Wireless Toronto's Alley Jaunt Proposal

Dear AlleyJaunt,

We are WirelessToronto, an all-volunteer group dedicated to bringing no-fee wireless Internet access to Toronto. Our aim is to encourage the growth of wireless networking and to build community in interesting and innovative ways. Additionally, we are interested in all sorts of nifty explorations of what WiFi can do to our experiences of our urban environments. With this in mind we plan to do totally awesome things at AlleyJaunt.

Wireless networks provide an amazing source of information about a neighbourhood and its inhabitants. The personality of an area is represented in the names that people choose for their networks, the presence--or lack--of networks at all, and the information transmitted across these networks.

DEMARCATING SPACE
Taking note of the SSIDs (wireless network names) in the Alley (they are myriad, coming from all the homes in the area), we will draw chalk lines on the ground to demarcate where the various networks are. As humans wander through space, they (we) are not always aware of what is there yet invisible; this project seeks to make these things visible so that participants meandering through the alley can see them. The drawing with chalk would be done while the jaunt is in progress; onlookers will be able to watch the process of using a stumbling device to detect networks and their boundaries. All the chalk lines will be labelled with the SSIDs and will be very pretty from above.

VISUALIZING TRAFFIC
On a screen set up in our allocated garage, we will display a real-time slideshow of images that are currently being accessed on these wireless networks. This will make visible the content of these networks and allow visitors to understand something about the residents of the neighbourhood (albeit anonymously).

UNDERSTANDING NAMES
The names people give their wireless networks are often personal; SSIDs are unique identifiers. The names of the networks in the neighbourhood are in some sort of dialogue with the existing names-- names of streets, names of longtime neighbourhood residents. We will make real magnetic poetry (with a dymo labeller and magnetic paper) out of the SSID names as well as the street names and any other local names that people would like to add. Participants will then be able to create poems out of the neighbourhood.

The space we need for this project is one garage to set up our screens to display images, and use of the alley, which is hopefully paved well enough to draw on with chalk. If drawing with chalk doesn't work on the surface of the alley, we can substitute lines drawn with flour.

Sincerely,
The Wireless Art in Toronto Squad

David McCallum is a musician and media artist whose projects have involved the exploration of private/public space through WiFi networks, the use of surveillance, and remixing environmental noise.

Dory Kornfeld is an Urban Geography student working on the ways in which technology changes our experience of the cities we inhabit. Many of her creative projects involve combining technology and craft in surprising ways-- she is behind all the Google results for "wifi mittens."

Edward Nixon is a Toronto poet and spoken word performer, a co-founder of Wireless Toronto, with a keen interest in language, media and community.

Michael Pereira is a technologist and community activist. His photographic work documents the relationship between nature and the urban environment.