears to be controversial. To combat this, we must establish a code of conduct that permits moderators to effectively police libel and obscenity while protecting freedom of expression.

- The need to mitigate the workload of moderation. The time constraints placed upon the editorial staff necessitate a code of conduct that can be made easy to enforce with the appropriate mechanisms.
- The timely format of a blog. The traditional editorial models of the newspaper create a journalistic standard that is too rigorous to apply directly to a blog, a format with its own conventions with which people are already familiar. Some examples of this include triangulating sources, investigating assertions, and the purging of bias. Thus, simply appropriating the *Technique* writer's guide to the blog is infeasible.
- The need for a code of conduct that respects diversity of opinion. The current standard for acceptable editorializing in the *Technique*, while even-handed, heavily reflects the personal opinions of its editors and their beliefs about what constitutes appropriate content. One reader whom we interviewed complained of bias on the part of the *Technique* editorial staff towards liberal viewpoints, albeit with the admission that "they're pretty good about printing [conservative letters]." The *Technique* may print a variety of opinions in their Letters page, but these remain "outsider" opinions relegated to a small section of the paper. Promoting free expression is critical to the diversity and identity of a community – Horn argues that online communities are "formed and strengthened through the resolution of conflict" (1998).
- The need to respect the editors' stake in the *Technique*'s reputation. Editors put a tremendous amount of work into the paper, and thus should feel entitled to interpret certain rules in order to maintain the character and identity.
- The tension between free expression and civil speech. The unmoderated newsgroups in the *git.\** hierarchy were described by our interviewees as virtually content-free,

consisting of nothing more than flames and noise. In order to meet our goal of providing a voice to the GT community, we must guarantee a certain level of civil discourse.

### *Codes of Conduct*

With these constraints in mind, we have formulated the codes of conduct for the Technique blog based around three user roles. Users must agree to these respective codes of conduct before assuming each of these roles in the community. First, the Basic Code of Conduct applies to all registered users, and is required of all submitted comments and posts as well as user profile information. Second, the Moderator Code of Conduct applies to the deletion of comments and the approval of posts. Third, the Editor Code of Conduct applies to approval of moderators and the deletion of posts, as well as behavior when submitting content.

Punishments for violating the code of conduct may vary at the discretion of the editors. Minor infractions may only result in a deleted comment; however, a consistent pattern of deviant behavior may result in the deletion of the user's account.

### *Basic Code of Conduct*

The Basic Code of Conduct, applying to all user-submitted content, proscribes content with the following criteria:

- Illegal or infringing of intellectual property rights.
- Obscene, pornographic, or incorporates excessive profanity.
- Defamatory, libelous, threatening, harassing, or invasive of privacy, including misrepresentation or the posting of personal information about private individuals.
- Personal attacks on individuals or groups based on ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation as well as the usage of derogatory language or images.

The Basic Code also encourages respectful language and civil argument. It is based upon the content policies for the Technique, Harvard Law blogs (<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/terms>), and the NPR forums (<http://www.npr.org/about/termsfuse.html>).

Some subtleties in the Basic Code require further explanation. For example, how is an argument against gay marriage affected by the Basic Code? Some may consider statements to the effect of “Gay marriage is immoral” to be hate speech, and prohibited under the fourth category of the Basic Code. However, the fourth category distinguishes between attacks on behavior and attacks on groups. “Gays are evil” is hate speech; “Gay marriage is evil” toes the line without crossing it.

Another point of clarification is “excessive profanity.” As one of our interview subjects points out, “Sometimes you just have to say ‘Damn’ as a point of emphasis” [I5]. We wish to avoid the trap of the AOL “dirty words” list (Naraine, 2005), where the censorship of profanity is decontextualized from the spirit of the Basic Code. This raises the possibility of abuse by moderators, wherein a moderator may selectively enforce a blanket ban on profanity to remove content he or she finds personally disagreeable. We believe that a complete and indiscriminate ban on four-letter words would tarnish the inclusive and expressive spirit of the community, yet we must also enforce a basic level of civility in speech.

### *Moderator Code of Conduct*

The Moderator Code is a set of additional precepts that must be followed by moderators, and relates to the deletion of comments and the approval of posts. It reiterates that moderators are not editors, and limits the circumstances under which moderators may reject or delete content.

The Moderator Code establishes that:

- A moderator may only delete a comment if it represents a clear violation of the Basic Code.
- A moderator may only reject a post if it violates the Basic Code, if it has significant problems with grammar or spelling, or if it is inappropriate for the section.
- When rejecting a post, a moderator must provide a clear and understandable reason for his or her rejection.

“Inappropriate for the section” is a broad standard, and is subject to a great deal of interpretation. It implies that each section of the blog must have a clearly defined list of criteria for what is and is not appropriate. These criteria must be made available to the moderators, and moderators must interpret them in a value-neutral manner.

Another issue that must be dealt with in this context pertains to accuracy. For example, what about a scenario wherein a submitted post quotes statistics that the moderator believes to be deliberately misleading? The moderator may not reject the post based on that criterion – refutation of a post occurs in the comments section, not at moderation time.

### *Editor Code of Conduct*

The Editor Code must be accepted by editorial staff before they receive editor privileges on the blog, and applies to the approval of new moderators and the deletion of posts as well as conduct in the comments and posts. It stipulates that:

- Editors must evaluate moderator applications based on conduct within and contribution to the community.
- Editors may not reject a moderator application based on personal beliefs or interests on the part of the applicant.

- In their comments and posts, editors must reflect well on the Technique as a publication and as a community.

The Technique blog is intended to form a connection between the newspaper and the Georgia Tech community – under the Editor Code, an editor has the responsibility to let the community have its voice.

### **Range of Roles**

Amy Jo Kim suggests that a range of roles must be accommodated in a community's design (1998). The Technique blog formalizes these roles as part of a meritocracy that rewards good behavior with increasing power and responsibility. Lessig observes that “Two solutions are possible. One, a top-down solution, would empower editors--people who select what should be published based on a host of considerations, including the truth of what is said. The other, bottom-up, would facilitate the construction of reputation – a measure of the significance of the speech that turns on who is actually uttering it” (1999). We believe that our solution reconciles these two models of progressive community involvement.

General readers can read posts, see profiles and groups, and report abuse to the moderators. A visitor, who is presented with prompts to register on the front page and at the bottom of each comment listing, must register in order to comment on a post. As Preece and Nonnecke point out, up to 90% of online groups can be classified as “lurkers” who would read, but not contribute to the site (2000). In a regular newspaper or information site, most people do not respond to articles they read, so the challenge is how to entice these users to switch to a more active mode of participation.

A newbie is a newly registered user. Only those with a GT PRISM address can register as

users. New users must agree to abide by the Basic Code of Conduct, and are provided with a page that offers a brief tour of site features (e.g., how to report abuse, how to join a group, how to comment, how to cheer comments, etc.). A newly registered user has the ability to comment and cheer.

A regular is a more active user. Contribution is indicated in a user's profile by status -- status reflects how often a user is cheered, while his or her level of activity is evident from the comment and posting history. If a reader has a cheer rating of 10 or higher, he / she will be invited via email to begin submitting posts for sections of the blog.

A poster is a highly-rated reader who has won the right to submit posts to a section. A poster's status is indicated in the posting history under his or her profile. When a poster has made 5 approved posts, he or she is invited to apply to become a section moderator.

A moderator can approve posts for a section, as well as delete comments and flag groups that violate the Basic Code. Moderators must agree to the Moderator Code of Conduct before assuming the role. Moderators have access to the post submission queue, and are placed on a moderator mailing list that enables them to receive announcements, ask questions, and give feedback. While moderators are not members of the Technique staff, they are often invited to staff functions and may receive other staff privileges.

An editor is a paid member of the editorial staff of the Technique. Editors can approve moderator applications and delete posts (essentially revoking a moderator's approval of a post). An editor must agree to the Editor Code of Conduct before assuming a role in the management of the blog.

## **Sub Groups**

Subgroups in the Technique blog exist in order to allow a diverse community to discover and explore common interests. They serve as an optional, user-driven filtering mechanism to enable readers to easily access their favorite content and form personal connections with other readers.

According to Amy Jo Kim, it is through subgroups that a large community can promote intimacy and familiarity among its members – a critical part of fostering community involvement and good citizenship (1998). Furthermore, our survey revealed that our target audience is familiar with blogs primarily through friend-based communities like LiveJournal and Xanga. One of the most popular blog features (41%) listed in our survey responses was “access comments by my friends” – that is, our users want the ability to filter their experience based upon authorship as well as by content. We believe that groups will function as a motivator to contribute to Technique blog, since users will see their contributions in the context of their peer group as well as the wider community.

We have studied several existing models for subgroups within a community. Slashdot makes use of a “friends and foes” system, enabling users to quickly browse through comment histories of users on their friends list. LiveJournal allows users to create both personal friend lists and communities of interest (which function as group blogs). Second Life features a lightweight and entirely user-driven group system, allowing users to group their associates and easily communicate with large numbers of them at once.

In our group model, a group consists of a list of users and a group profile. The group profile page includes a picture, membership listing, and short description of the group. The group page also includes a listing of recent comments and posts by members of that group. The group

page URL is consistent and easy to remember, e.g. <http://talk.nique.net/groups/cs6470/>. A user may search for groups by name or description, and join as many groups as he or she wishes. The user's profile contains a list of his or her active groups, and any user may browse recent contributions from a group by visiting the group page.

Any user may create a group. Group creation entails selecting a name and entering the group's profile information. A group may be designated as *open* or *restricted*. Any user may join an open group, while restricted groups require that new members be approved by an officer, who by default is the group's creator. Group officers may change the group's profile information and security level, approve new members (in a restricted group), and designate other members as group officers.

Enabling users to create and define groups brings a new set of moderation challenges, such as ensuring group names and profiles conform to the Basic Code of Conduct. However, as with comments, requiring approval by a moderator of every change to a group's profile places too high a barrier between users and their ability to contribute to a community. Thus, we rely on users to report group profiles that violate the Basic Code through the moderator reporting mechanism.

Friends work in a manner similar to groups. A user may designate other users as friends – their comments and posts will be combined onto a single page, linked to the user's profile (e.g. <http://talk.nique.net/users/ajk/friends>).

## **Cyclic Events**

The Technique blog community benefits from the knowledge that the Technique is a weekly publication. Readers know, therefore, that every Friday new content will be available and

open to discussion online. In addition to this inherent cycle, we have designed several other elements to encourage recurring visits to the site and to help the online community to develop a coherent sense of identity and shared purpose. For example, every week, we will feature a different “Online Poll” that is connected to a relevant news story from that week. We will also feature periodic “Photos That Got Away,” using photographs that were not used in the print edition. Finally, the blog will also feature a “Comment of the Week,” highlighting particularly insightful or humorous contributions from its readers. Each of these weekly events will help to promote the sense that every user is part of a larger, dynamic community of their peers.

Other cyclic events overlap with the online community’s integration into real life. For example, we will post notices that all readers and commenters from the Technique blog are always welcome at the weekly staff meetings held by the Technique. In addition to being able to meet one another face to face, readers will also have the opportunity to speak with editors, provide ideas, and raise relevant issues for discussion at these meetings.

We suggest that moderators, in addition to being welcome at the weekly staff meetings, should also be invited to join the staff banquet, held annually by the Technique. This event is a more personal way of for the staff to meet and thank all the moderators for their volunteer service to the community.

Finally, at the end of each semester as well as the academic year, the Technique blog will thank contributing users and moderators who are graduating, and thank everyone for their contributions throughout their time at Georgia Tech.

All of these elements will serve to reinforce the core sense of community surrounding the audience that the Technique blog serves.

### **Integration with the Real World**

The Technique blog community is very much integrated with the real world – that is, the real life community that is composed of approximately 16,500 Georgia Tech undergraduate and

graduate students, in addition to alumni, faculty, and staff. Because of its close relationship to the print publication, the very nature of the Technique blog is that it addresses issues that are of immediate relevance to everyone within the real-life community at Georgia Tech.

There are some more direct ways in which active readers and users of the blog community can interface directly with one another and with the Technique staff. As we discussed in the cyclic events section, the Technique staff hosts regular staff meetings, which are gatherings that are open to the public and that all online readers and commenters are welcome to attend. We suggest that moderators, in addition, should be invited to the annual staff banquet, as an additional way of thanking them for their volunteer service to the community. These events will allow those contributors who wish to meet and connect with one another in real life to do so. This can help to make the core community relationships stronger and deeper.

However, the nature of the blog is also to allow people to remain anonymous, particularly when discussing sensitive subjects. Therefore, users of the Technique blog community are welcome to either participate in the real world events or only be known by their pseudonym.

## PROTOTYPES

Figure 1 Technique.talk Main Page

The screenshot shows the main page of the Technique.talk blog. At the top left is a bee logo. The main title is "The South's Liveliest College Newspaper" followed by "TECHNIQUE.talk" in a large, stylized font. Below the title is the text "Serving Georgia Tech since 1911 • April 20, 2005".

The page is divided into several sections:

- Sections:** A vertical list on the left includes News, Opinions, Focus, Entertainment, Sports, and Story Ideas & Suggestions.
- News:** The top section with a light gray background. It features two article teasers: "Runoff pits Andersen against Howard" and "Housing responds to report of dorm mold".
- Opinions:** A section with a white background featuring a teaser for "Value your time in college, but get over Tech".
- Focus:** A section with a light gray background featuring a teaser for "Forum highlights academic freedom".
- Entertainment:** A section with a light gray background featuring a teaser for "Memorable moments from Ludacris concert".
- Online Poll:** A section with a white background asking "What do you do with your used textbooks?" with four radio button options: Keep them, Sell them online, Sell back to bookstore, and Donate to Goodwill.
- Search:** A search bar with a "SEARCH" button.
- Older Posts:** A list of links to previous posts, such as "Large class sizes cramp housing (57)", "RHA hosts Winterbuzz (33)", "LeaderShape cut (49)", "New VP Heads Student Affairs (12)", "Dining Services Feed U.S. Troops (213)", and "Misconduct Procedures Revised (32)".
- Footer/Navigation:** A vertical list on the bottom left includes "Disclaimer", "Code of Conduct", "Contact a Moderator", "FAQs", and "RSS".
- Login/Signup:** A form on the right side with fields for "Nickname" and "Password", and buttons for "LOGIN" and "New User".

This prototype illustrates the default main page of the Technique.talk blog. The top five sections (News, Opinions, Focus, Entertainment, and Sports) correspond to the primary sections from the print edition. The sixth section, Story Ideas & Suggestions, is a place where readers can submit story ideas to the Technique staff, and where the staff can solicit feedback and possible sources for upcoming stories.

The main page provides an overview of the site structure. Top stories from each section correspond to front-page stories from the print publication, although all stories from each section will be available if the user clicks on the main heading of that section. Posts that are direct references to a story from the Technique have a light gray background (a visual cue reminiscent of newspaper), while online-only content remains on a white background.

Users will also be able to create a new account, log in if they already have one, search the blog, go through archives, as well as take a weekly online poll (this section rotates with other period content such as a caption content or comment of the week). The disclaimer, code of conduct, contact a moderator information, FAQs, and RSS feed options will be available from every page in the site.

Figure 2 Technique Blog Typical Post Page

**“The South’s Liveliest College Newspaper”**  
**TECHNIQUE.talk**  
 Serving Georgia Tech since 1911 • April 20, 2005

**Sections**  
 News  
 Opinions  
 Focus  
 Entertainment  
 Sports  
 Story Ideas & Suggestions

**Comment of the Week**  
*“Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus.”*  
 -AJK  
[Track Back](#) | [Cheer](#)

[Disclaimer](#)  
[Code of Conduct](#)  
[Contact a Moderator](#)  
[FAQs](#)  
[RSS](#)

**Opinions**  
**Does the honors program need a second look?**  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Donec pellentesque erat id risus. Nulla facilisi. Nam adipiscing, magna eget malesuada fringilla, magna purus tempus mauris, at tempus elit arcu et pede. Proin accumsan lectus quis felis. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Vestibulum consectetur fermentum leo. Phasellus posuere mi eleifend mi. Vestibulum velit. Nullam felis nulla, posuere non, feugiat at, lacinia ut, massa. Nulla risus tellus, faucibus eu, ornare sed, iaculis adipiscing, risus. Pellentesque lacinia. Nam accumsan orci sit amet turpis. Proin ipsum lorem, euismod vitae, pharetra ut, mollis at, justo. Sed auctor. Maecenas arcu. Vestibulum ullamcorper suscipit urna. Quisque justo velit, gravida quis, mollis quis, pellentesque id, libero. In odio erat, elementum at, mattis eu, varius eu, tortor.  
 Posted by BobK at April 16, 2005 05:12 PM

**Comments**  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: MRJ at April 17, 2005 07:32 AM | 5 cheers [ 😊 cheer | report ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus.  
 Posted by: WhoAmI at April 17, 2005 07:29 AM [ 😊 cheer | report ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum.  
 Posted by: DrSeuss at April 17, 2005 06:55 AM [ 😊 cheer | report ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: Jlee at April 17, 2005 06:30 AM | 2 cheers [ 😊 cheer | report ]

**Post a Comment**

**Older Posts**  
[Large class sizes cramp housing \(57\)](#)  
[RHA hosts Winterbuzz \(33\)](#)  
[LeaderShape cut \(49\)](#)  
[New VP Heads Student Affairs \(12\)](#)  
[Dining Services Feed U.S. Troops \(213\)](#)  
[Groups launch relief campaign \(85\)](#)  
[Misconduct Procedures Revised \(32\)](#)  
[Archives](#)

This prototype illustrates a typical blog posting on Technique.talk (this one falls into the Opinions category). A user, whether logged in or not, will be able to view the entirety of the post. The user will also be able to view all the comments that other users have made. If registered and logged in, the user will be able to post a comment of his / her own. In addition, users will be able to either “cheer” a comment (indicating that it is a good post; this action will increase the commenter’s rating) or to report a post (indicating that the reader feels the post has violated the code of conduct in some way and wishes for a moderator to consider removing it).

Figure 3 Technique Blog User Profile Page

**TECHNIQUE.talk**  
Serving Georgia Tech since 1911 • April 20, 2005

**Welcome, AJK! > Edit Your Profile**

**Sections**  
 News (5 new)  
 Opinions (3 new)  
 Focus (2 new)  
 Entertainment (5 new)  
 Sports (9 new)  
 Story Ideas & Suggestions (6 new)

**Comment of the Week**  
 "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus."  
 -AJK  
[Track Back](#) | [Cheer](#)

**Disclaimer**  
[Code of Conduct](#)  
[Contact a Moderator](#)  
[FAQs](#)  
[RSS](#)

**Nickname:**   
**Password:**   
**Confirm:**   
**GT Email:**   
**Major:**   
**Year:**   
**Web Page:**   
**AIM:**   
**Interests:**   
**Campus Organizations:**

**Photo**  
 No Photo Uploaded  
 > [Upload A Photo](#)

**Manage Your Groups**  
 College Republicans [DEL]  
 Astronomy Club [DEL]  
 Technique [DEL]  
 Hemphill 1st Floor [DEL]  
 > [Find New Groups](#)  
 > [Create New Group](#)

**Manage Your Friends**  
 BobK [DEL]  
 AJK [DEL]  
 JLee [DEL]  
 Schur [DEL]  
 > [Add New Friends](#)

**Your Current Rating: MegaBuzz**

**Your Posting History**  
 RE: [Large class sizes cramp housing](#)  
 April 12, 2005  
 RE: [LeaderShape cut](#)  
 April 5, 2005  
 RE: [New VP Heads Student Affairs](#)  
 April 1, 2005  
 RE: [Dining Services Feed U.S. Troops](#)  
 March 25, 2005  
 RE: [Lorem ipsum](#)  
 March 21, 2005  
 RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
 March 4, 2005  
 RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
 February 24, 2005  
 RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
 February 13, 2005

This prototype features the standard profile page for a user named AJK. On this page, AJK is allowed to modify any of her basic information, upload a photo, as well as to manage her group affiliations and friends list. She can see what her current rating is (MegaBuzz), depending on how many of her comments have been cheered by other readers. AJK's posting history is also linked to her profile. Other users, when viewing this page, will see the same profile without the editing options.

Figure 4 Technique Blog Group Page



# "The South's Liveliest College Newspaper"

# TECHNIQUE.talk

Serving Georgia Tech since 1911 • April 20, 2005

### Sections

- News (5 new)
- Opinions (3 new)
- Focus (2 new)
- Entertainment (5 new)
- Sports (9 new)
- Story Ideas & Suggestions (6 new)

## Welcome, AJK!

[View by Group](#) > **College Republicans**

### Recent Posts

**Honors program needs a second look**  
 As an incoming freshman, FASET leaders tell you, "Every Tech student was the smartest at their high school."  
 Posted by BobK at April 16, 2005 03:11 PM | [Read More](#) | [Comments \(89\)](#)

**Memorable moments from Ludacris concert**  
 Priceless Tech moment: Ludacris coaxed the crowd into holding up lighters if they smoked weed, and some people held up cell phones.  
 Posted by DJKim at April 16, 2005 12:03 PM | [Read More](#) | [Comments \(53\)](#)

### Recent Comments

RE: Topic topic topic [ 7 cheers ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: MRJ at April 17, 2005 07:32 AM | [Trackback](#) [ [cheer](#) | [report](#) ]

RE: Topic topic topic  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: BKing at April 17, 2005 05:21 AM | [Trackback](#) [ [cheer](#) | [report](#) ]

RE: Topic topic topic [ 4 cheers ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: DanT at April 16, 2005 05:30 PM | [Trackback](#) [ [cheer](#) | [report](#) ]

RE: Topic topic topic [ 2 cheers ]  
 Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
 Posted by: Marta at April 16, 2005 03:12 PM | [Trackback](#) [ [cheer](#) | [report](#) ]

**Your Current Rating:**  
**MegaBuzz** [Your Profile](#)

[SEARCH](#)

### Your Posting History

- RE: [Large class sizes cramp housing](#)  
April 12, 2005
- RE: [LeaderShape cut](#)  
April 5, 2005
- RE: [New VP Heads Student Affairs](#)  
April 1, 2005
- RE: [Dining Services Feed U.S. Troops](#)  
March 25, 2005
- RE: [Lorem ipsum](#)  
March 21, 2005
- RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
March 4, 2005
- RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
February 24, 2005
- RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
February 13, 2005

### Online Poll

What do you do with your used textbooks?

- Keep them
- Sell them online
- Sell back to bookstore
- Donate to Goodwill

[Vote](#) | [Results](#)

---

[Disclaimer](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Contact a Moderator](#)

[FAQs](#)

[RSS](#)

This prototype assumes that the user, AJK, has chosen to filter the latest postings and comments on Technique.talk by one of the groups that she is a member of, the College Republicans. She can see, therefore, two recent posts made by her friends "BobK" and "Angel," who are also members of the College Republicans. She can see a number of recent comments made by other members of the College Republicans group, as well.

Figure 5 Technique Blog Customized View Page



# "The South's Liveliest College Newspaper"

# TECHNIQUE.talk

Serving Georgia Tech since 1911 • April 20, 2005

**Sections**

Entertainment (5 new)

Sports (3 new)

Friends (5 new)

**Online Poll**

What do you do with your used textbooks?

Keep them

Sell them online

Sell back to bookstore

Donate to Goodwill

[Vote](#) | [Results](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Contact a Moderator](#)

[FAQs](#)

[RSS](#)

**Welcome, AJK!**

**Entertainment**

**Memorable moments from Ludacris concert**  
Priceless Tech moment: Ludacris coaxed the crowd into holding up lighters if they smoked weed, and some people held up cell phones.  
Posted by DJKim at April 16, 2005 12:03 PM | [Read More](#) | [Comments \(53\)](#)

**MtvU Campus Invasion Tour Rocks!**  
Brown backpacks full of books, air fresheners, spiral notebooks and CD samplers donned the backs of students on the lawn of the Burger Bowl Sunday afternoon.  
Posted by Katy at April 16, 2005 11:30 PM | [Read More](#) | [Comments \(12\)](#)

**Sports**

**Softball slides past N.C. State**  
With a strong showing against N.C. State last weekend, the Lady Jackets are poised to make a strong run at the College World Series in Oklahoma City this June.  
From The Technique, Vol. 90 Issue 30 | [Read Story](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

**Tennis excels in ACC matches**  
The men's tennis team split a pair of matches over the weekend in ACC play. The team blanked Maryland 7-0 and fell to Florida State 5-2 during tough road matches in conference play.  
From The Technique, Vol. 90 Issue 30 | [Read Story](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

**Recent Posts and Comments from Friends**

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
Posted by: MRJ at April 17, 2005 07:32 AM | [Trackback](#)

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Praesent et turpis ut neque tincidunt dictum. Praesent tincidunt pellentesque risus. Donec gravida diam in justo.  
Posted by: DJK at April 17, 2005 12:30 AM | [Trackback](#)

**Your Current Rating:**  
**MegaBuzz** [Your Profile](#)

**SEARCH**

**Your Posting History**

RE: [Large class sizes cramp housing](#)  
April 12, 2005

RE: [LeaderShape cut](#)  
April 5, 2005

RE: [New VP Heads Student Affairs](#)  
April 1, 2005

RE: [Dining Services Feed U.S. Troops](#)  
March 25, 2005

RE: [Lorem ipsum](#)  
March 21, 2005

RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
March 4, 2005

RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
February 24, 2005

RE: [Lorem ipsum dolor](#)  
February 13, 2005

This prototype assumes that the user, AJK, has customized her view so that the sections of most interest to her (Entertainment, Sports, and recent posts and comments from her friends list, respectively) appear in a customized page after she has logged in to Technique.talk.

## USER SCENARIO ONE



### Anne

- 5th year senior
- Major: Civil Engineering
- Community manager for undergraduate living center
- Activities: Society of Women Engineers, Catholic Center, used to be representative in SGA but no longer has the time
- Reads Technique to stay informed of campus issues and events

Anne is a fairly busy person between maintaining her tough courseload, applying for jobs, and her position as a community manager for undergraduate housing. As part of her job, she encourages her hallmates to become active in campus activities and is required to come up with hall programs such as going out to eat or attending Campus Night at the High.

She first encountered Technique.talk after reading an editorial on the rising costs of housing and clicking through to read the feedback. The blog had many upset comments from students who felt that housing was already too expensive, and mocked the Housing Department because of recent problems (mold, squirrels digging holes in the walls, etc.). As a staff member, Anne would have felt uncomfortable making a statement under her own name because of her staff position, but when she saw she could post under a pseudonym, she felt comfortable expressing her views. She registered and posted several comments explaining why housing prices were going up, mainly since prices for utilities had gone up this past year, but encouraged students to attend their hall council meetings to see if anything could be done. People appreciated the extra information and cheered her remarks. Before she knew it, she was invited to become a poster and accepted, but has only submitted a few postings so far about her experiences looking

for a job. She also continues to comment on campus issues, such as diversity issues and SGA. It sometimes frustrates her that the most vocal posters are people with what she considers narrow-minded views, so she tries to provide a rational response.

## USER SCENARIO TWO



### Jeff

- Freshman
- Grew up in Northern Virginia
- Chemical Engineering major
- B Student
- Computer literate but not savvy – doesn't like really geeky stuff
- Likes to read campus news, sports, entertainment, local music / bands, and comics
- Interests: GT sports, movies, playing guitar
- Has a LiveJournal and profile on facebook.com
- Grandparents bought him a laptop for college

Jeff's roommate tells him that a photo of a friend of theirs who went to class in his bathrobe is up on the Technique's blog. The roommate emails the URL to Jeff, which corresponds to a posting on the blog in the "Photos That Got Away" section. Jeff clicks on the URL in Outlook, and it takes him to the site page. Jeff snickers at the photo, and sees a link at the bottom that says "Register or Log In to Comment on this article." Jeff clicks on "Log In," thinking he can use his GT username and password. He realizes his mistake when the Login error screen presents him with an invitation to "Register FREE to Leave Comments and Rate Your Friends." He clicks on "Register" and follows the directions – he inputs his PRISM email address, a nickname, a password, and some details about his interests. He is then directed to check his email and click on the confirmation link, which he does. This takes him back to the

registration page, which congratulates him and provides him with links to the FAQ, and a Quick Tour of the site. Jeff then clicks the back button several times to get to the photo page again. He adds a comment “Haha dude wear boxers next time ;).” He then idly clicks back through other posts in this category, curious to see what other photos have been taken around campus. Bored, he clicks on the “Sports” section, and reads a (non-Technique) post from a junior who rants about his experience using a new online lottery system for students to purchase extra tickets to games. Curious, Jeff clicks on the “Read More” link and is taken to the permalink page, where he reads comments left by other members. Jeff reads a particularly long comment by someone who describes possible improvements to the system. Jeff finds this helpful, and cheers the post before closing his browser to go to class.

## CONCLUSIONS

Amy Jo Kim warns that as community designers, one of the most damaging mistakes we can make is to “over-design your community up front and invest too heavily in a design paradigm or technology platform that can’t easily be changed and updated. Successful, long-lasting communities almost always start off small, simple and focused, and then grow organically over time – adding breadth, depth, and complexity in response to the changing needs of the members, and the changing conditions of the environment” (Kim, 1998). It has been our goal to design the Technique.talk community in a way that is easy to use for the Georgia Tech community, regardless of technical proficiency. According to one of the editors we interviewed, the site should be “easy enough for management majors” to navigate [I6]. Our design accounts for scalability, as community dynamics and levels of responsibility will certainly shift as more users become regulars and moderators within the community.

Liability remains the key issue that worries the Technique editorial board. To date, we are still in active discussion with Georgia Tech Legal Services to determine exactly what the implications will be. It is our sincere hope that the Technique staff will implement Technique.talk in the near future and the design document and prototypes that we have developed will serve as a guideline for this process. We believe that the features of our design are technically feasible, and could be implemented in a reasonable amount of time by the Technique's online editor, or as part of an undergraduate Computer Science project. If realized, Technique.talk has the potential to become a dynamic public forum where students can discuss issues relevant to them, a place for the Technique staff to establish stronger, more direct connections with their readership, and a means of facilitating a more coherent sense of community within the Georgia Tech student body overall.

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