

Why time is out of sync

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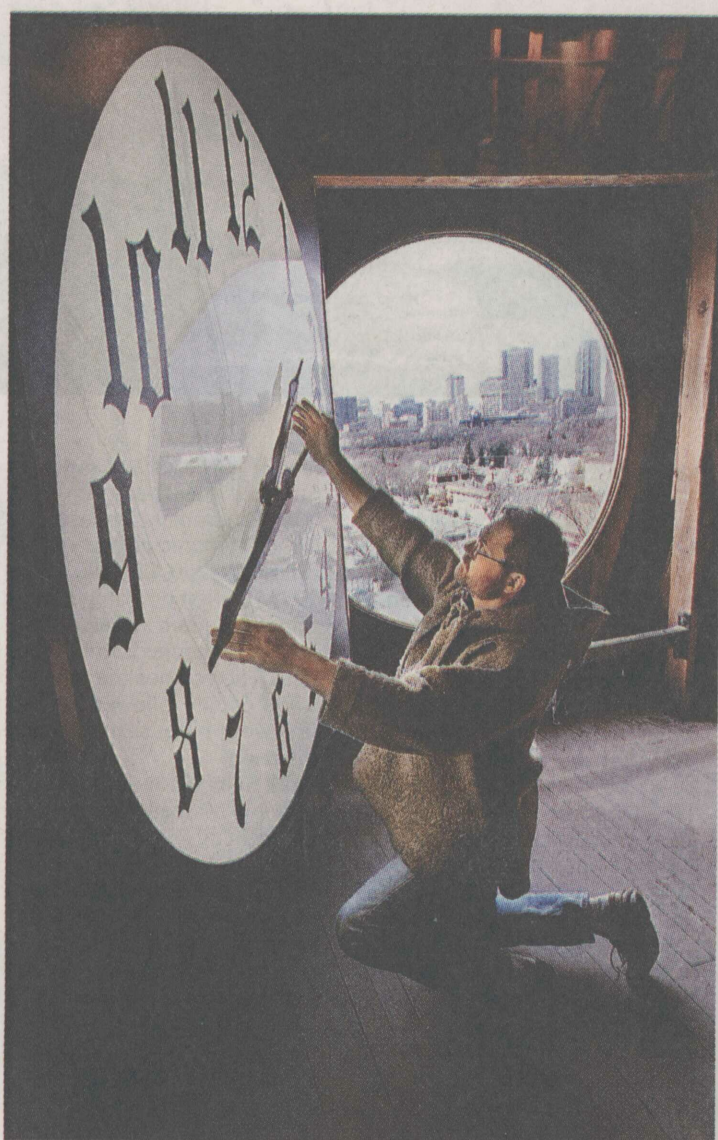
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REPORTER
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Daylight Saving Time
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JOE BRYKSA / CANADIAN PRESS

One of the consequences of Daylight Saving Time is that newspapers have to find photographs to illustrate it every April.

tic conflicts: state versus church, urban versus rural and federal versus provincial governments.

"Time does have a way of exposing everything," Downing says.

When Standard Time was first introduced in North America by Canadian engineer Sandford Fleming, trains were so integral to business and personal relationships that people were willing to make the change from their sun-oriented schedules.

"It seemed more natural," Downing says. "People began to cling to Standard Time, calling it 'God's Time.'"

When Daylight Saving Time was later proposed by William Willett in Kent, England, it seemed downright blasphemous. Standard Time was by then equated with "sun time," and anything else seemed artificial.

Willett argued with politicians for years that the new time scheme would save money spent on lighting, but British parliament wasn't eager to

The debate over time highlights classic conflicts: state vs. church, urban vs. rural, federal vs. provincial

change what they saw as the natural order.

The need to save energy wouldn't win out until the English really wanted to get thrifty, during World War I.

Farmers were the first to say they weren't happy. They argued that they needed to run their businesses in sync with the sun.

"Farmers can't harvest certain crops until the sun dries the dew off," Prerau points out. If the market opens an hour earlier, that gives the farmer a lot less

time to get his crops from the field to the store.

Small farming operations that deliver fresh produce daily already have to deal with the conundrum from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

The U.S. proposal, which is intended to save energy by reducing dependence on artificial light in the early evening, would extend Daylight Saving to include part of March and November.

The farming communities of Saskatchewan were, not surprisingly, opposed to the original Daylight Saving scheme and aren't expected to get on board this time either.

But Downing said there's likely more to the Saskatchewan case than agricultural issues.

As with so many things in Canada, the power of the province tends to be a factor. Downing said federal governments simply don't want the hassle of being in charge of the clocks, and some provinces might be happy to be able to flex their political muscle instead of letting the usual urban suspects set the agenda.

The same goes in the U.S., he said, where renegade states such as Arizona stand out for their opposition to Daylight Saving Time.

If Downing was in control of time, the Cambridge, Mass., author says he would institute another of Fleming's ideas: A 24-hour clock that sets one time zone for the whole world.

When it's 14:00 in the afternoon in Toronto, it's 14:00 in the evening in Frankfurt, Germany, and 14:00 in the morning in Tokyo. People's activities would be ruled by the sun, not by the clock, so those in one part of the world might rise at 14:00 while those in another might be going to bed. But the actual time would remain consistent around the world.

It would also eliminate the "infernal international date line," Downing said.

"We live with this invention that if you cross a meridian on the globe it's a different day. We all know it's a preposterous idea."

How can we live with such a crude estimation of time and consider ourselves civilized? he asks.

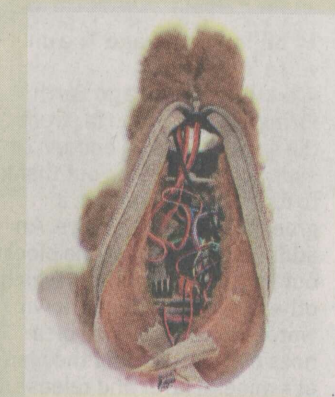
Still, Downing recognizes it's probably not an idea that will take hold.

While time has become more standardized in the last century, the variations that remain today are a factor of ages-old battles that will likely never be resolved.

FAUNA TECH | A PhD student fights the rudeness of cellphones



The squirrel, at your service.



The squirrel's inside workings.

CHRISTOPHER HUTSUL
TORONTO STAR

If your cellphone were a person, it would be terribly ill-mannered. It would holler during dates, squawk during meetings and do the shimmy at the movies.

Frustrated by such tactless behaviour, MIT student Stefan Marti has created a device that makes our boorish phones more refined.

Marti's Cellular Squirrel is a cellphone accessory that is designed to gauge how "interruptible" a user is at the time of an incoming call — acting, in a way, as a personal administrative assistant.

Placed on a desk or table, the animatronic squirrel "watches" the user to determine if he or she is engaged in an important conversation.

When a call comes in, the squirrel then intercepts it and asks the caller to rate the urgency of his or her call. If the squirrel deems its owner to be available for a conversation, it alerts the call's recipient by using human-like cues, such as motion and eye contact.

The Cellular Squirrel isn't actually a cellphone (imagine the looks you'd get walking around with that thing pressed against your head). Rather, it's an intermediary device that communicates with the phone remotely through Bluetooth technology, activating the phone only when the user explicitly commands it to do so — by squeezing its paw.

"It's an interface that interrupts with more socially appropriate signals," explains Marti, who received his PhD in June.

"The idea is that instead of ringing or vibrating, the squirrel interrupts us with human style, non-verbal cues, like eye contact and motion.

Those are social cues that we are hardwired to understand."

Marti is interested in designing electronics that are more sensitive to the nuances of human behaviour. The cellphone, he argues, lacks social sensitivity because it alerts

the user regardless of the social situation, and by using very un-human signals, as well.

"Cellphones are very limited in terms of how they can express themselves," says Marti. "They interrupt us by either ringing or by vibration, but that's a very binary interruption — and it interrupts regardless of what I'm doing, or who the caller is. It's up to the caller to decide whether or not I'm interrupted."

"If you look at how humans interact, there is a much more complex vocabulary of non-verbal cues going on about when to interrupt or not. Cellphones are just not aware of that. In this sense, they're lacking social intelligence."

Marti decided to place the device's workings in a mammal-like housing — he has also designed bunny and parrot versions — to advance the relationship between the device and the user.

"The cellphone is a nice piece of technology, but it's just a square brick and it has a display and keys," says Marti. "The squirrel is embodied in an anthropomorphic form that allows it to use similar cues as humans do."

So will the Cellular Squirrel start appearing on desks any time soon?

Sadly, no. Marti's invention is a one-off, created solely for the purposes of his dissertation.

Also, the technology was developed in the MIT Media Lab and therefore belongs to the school and its sponsors.

But Marti does expect to see more socially sensitive electronics on the market eventually.

"Electronics have to become more human," he says. "They need to become aware of social context."

To see a video of the cellular squirrel in action, visit web.media.mit.edu/~stefanm/phd/cellularsquirrel.

1 ENDNOTE
Meanwhile, in the science of relief... D12

purple, say?

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THE SCIENCE OF

The two-second pour

The TurboTap works because it defeats what its creator calls the "two enemies of pouring beer": gravity and turbulence.

The problem

Gravity is enemy #1. It takes over as the dominant force as soon as beer exits a tap, speeding it up and narrowing the stream. This increases the force of the impact with the glass, resulting in turbulence that produces excessive foam.

Fighting gravity



A good head needs coaxing, critics argue

► Beer From D1

"It gives them the opportunity to exercise what's really their art — all that conversation they need to keep going on behind the bar," says Younkle, who after a decade of R & D ("research and drinking") still loves a perfectly poured fresh draft on a hot summer's night.

So far, his company, Laminar

brandt is equally skeptical.

"Anything that promises to reduce the amount of beer going down the drain and increase the amount going down people's throats is a good thing," he says. "But the proof is in the pudding."

Down on John St., inside the dimly lit Friar & Firkin, Graeme Lang rushes between orders for the summer after-work crowd