

One Digital Day in Her Life

By Kris Goodfellow

April 16, 1998



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NOT even a mundane cough escapes notation in Jennifer Healey's diary. Instead of waxing poetic about the simple pleasure of a cup of coffee or bemoaning the process of writing a thesis, Ms. Healey, a doctoral candidate in electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Laboratory, has begun recording her physiological responses to her environment in the stark language of bits and bytes.

Ms. Healey is experimenting with wearable sensors hooked up to a portable computer that she carries around but that might one day fit in the sole of a shoe. One day the system could be used to build a personal security system that would snap a picture when the wearer was startled. Or it might track the specific causes of stress so the person could learn how to avoid such situations. But for now, she is just beginning to test it.

Ms. Healey is discovering the myriad ways that flaws can occur in the millions of bits of data she gathers about her heart rate, breathing, sweat gland secretions and muscle activity, all of which are punctuated by pictures taken with a camera no bigger than a brooch. She is also learning to read the patterns of her data so that she can better interpret those produced by the people she will test

Here is Ms. Healey's digital diary for one day and how she now interprets what it means. KRIS GOODFELLOW

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A version of this article appears in print on April 16, 1998, Section G, Page 11 of the National edition with the headline: One Digital Day in Her Life. [Order Reprints](#) | [Today's Paper](#) | [Subscribe](#)

