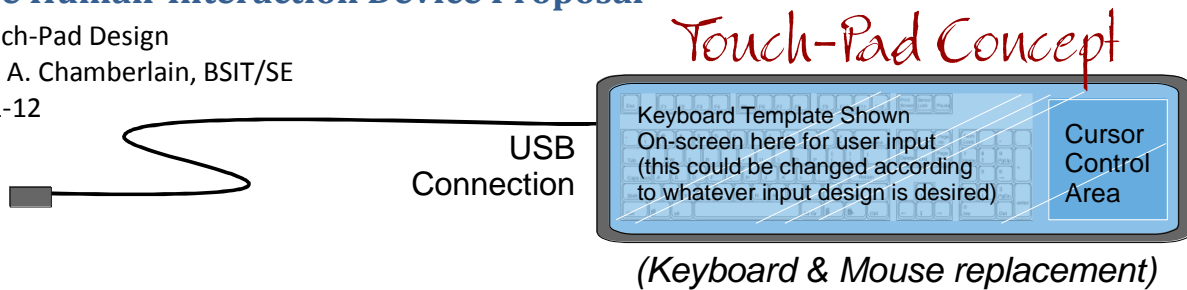


Future Human-Interaction Device Proposal

The Touch-Pad Design

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This question must be asked: "What is the future of the keyboard as we know it?"

The current keyboard and mouse may well be replaced by a "Touch-Pad" concept.

If you have been keeping up on the latest IT trends, you will observe that the market is shifting toward mobile-devices and touch-screen human-input. Now, consider how amazingly long the standard US keyboard has survived in the face of such fast-paced IT developments over the past two decades. At some point, we must all admit (as strong a friend the keyboard has grown to become) that the keyboard is now holding us back.

Considering the fact that human-input is leaning toward touch and the fact that none of us want to return home from a day at the office with our arms about to fall off our shoulders from reaching out and touching a monitor in front of our faces all day long. I personally envision a USB-driven touch-pad (possibly rubberized, similar to a mouse-pad, but most-likely a hardened screen material similar to a note-pad screen - at least, at first) sitting in front of the user, mimicking hand-movements/touches on the monitor screen in front of us, interacting with the Operating System (OS). This design would shatter the keyboard limitations, and still allow keyboard templates to be used when desired by the user. If a note-pad screen was used, digital overlays could be applied to represent keyboard layouts (types optional to the user), game consoles, even aircraft controls (for flight simulators). The possibilities are endless. The user would no longer be at the mercy of whatever style keyboard was sitting in front of them at the machine (my personal hate is the ergonomic styles I run into that all seem to enjoy eating my passwords when I can't "feel" the normal password-entry). For those who love the feel of keys under their fingers, I can imagine a rubber-molded, slightly-raised key physical lay-over on the touch-pad; when the finger depresses the raised key, the pad underneath is activated, matching the digital template. Touch-menus could also be integrated into the device (preferably along the edges), controlling items such as volume, display zoom, input-template options such as US keyboard layout, keypads, game console choices, etc.

Think about browsing through a digital document, moving pages with a simple swipe on this new device (just as is already being done on note-pads, smart-phones, etc - but at the comfort of a large-scale desktop workstation).

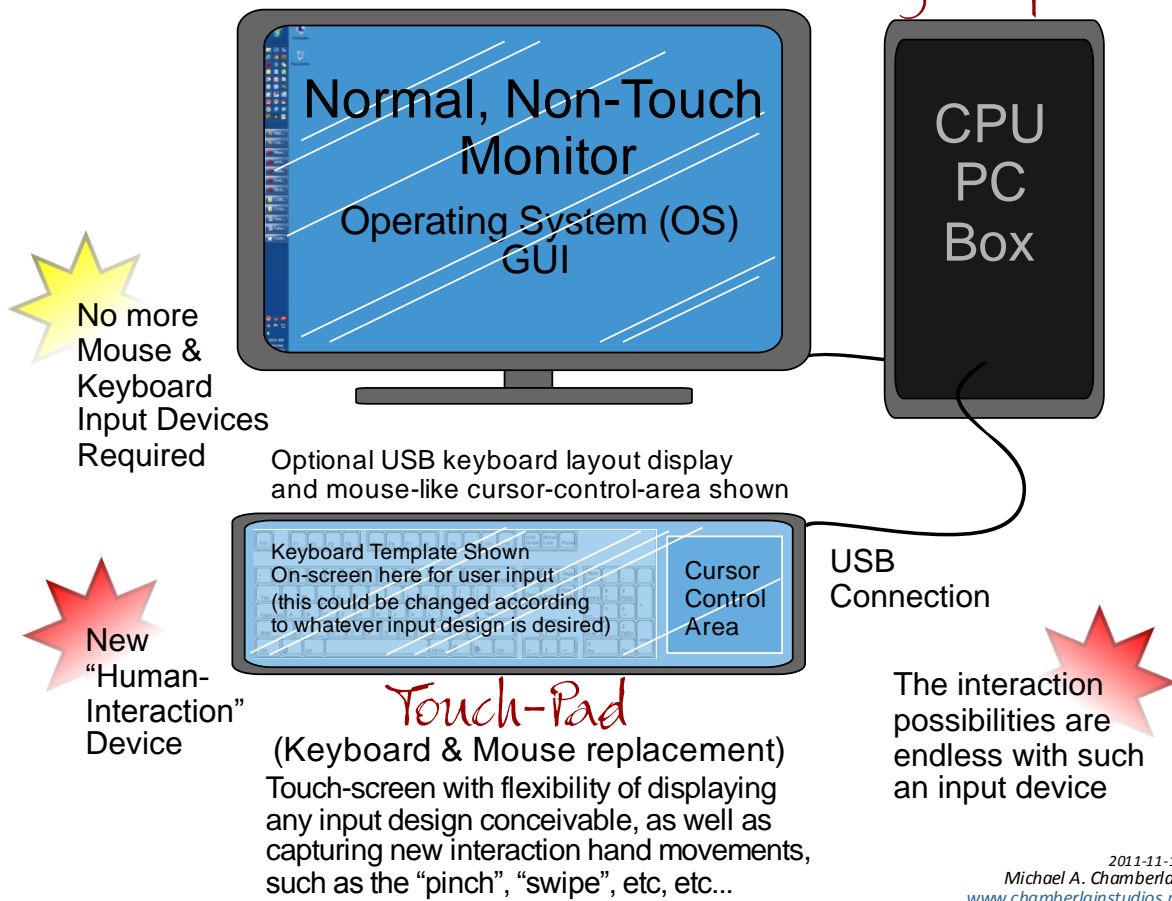
At some point, we need to open our minds to the possibilities of increased human-"interaction" (more than just human-input) with the usability of our data-systems and business processes to gain. The keyboard is an unnecessary limitation we are placing on ourselves now. Think of how we could improve efficiency by breaking out of the keyboard and mouse mold. Consider the possibilities.

Imagine the possibility and flexibility of users designing their own input-interface. Users could design their own keyboards/input consoles from the ground-up, if desired. Software designers could create any interface they wish to interact with users. The way we look at front-ends, back-ends, data-sources, services, widgets, and interfaces could all change.

My personal artist-concept of the Future "Human-Interaction" Device:

Figure 1: The design layout concept:

New Human-Interaction (Touch-Pad) Design Proposal



This "touch-pad" input-device concept would allow anything to be programmed/designed for the input-device screen in front of the user, while allowing the current monitor design to stay as-is (non-touch).

The graphic shows a keyboard and mouse-like cursor-control area layout, but could be anything depending on the software designers' wishes and/or the users choice. This style of interface could simply be downloaded (a file-choice of the user or software designer). This device could also be easily cleaned and stored in any current area designed for a keyboard.

It is common-thought that most command-driven interaction will soon be primarily delivered via voice-command; however, we still have to allow for handicaps and those who would prefer touch-interaction. A touch-interface will still be required for many tasks and under many circumstances. Consider what was just recently posed by "Real Steel" (the movie) - We will still all need a secondary, manual input device - if nothing else, for backup purposes. In addition, I'm sure all of us programmers will still all need a keyboard on-hand for very low-level interaction - such as BIOS/CMOS/etc work. however...

This concept would (I believe) be the next logical step in machine-level interaction.