**Problem Description:** Manual data collection can be tedious

Collecting data about everyday actions like eating, travels, and time spent on the computer takes getting used to, and oftentimes, people never get over that threshold.

There are many reasons for this. It might take too much work to log data or the benefits aren’t worth the trouble. For example, someone might log her sleeping habits, but if the results are not displayed in a meaningful way, then there’s no point in continuing the data collection process.

So there are some major obstacles to overcome:

- **Make it as easy as possible**
  Do not give the user an excuse to quit.

- **Make the effort put in worth it for the user**
  Reward the user for diligently logging data.

- **Provide some flexibility**
  People care about different types of data.

**Proposed Solution:** Use a tool or application people already use as a starting point

**your.flowingdata – An Application for Personal Data Collection via Twitter**

Nathan Yau & Mark Hansen

http://your.flowingdata.com

**Introduction:** Personal data collection one tweet at a time

**Ubiquity of Twitter**

- **Via the Web**
  - Twitter offers a simple user interface for people to tweet what they are currently doing.

- **Via SMS**
  - Users can also easily send updates in the form of SMS messages.

- **Via the API**
  - Twitter also provides an easy-to-use API so that users can update from desktop applications, custom scripts, and other websites.

**An Extension of “What are you doing?”**

- **Capitalizing on what people are already doing**
  - your.flowingdata lets users log data about themselves and their surroundings in the same way that they are already using Twitter. Users can send direct messages to a your.flowingdata bot (@yfd on Twitter) using a simple syntax, which is parsed and then stored in a database.

- **Exploration**
  - Users are encouraged to explore their personal data via a visual interface. Instead of a list of updates, users see their data through interactive visualization tools.

**Your.flowingdata**

Thousands of people are using your.flowingdata to collect data about themselves, their surroundings, and dependants like children and pets.

Since your.flowingdata v.2 launched in July 2009, over 104,000 data points have been logged by about 2,000 users.

Some have written scripts to automate the process logging things such as location, music listening, and weather.

Others have created tools to make the data logging process even easier with Mozilla Ubiquity, javascript bookmarklets, and an iPhone app (pictured below).