



Ionica Smeets

Ionica Smeets is a science journalist, mathematician and television presenter. Ionica obtained her doctorate in mathematics with a dissertation on continued fraction algorithms from Leiden University. As a journalist and a presenter, she is interested in the role mathematics plays in everyday life. She writes columns for the Dutch newspaper “de Volkskrant” and has published the book “Ik was altijd heel slecht in wiskunde” (I was always bad at maths) with Jeanine Daems. Besides writing, Ionica has published short videos about science for the website wetenschap101.nl. In her recent television programme “Eureka”, Ionica Smeets and co-host Sofie van den Enk try to find mathematical answers to questions such as how to win the lottery and how to find the ideal partner.

OK, GLASS ?

GLASS

HALF FULL

VERSUS

GLASS

HALF EMPTY

IONICA SMEETS AND HANNA SCHRAFFENBERGER SHARE AN OFFICE AT LEIDEN UNIVERSITY. THE TWO WRITERS DISCOVERED THAT THEY HAD A COMMON INTEREST — A WEAKNESS FOR GADGETS. BUT AS IT TURNED OUT THEIR OPINIONS ON GOOGLE GLASS DIFFERED, AND THE IDEA OF THE TWO-SIDED COLUMN WAS BORN.

Hanna Schraffenberger is one of the editors of AR[t] magazine. When she is not working on the latest issue, Hanna is researching Audience-Artwork Interaction and Augmented Reality at the Media Technology research group at Leiden University and at the AR Lab at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague. Besides sharing her research in the form of traditional academic papers, Hanna is interested in exploring alternative forms and mediums to communicate her ideas. So far, this has resulted in interactive installations, t-shirts that explain scientific topics and of course the articles that she writes for AR[t].

Hanna Schraffenberger



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GOOGLE GLASS? YES PLEASE!

BY IONICA SMEETS

When I hear the arguments against Google glass, I am reminded of my best friend's reaction when I told him I planned to buy an iPhone, sometime in 2008. He was appalled. "You will read your email everywhere! What will happen if we are at a party and you get an important email from work. Would you leave the party?" I honestly answered that I thought

I might, if there was a serious problem. He decided that he would never, ever buy a smartphone. And he questioned my sanity.

Of course, by now he is on his second iPhone as well. And I believe that many of the people who are now railing against Google Glass will turn around at some point. For now, it is very hard to predict how we will use these types of technologies in the future. After all, when the first mobile phones came, nobody dreamt about WhatsApp, never mind Angry Birds.

So probably, in a few years, everyone will be using Google Glass (or one of its competitors) in ways we cannot even imagine now. I have some rather trivial reasons for wanting a Glass now,

GEEGEE! OR WHY I PREFER RUBBING GLASS OVER WEARING IT.

BY HANNA SCHRAFFENBERGER

"Where's my Geegee?" – I can't find anything without my Geegee!" I sound like my mother when she can't find her glasses. However, unlike her, I'm not shortsighted. I'm envisioning my life as a Google Glass addict. I picture a world in which my hands search the bedside table

for my Glass first thing in the morning and put them down just after turning off the light at night. A world in which my little black 'Geegee' knows where it has last seen my keys, displays what I have to buy in the supermarket and remembers the names of those friends who use fake names on Facebook. Although the highly anticipated device will probably hit the consumer market soon, this future vision remains very unlikely – at least for me.

It's not that I don't like technology – being connected, liking stuff, sharing what I see, reading my emails while shopping for groceries and buying overly expensive gadgets. Like many, I'm addicted to my phone and I can't wait to sync it with my future iWatch. Also, I enjoy reading the

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but I am mainly excited about the new possibilities I will discover once I have one.

One of the things I already look forward to is navigating around the city with more ease. I am probably the person with the worst sense of direction in the world. After living in Leiden for seven years, I still get lost sometimes when I bike to friends at the other side of the city. So having an interactive map on my smartphone improved my life a lot, but having a map projected onto glass would be even better. Because now I quite often go to meetings on a rented public transport bike (another thing that I did not imagine using before it existed, but something I would miss so much if it wasn't available anymore) and ride with my phone in

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hand to navigate. I still get lost at least twice a week. Having the instructions, well, in front of my face, will make my life easier.

Another reason I would love to have a Glass is for skyping. Currently, when I want to show my family abroad my lovely two-year old son, I have to run around with my laptop with its built-in webcam. Toddlers are not so great at sitting still in front of a computer. Just following him around with my eyes will be much easier. And of course, taking pictures in the blink of an eye will also be nice when I am playing with him.

What's more: my lousy facial recognition skills could also use some algorithmic improvement.



newspaper on my tablet while having breakfast. And I love my Macbook. So much so, that I spend about eight hours a day in front of it. But the fact that I'm a screen addict doesn't mean that Google Glass will be a good fit for me. The opposite is the case: I don't see the point in staring at a screen through yet another screen. What will Google Glass possibly display that my phone, tablet, laptop and smartwatch won't display even better? Emails? Pictures? Articles? The newspaper?

"But it will replace your phone" – the proponents might object. Well, it can't. Glass needs your phone to receive calls and messages. In fact, Glass might even motivate you to take out your phone. If you receive a private text

message, would you like to type one back – or speak out the response for everyone to hear?

I agree, phones don't necessarily make us act social. Zero eye contact. But I prefer to disappear into my phone over acting like an undercover zombie who stares ahead while secretly reading the news. More importantly, I like to be in charge of my attention. It is difficult enough to ignore a message, postpone Facebook prompts and to stay focused when the phone is buzzing in my pocket. How will I be able to ignore the pop-ups and temptations floating right in front of my eye? I guess information is like food to me. While some like to be fed, I prefer to be in charge of what, how much and when I eat. And by the way, I am sure, receiving



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I would love to get some hints from Glass when I meet an acquaintance and cannot remember his name and have no clue why he is talking about Peru. Did he live there? Is his wife from Peru? Help me out here Glass! Will this make social interactions less valuable? I don't think so. Does setting automatic birthday reminders make the card you send less valuable?

It is all about how you use the technology; with smartphones it took a while to find a new equilibrium between being connected and being polite. But in the end, I never had to leave a party because of an urgent work email, simply because I try not to read my email when I am

last-minute-hyper-urgent-work-assignments will be at least as annoying on Glass as it is on any other device.

So phone trumps Glass? Admittedly, this isn't always the case. Glass is great at providing information about what we see and the surrounding space. We know the examples: you need to find your way through unknown streets and Glass will point the way. You forgot the name of 'this guy you are talking to' and Glass will help you out. Luckily, I have a different solution for that. Instead of spending a small fortune on a device that allows us to be more social and to look at people, let's be even more social for free: let's talk to each other. OK Glass, let us agree that forgetting names or getting lost happens to the best of us and that it is OK to ask.

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with company. I am confident that we will also find a way to use Glass, without ruining our entire social lives.

Some people will just be annoying and use their Glass to check Facebook during a dinner party. But they are probably the same people who, now, always have their smartphone on (with the most obnoxious ringtone possible). But I bet that these kind of persons were already a pain in the neck in the fifties when they monopolized the jukebox in their diner.

So, Google Glass, will I wear you 24 hours a day? No way. Would I like a pair? Yes please! ■

Considering that I won't wear Glass in front of the computer screen, on my way to work, when getting lost, when talking to strangers and while having breakfast, a question arises: when would I wear it? Google's demo videos provide the answer. I wouldn't mind wearing Glass in order to record a video when riding in a hot air balloon, jumping out of a plane, sculpting ice or when Skyping with my boyfriend from the highest building in town. It's just that these kind of things happen so rarely in my life that it is not quite worth buying the device.

I don't want to bore you with technical arguments, like the low screen resolution. I don't want to make up psychological assumptions, e.g., that people like to touch stuff — even if it's only words on a screen. I don't want to be too negative. It is a new device — I haven't even

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tried it yet — it deserves a chance. So what would make me want to wear Glass? Personally, I would wear Glass for the same reason that I would wear glasses. I'll wear them to be able to read things that I otherwise can't, I'll wear them in order to perceive more about the world around me. So, if Google thinks that Glass should be for me, there has to be something worth seeing, which I can't see well without my Glass. In my opinion, traffic-directions, weather predictions and superimposing names just doesn't cut it. My advice: if Geegee wants to succeed, it should not rely on the hardware itself. I think the best way to convince me and fellow skeptics is by creating content that is worth seeing with Glass. But even if that happens, I'm not sure whether I'd wear it. I'm afraid, I'd prefer to get lenses instead. ■

