MIT lab working on wristband to allow for individual control of local building environment

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(PhysOrg.com) -- MIT Media Lab has announced that a team of researchers working in the Responsive Environments Group is hard at it trying to come up with just the right sort of wrist bracelet that could interface with a building fitted with sensors, to allow a user to easily alter the temperature, lighting or perhaps even the humidity levels of their immediate environment. Such a bracelet would also quite naturally also be used to alert other devices with motion detectors to become active.

The current iteration of the new bracelet called the WristQue, is according to the media lab, both comfortable and customizable, making it ideal for use by a variety of people in a controlled environment. Also, the hardware inside the bracelet is 3D printable which means a new one can be whipped up whenever the need arises, similar in fact, to the way that most large companies now print up ID badges to allow admittance to work areas. The bracelets are configured to "talk" via radio waves to sensors located throughout a building and to take note of and broadcast current conditions that exist around the person who is wearing it.

The whole point is to come up with a way to allow people, in most cases, office workers, to change conditions in their local environment with a simple press of a button. The WristQue has three buttons actually, one to tell the system to turn up the heat, another to turn it down, and a third to activate other motion-detector driven devices in the vicinity, such as sun shades or even the coffee maker.

There is the small problem of how to negotiate differences in taste though. After all if you have two people (or more) sharing a cubicle or other workspace for example, and one prefers the temperature warmer than the other, a button pushing showdown could occur. To get around that, the engineers have programmed in an algorithm that takes the average of what it believes both people want and then sets the temperature accordingly. They've also programmed in the times that people are occupying a certain space to set the temperature for them before they arrive, which could mean cost savings on utility bills.

Because the team wants to keep the controls on the bracelet to a minimum, they keep tinkering, adding sliders for lighting, for example, or adding and removing other buttons to allow for the control of other devices that the typical person might want. They key though, they insist is that the bracelet be geared toward your individual needs (it knows who you are because you're wearing it) and thus allow for statistics to be gathered to help predict what you will want without you having to fiddle with the buttons every time you come into the office.

More information: www.media.mit.edu/research/gro … ponsive-environments

via Newscientist