

Summary & Discussion

Week 1

Classics in CSCW Literature

- Collaborative Activity and Technological Design: Task Coordination in London Underground Control Rooms (Heath & Luff, 1991)
- Patterns of Contact and Communication in Scientific Research Collaboration (Kraut & Egidio, 1988)
- Is Paper Safer? The Role of Paper Flight Strips in Air Traffic Control (Mackay, 2000)

Big Themes

- Awareness
 - Monitoring and performance
- Formal and informal contact / communication
- Procedure vs. practice
 - Perspectives on design and systems

Heath & Luff (Context)

- London underground control rooms

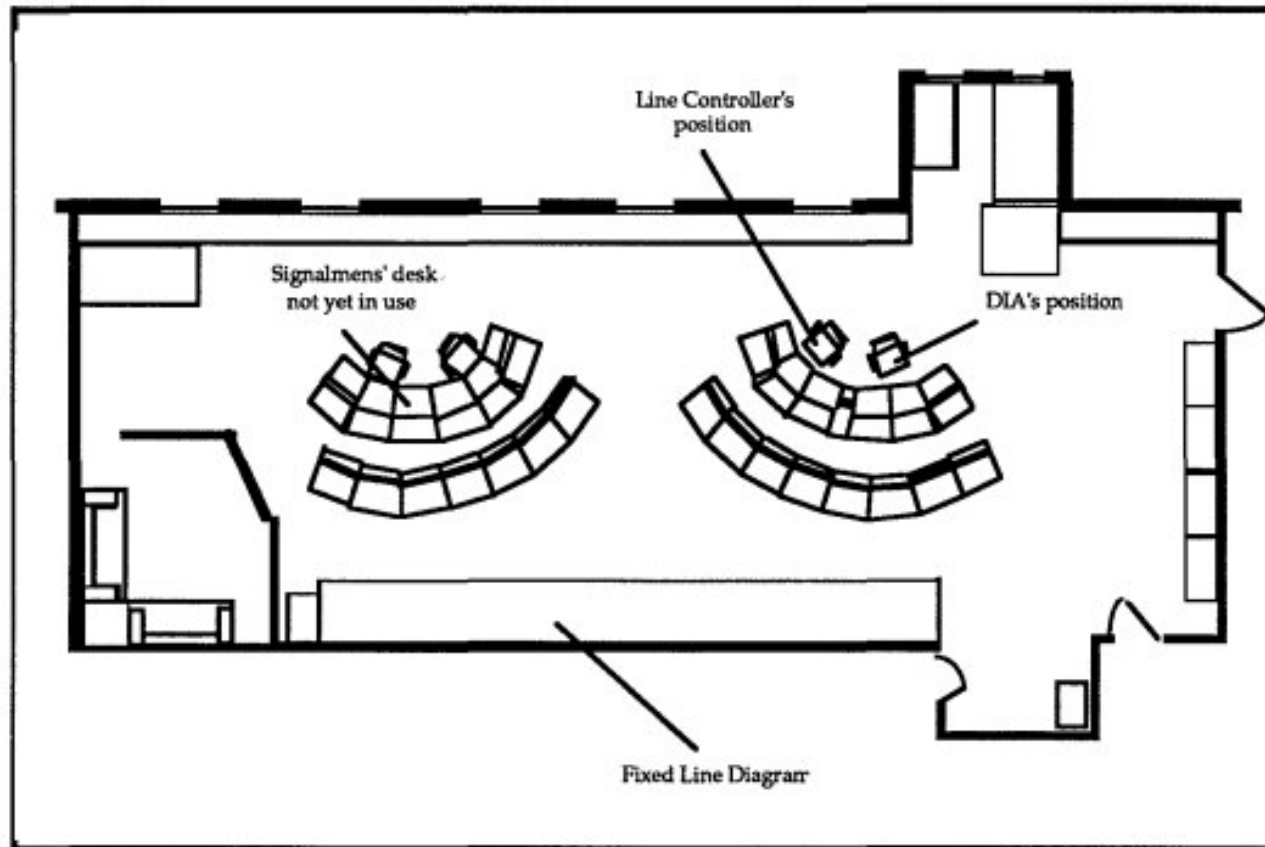


Fig. 1. The Bakerloo Line Control Room

Heath & Luff (Context)

- London underground control rooms

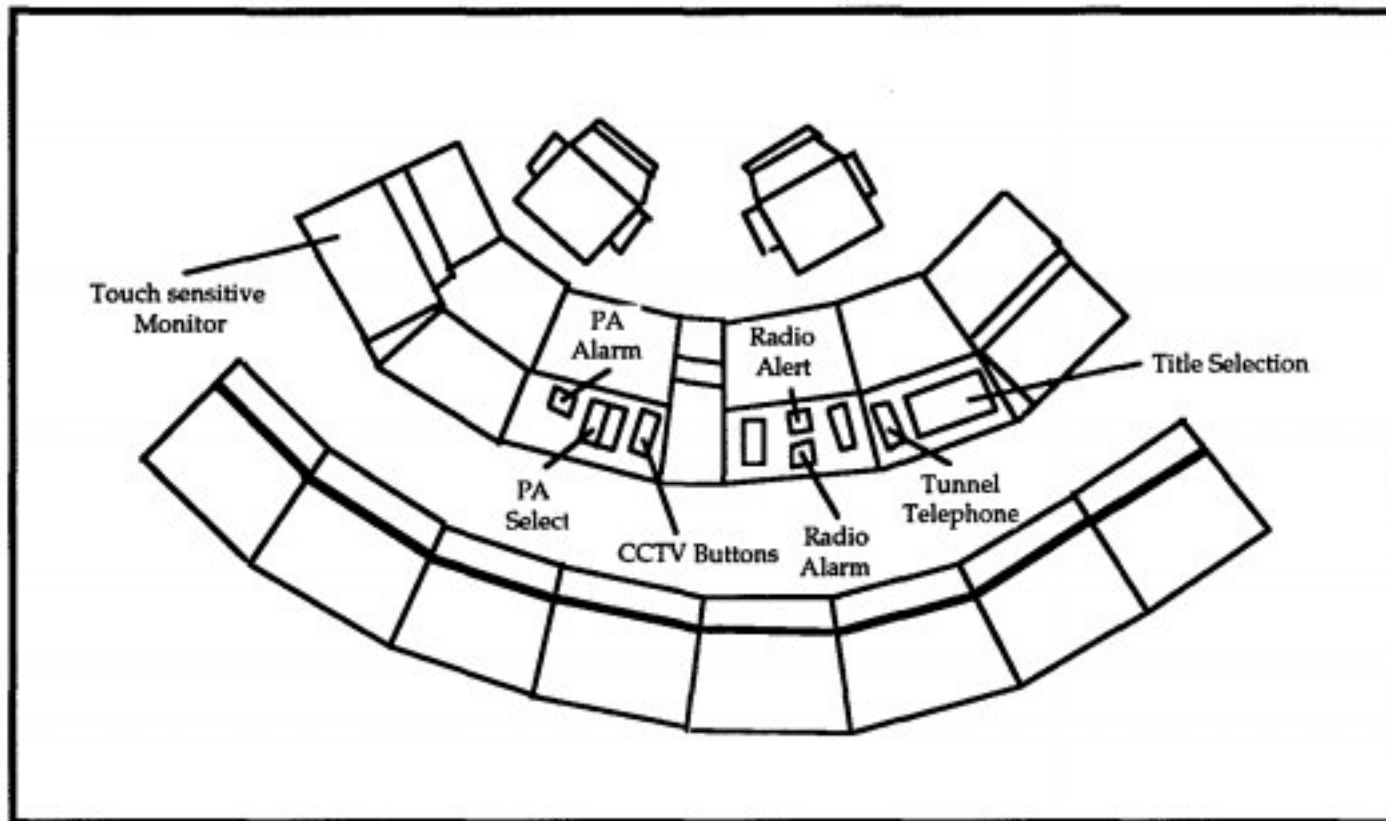


Fig. 2. Line Controller's and DIA's Desk

Heath & Luff (Themes)

- Surreptitious monitoring and interrelating tasks
- Rendering tasks visible
- Overseeing the local environment

Kraut & Egidio, 1988

- Punchline: the closer you are (physically) to someone, the more likely you are to collaborate with them
- Context: study of Bell Labs (big research campus back in the day)
- Methods:
 - Interviews with 70 researchers
 - Survey study of 66 psychologists
 - “Archival study” (“runnin’ some serious stats”)

Kraut & Egidio, 1988

Distance between offices and probability of research collaboration		
Office location	Total pairs	% collaborating
same corridor	243	10.3
same floor	1038	1.9
different floor	1736	.3
different buildings	1261	.4

TABLE 1

Numbers of research collaborations by organizational and physical proximity				
Office location	Organization			
	Same Department		Different Department	
	Pairs	% collaborating	Pairs	% collaborating
same floor	271	10.3	909	1.87
different floors	23	4.3	1708	.29
different buildings	0	NA	1261	.40

TABLE 2

Kraut & Egidio, 1988

- Big ideas:
 - Frequency of communication (informal, especially)
 - “Quality of communication”
 - “Cost of communication”
 - Low-cost interaction

Discussion

- Personal experiences to making actions visible?
- Scale, ergonomic issues?
- Physicality of the workspace?
- Role of collocation in the London Control Room: what happens if it is distributed? What is necessary?
- What is the role of the paper & cellophane timetables? How does this change if the interface is computerized?

Discussion

- Have the ideas in this paper “aged”?
- What are some informal communication tools?
- What is the role of informal communication tools?
- How do tools shape our interactions with one another?