Day One - Brave Conversations

By Chira Tochia

After a brief welcome and background to the event organisers, Anni and Bel, and a short introduction to what Brave Conversations is all about, on our tables we got into pairs and were made to understand the digital profile of one another. It was interesting to see how some pairs reached straight for a device, whilst others started with a face to face conversation and some mixed between the two and they discussed each other's digital footprint. I for one immediately made note to update the privacy settings on certain profiles I wasn't aware that are showing on the first page of Google results under my name (and perhaps made some changes during the break).

Session two was more informative learning about the history of the Web from Anni that were sprinkled with stories from Wendy about these historic moments. It touched upon Wendy and Kieron O'Hara's latest paper, Four Internets: The Geopolitics of Digital Governance and raised questions on what the future Web might look like.

In the third session of the day, I found the case study of the AI bot that was a creation of someone's thoughts and voice who has passed fascinating and most definitely a debatable topic, however I felt the content shared should definitely have come with a trigger warning. There was a very distressing video of a woman reunited with a virtual version of her late daughter through augmented reality where it was clear she was desperate to reach out and touch her child but was unable to do so. Also, Dadbot, although it appeared harmless with the son using a text bot to ask his late father questions based on interviews taken place during the illness leading up to his death, it was clear that when the bot didn't know how to say "I love you too" that the son was gutted. In my group we aggressively agreed that we did not feel there was a need for this kind of device. We are already luckier than generations before us to have more than a written letter or spoken memory type of data of loved ones that have died through technology that allows us to listen to old voicemails, read text messages and watch videos recorded candidly. Personally, I think it is rather self-indulgent to make your loved ones remember you this way, not only by focusing solely on the good traits of one's personality but creating an imitation that doesn't allow you to follow the process of grief and ultimately forget.

I think this conversation would be most interesting to take place in countries such as China where shrines for lost loves ones are very common and ancestry is almost an everyday topic, and also in countries in South America where they celebrate the day of the dead so they can pay homage and

remembrance to loved ones that have passed. I believe the conversations might have varying opinions in both those cultures with very different outcomes.

I really like the format of the final session which was called the fishbowl, but sadly I think some people misunderstood that they had to be tapped out by others and it turned more into mini monologues than a running commentary in the middle that others could join and debate over. It was still a great way to round off the day with everyone sharing their experience of brave conversations that they had and what role they felt we played in using our skills to help create a better world.

Day Three - Datathon, PhD Colloquium

Today there were two events running in parallel and I had signed up to present in the PhD colloquium. The day was split into the following categories:

- Social Cognition;
- Digital Governance / Privacy/ Security;
- Inclusion and Accessibility;
- Digital Empowerment.

I didn't feel a perfect fit with any to be honest but then I thought perhaps my research was digital empowerment to workers empowering themselves with digital tools to manage their work life balance. Everyone presented excellently and it was great to hear from so many varied projects (the beauty of Web Science) who are in different stages of their research. It was particularly exciting to hear from the students studying at IIIT-B. I was last to present and I always find this such a rewarding experience as it gives me a chance to really think about the top noteworthy headlines of my research and also to get feedback from my peers.