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NEWS AND NOTES

A Provocative ISTAS`13

The 2013 IEEE International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS`13), focused on themes of wearable technologies and augmented reality, was held June 27–29, 2013, in Toronto, Canada.

ISTAS`13 was held at the University of Toronto campus, and was one of the best-attended SSIT conferences ever to be held. ISTAS`13 organizers were Steve Mann, General Chair, and Katina Michael, Program Chair.

ISTAS`13 featured a "preview" event - a sousveillance-themed "flashmob" - on the evening prior to the official conference opening. The opening day program, at UofT's

historic Hart House, showcased plenary speakers such as futurist Marvin Minsky, Ray Kurzweil, Steve Mann, and Thad Starner.

One unusual aspect of the conference was that, upon arrival, attendees were given slips of paper with the following notice:

"Delegates attending this conference MAY be captured photographically by installation art and other featured audio-visual devices which may be continuously recording and photographing the ambient surroundings at ISTAS`13."

[This notice was also posted on the ISTAS`13 website at <http://veillance.me/>]

Attendees were then provided nametag holders as they registered. However these nametags came with a twist. They included a pocket and small plastic dome attachment which, it was announced at the conference opening session, could function – in combination with a smartphone, some easily downloadable software, and a particular website – as "sousveillance" devices. I.e., the domes could allow each conference attendee to record via video or photograph their participation in the event, and to post their images on line.

At opening-day session breaks, some attendees commented that the capability was "cool." Others opined that they found it "creepy."

These two reactions were part of the range of attendee reactions to



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ISTAS'13 – Opening sessions at Hart House, University of Toronto, June 27, 2013.

and experiences of ISTAS'13. Similarly, some attendees indicated in conversations that they were most interested in the actual technology being displayed and discussed (the “EyeTap” that Steve Mann wears and has been developing for

decades was front and center of this interest, as was discussion of the forthcoming “Google Glass” in various contexts).

Other attendees said they were more interested in discussion of the social and ethical

implications of these technological developments.

A special issue of *T&S Magazine* with articles culled from ISTAS'13 will appear in 2014.

–Terri Bookman

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