

MAPS
June 27, 2001

This last week I watched the Visions video. I was very impressed by the system that they developed and it also prompted a few questions and ideas with me. First of all, I wondered if the sound system sensed which room Stacie was in before talking to her, or if it just talked all over the town home. I was very impressed with Stacie herself in being able to respond so well to the directions given by this voice from the walls.

I also was impressed/wondered how Stacie knew how to ride a bike, and get the grocery store. She also seemed very able to work and work well with the Visions system. She seemed to be an almost fully functioning person as a result of this system, which further inspired me in our project.

Another interesting thought about the system was how it behaves or what happens in the case of a power failure. This led me to think about a palm pilot's battery power. And I was wondering (we may have already thought of this) if the device will prompt someone to charge it when the power is getting low. This is also an important thought if the device is going to be left on all of the time, which I believe it should be, working as an alarm clock for all tasks.

I also definitely see value in computerized the shopping list process onto a PDA, rather than having the card system that the visions system had. Although they did not show how she selected the cards for shopping in the video, I think doing it manually leaves more room for making mistakes than if the palm device shopping list was self-contained.

As far as cooking instructions, Stacie seemed to follow the directions well, and I would guess that we hope everyone would. I also have concerns for if they make mistakes and accidentally start a fire or something. Although perhaps the caretaker of the device could disable certain dangerous task prompting that they think their patient is unable to perform.

I also read the first three chapters of the Assistive Technology book. This seems to stress the importance of having our device be transparent, or easy and simple to use. Affordability was also stressed, as well as chic-ness. I think that putting a prompting system into a palm pilot is really appealing to people with cognitive disabilities because so many 'regular' people use them, it would help them feel more included in society, more like they fit in. Also, since the palm device is such a trendy thing, its affordability comes right along with that.

As far as nitty gritty ideas that I got for user interface and such from the book, I definitely think we should make it as simple to program by the caretaker as it is for the person using it to use. The device has to be usable enough by everyone involved in order for it to get used.

The book seemed to intensify my excitement for our project and really see this as becoming a widely used assistive technology tool. Of all of the normally faced problems with assistive technology, I think we have actively addressed most if not all of them, and especially in our plans to test prototypes on real users I think we can make this turn out to be very effective. I must reiterate this fact almost every week because it's hard to determine exactly what we should do otherwise. I think that we should test everything on real people so that we know that the finished product will really be of use. Summing up,

the assistive technology book is also a useful guide that I think we should look back on and remember the important facts about. We should keep asking ourselves several questions about our device. Is it transparent? Will the user be able to continue use? Will the user be able to understand how to work the device with little effort? Will the caretakers be able to program the device with little effort? Etc, etc.

I have also begun to work through the Code Warrior tutorial. So far it seems fairly strait forward. Next week I should have more to say about it.