Beyond Clickers:
Web-based Wireless Interactivity for the Physics Classroom

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We were beyond clickers before clickers existed

- Classtalk – 1990s
- Designed & Built by Better Education Inc.
  - http://www.bedu.com/
- Had many features which have been lost in the clicker generation

Classtalk Hardware

- Hard wired proprietary network
- Macintosh Server
- Hewlett-Packard Hand-held DOS computers
  - Full QWERTY keyboard
  - Limited but readable text screen
Classtalk Software
Designed & Written by Fred Hartline

- Sent questions to handhelds
  - Full questions appeared on each student's screen
  - All types of questions possible
    - *Not* limited to multiple choice
  - Sets of questions could be sent
- Provided analysis & individual responses for instructor
  - Could point at a location in a seating chart and see that student's answer
  - Could send different messages to different students depending on their responses
- Allowed a variety of answers
  - Up to four individual students could log on to each handheld
  - Alphabetic & numeric responses possible

Includes seating chart with ability to click on a seat and see the student's name, picture and response.

Analyses include
- Parsing for short answer questions
- Binning for numerical responses
- Histograms for multiple choice
Better than any software for later systems

Typical Clicker and Software
Beyond Clickers

- Personal Data Assistants (PDAs)
  - Aka Pocket PCs

- Tablet PCs

Personal Data Assistants (PDA)

- Wireless Internet
- Full “keyboard” available
  - No limits on types of responses
- Web-based software
  - Can run in browser
    - Not all functions of desktop browsers
  - Any Web-based question-response system can work
- Expensive
  - Thanks
Tablet PCs

- Wireless Internet
- Full keyboard available
  - Plus ability to draw and write on the screen
- Web-based (browser) software
- Full notebook computer with drawing and writing capabilities
- Limited handwriting recognition
- Even more expensive
  - Even more thanks

PDA Limitations

- Browser
  - Flash is flaky but works
  - Multiple windows or tabs are coming now
    - Firefox beta
    - Opera – not free
    - Java is really flaky
- Hardware Interface
  - Possible but not well tested
  - Sensors can work but takes extra equipment
- Writing and Drawing
  - Limited
- Screen size small
- On-screen keyboard small
  - Text entry is slow
Ideas for Classroom use

- Neighboring students receive slightly different questions
  - Same topic
  - Required to discuss with each other after answer
    - Consider similarities and differences in situation and responses
- Graphical questions
  - Point to a place on the picture that ...
- Students use PDAs as measuring tools
  - E.g. Really expensive stop watches
  - Add sensors
    - E.g. Temperature profile in the classroom
- Web as a reference source
  - Have students look up concepts
  - Peer comparisons of results
- Peer to peer collaboration through out the classroom
Very Expensive Clicker

http://aa.uncw.edu/numina/srs

Really expensive clicker

Ubiquitous Presenter http://up.ucsd.edu
Beyond clickers with other types of responses

Correlated sets of questions

• Variety of questions types
  • Multiple choice
  • Ranking
  • Scaling
  • Open-ended
  • Can include graphics
  • Branching based on previous answer
  • Grouping of questions

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Question 2
For the circuit at the front of the room will the lamp turn on when the switch is closed?
- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

Question 3
1 - Bonding  2 - Wet quote a person  3 - Blocks only types
4 - Almost certain  5 - Can’t believe it by 100%
Question sets with open ended responses

Variations within one question

- Each student sees a picture of a diver after she has left the board
- Three students sitting next to each other will have different pictures
  - On the way up
  - At the peak
  - On the way down
- They select vectors to indicate each force acting on the diver.
- Subsequent peer-to-peer discussion addresses the “force in the direction of motion” issue.

Beyond Question
http://www.erskine.edu/bq/
Group problem solving with submission to instructor

Real time discussion of different approaches to the same problem

Student annotation of presentations
Group experimental investigation with collaboration across groups

Wiki for creating the lab report

Instructor’s Screen
For monitoring students’ progress
Limitations for Tablet Input

- No easy way to put open-ended responses in a histogram
  - Scan through them
  - Pick out interesting ones
- Cannot parse a graphic
- Monitoring the real time work of 100 students is essentially impossible

In the end pedagogy counts

Research-based

- Interactive engagement classes
  - large, medium & small
- Collaborative learning & teaching
  - Problem solving
  - Experiments
  - In class discussions
- Force students to predict the results of a demo
- Real-time feedback to instructor & students
  - Deal with issues now
  - Students see that others have difficulties similar to theirs
- Improved attitudes of everyone
Research
Lots of it

- Richard Hake review on PHYSLRNR
- PDAs improved learning over clickers
  - KSU NARST paper
- Interactive demonstrations
  - Thornton & Sokoloff
- Interactive Engagement in general

“I love using these hand-held computers. I really like how it provides feedback directly to the teacher. I plan on getting one of these, for my own personal use.”

“The best thing about the hand-held computers is that they provide useful feedback to the instructor about whether or not we understand.”

“They are really easy to use and with the questions and response method it is easy to participate in class. It seems to really show the weak areas of the class to the professor.”
Finally, students feel good when they can check up on the instructor

I fixed the problem with the online grade book.

No, you didn’t. I am looking at it right now.

For more information

KSU Tablet & PDA Projects  
http://web.phys.ksu.edu/HP_project

FHSU Tablet Project  
http://www.fhsu.edu/~zhrepic/

Classroom Presenter  
http://classroompresenter.cs.washington.edu/

Ubiquitous Presenter  
http://up.ucsd.edu

Beyond Question  
http://www.erskine.edu/bq/

DyKnow  
http://www.dyknow.com

Numina  
http://aa.uncw.edu/numina/srs

Group Scribbles  
http://groupscribbles.sri.com/