



The Babbling Brook

Catherine D'Ignazio

Assistant Professor of Civic Media & Data
Visualization, Emerson College
Research Affiliate, MIT Center for Civic Media

with

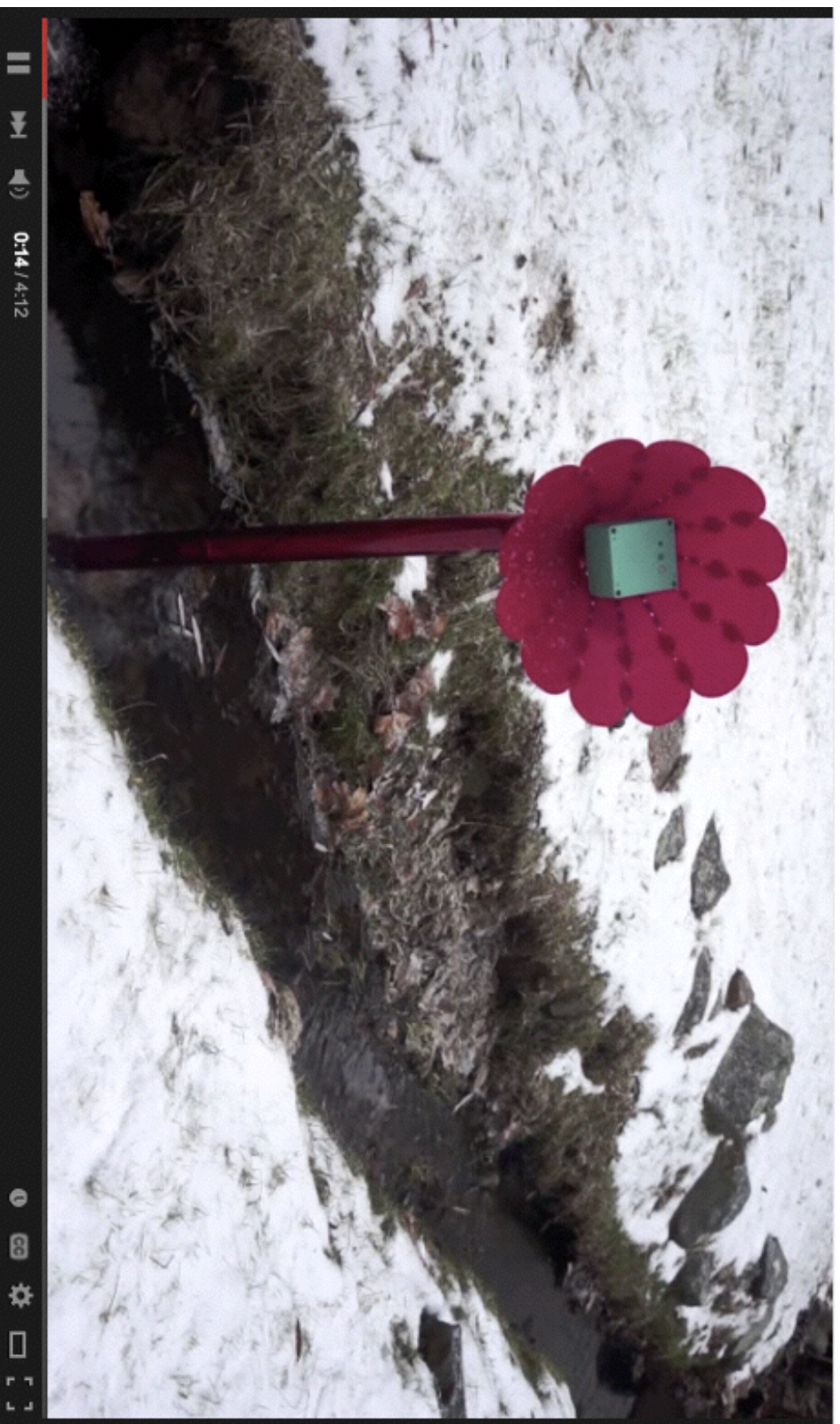
Don Blair

Open Water Fellow, Public Lab
Research Affiliate, MIT Center for Civic Media

and

James Coleman

MIT Meche & Architecture '14



The Babbling Brook continuously measures water quality parameters such as temperature, conductivity and depth. It combines that with microclimate data. It then proceeds to tell bad jokes about that data to anyone who will listen.

Environmental Data Comedy



Members of the public, particularly youth participants, develop comedic material via web and mobile interfaces.

We envision a regular program of water science comedy workshops where participants learn enough about the site, the water quality parameters and the climate to be able to write jokes that Babbling Brook will speak in real-time.

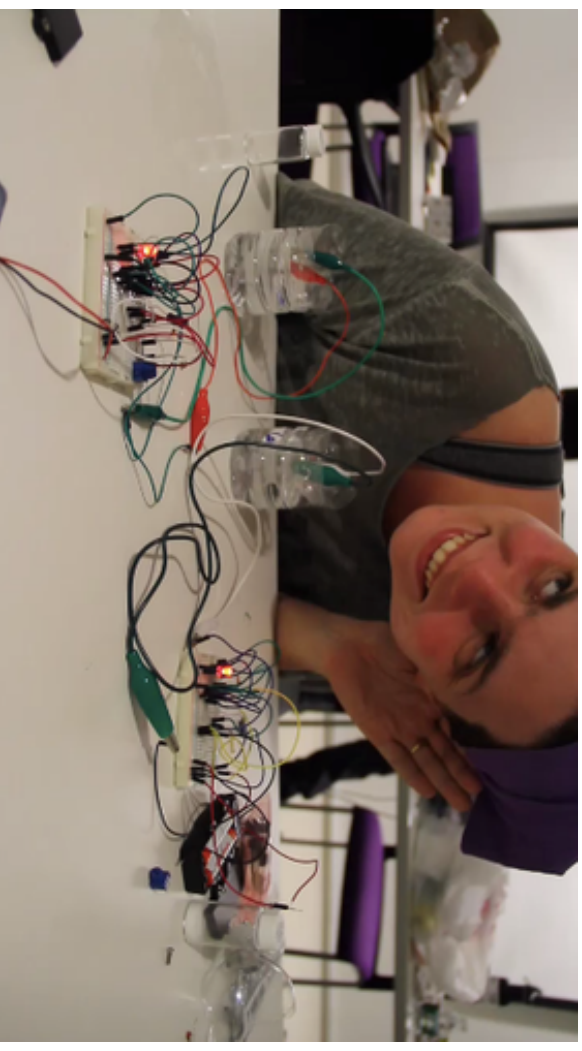
Project Status

Working out fabrication
and materials



Prototyping Hardware

- Temperature
- Conductivity
- Working on depth



Question: Are there other parameters that would be particularly useful to measure?

Prototyping Joke Engine



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "127.0.0.1:5000/writeJoke". The page title is "What is funnier than environmental data? Write your joke here!". The form contains the following elements:

- A text input field for "Specify temperature value in degrees fahrenheit and wind speed in mph." with a value of "100".
- A dropdown menu for "temperature" with "Fahrenheit" selected.
- A dropdown menu for "is greater than" with ">" selected.
- A dropdown menu for "value" with "mph" selected.
- A text input field for "then say" with the value "Funny Joke".
- A "Save" button.

The browser's developer tools are open, showing the "Elements" panel with the following HTML structure:

```

<div>
  <h1>What is funnier than environmental data? Write your joke here!</h1>
  <p>Specify temperature value in degrees fahrenheit and wind speed in mph.</p>
  <div>
    <input type="text" value="100">
    <div>
      <div>temperature</div>
      <div>Fahrenheit</div>
    </div>
    <div>
      <div>is greater than</div>
      <div>></div>
    </div>
    <div>
      <div>value</div>
      <div>mph</div>
    </div>
    <div>
      <div>then say</div>
      <div>Funny Joke</div>
    </div>
    <div>Save</div>
  </div>
</div>
  
```

[illegible]

Project Status cont'd

- Site at Tidmarsh selected but won't be ready until at least Fall 2015
- We will do a parallel, temporary installation at MIT
- Have applied for funding to Google, Creative Capital and MIT funds.

Needs/Discuss

- **Financial:** Seeking more funding so that the project can move through development more rapidly. Would love to hear any leads people know of.
- **Educational:** Would love to run a pilot “Environmental Data Comedy” workshop with youth in Summer 2015. Would just be testing the software side of things so it doesn’t need to be on-site at Tidmarsh. Do folks know a group we could partner with?
- **Technical:** Can we get weather stations at Tidmarsh to put their data into Wunderground API? Any advantage to BB to use the CHAIN API to store data (right now just dumping it into MongoDB)? One backend need we have is the ability to store, search and aggregate large amounts of environmental data so that people can tell historical jokes (e.g. “last year at this time i was x degrees”). Does CHAIN provide this infrastructure or is it just an input/output mechanism?
- **Scientific:** What else should BB be measuring to be useful to the scientists and ecologists on site?

thanks!!