

options of older people. Several design solutions are reviewed. Next, the development of language functions in older individuals is considered, with a view of an optimal communication format both in speech and in text. Then comes 'The view of industry' on design challenges, concluding to 'what really should be done', thus demonstrating the difficulty to get such questions addressed. Finally, a research view on design challenges in Internet points out the enormous potential of this communication vehicle for addressing needs and ambitions of older adults. Presently, the older segment of the population is left without adequate technological environment to turn potential fruit into real fruit.

Section 2 starts with methodological issues involved in the interaction between cognitive development in old age and cultural environment, for communication. This is the more important since the environment including ICT is in continuous change. The next paper illuminates the difficulties for people with visual or auditory deficiencies in dealing with their environments, both physical and social. The great potential of Internet is outlined. The final paper of this section describes a field experiment with people about to retire or just retired, which shows clearly the positive effects of electronic communication on contact density once barriers have been overcome. So this section illustrates the extensive diversity of the older population that is to be answered by options in the technological environments.

Section 3 starts with interface design again as crucial issue, now directed toward designers. Then comes the specific issue of face memory skill acquisition or face-name association, difficult in its own right. Next comes the very important issue of training older adults to use technology, dealt with in a systems approach; no matter how user-friendly or simple user interfaces will become, the need will remain for learning or training to use the wanted part of the available

functionality. The final paper deals with computer-based training of lost visual functions. Taken together, this section is an implicit plea for smart training devices for learning-while-doing.

In conclusion, high cost, complex functionality, and labyrinth user interface of present ICT are seriously hampering the usage of Internet for a majority of older people, thus blocking fulfilment of their needs, their opportunities, and their ambitions. The volume addresses several issues and proposes interventions.

What seems needed most of all is the ambition of industry to seriously address such problems. If this would come about, university researchers have already explored the field for further defining and solving the problems that industry itself cannot handle. This, I may add, is true for other countries as well.

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NEWS IN SHORT

Australia –

Design, Technology, SeniorNet Lounge

Plans are well advanced for the 6th Global Conference of the International Federation on Ageing that is to be held in Perth, Western Australia from 27-30 October 2002. One stream in the Conference is to be devoted to Design & Technology. Papers are being sought which address inclusion of all ages in design of the built environment, transport, equipment and technology.

On quite a different note, the Positive Ageing Foundation (a non-profit organisation) is working on two cyber programs for seniors. One, called the SeniorNet Lounge, provides access and operating assistance for seniors wishing to learn about and use the

Internet or Email. The other, Laptops on Wheels, is intended to extend computer access still further by regularly providing access to house-bound older people.

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Israel – DRIFTS

DRIFTS stands for Dynamically Responsive Intervention For Tremor Suppression. Under EU Project Number QLRT-2001-00536, an International consortium will start this gerontechnological project for the management of neurological tremor in the first quarter of 2002. Members of the consortium originate from Belgium, Denmark, Israel, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Coordination is in the hands of the Israeli Center for Assistive Technology and Aging.

Tremor can be a significant problem when engaged in activities requiring particular dexterity such as eating, dressing, and writing. The objective of the project is to create a prototyping and evaluation platform for the future development of wearable ambulatory devices that mechanically suppress upper-limb tremor while preserving, as far as possible, natural movement. Several categories of tremor are to be addressed among which those resulting from progressive neurological disorders, such as Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis as well as tremor resulting from cerebellar trauma, and atypical essential tremor.

The project will integrate a range of candidate technical solutions for kinematic sensing, control, and actuation, and identify design benchmarks for tremor suppression aids. It will draw upon a wide spectrum of technological and clinical disciplines in the areas of materials science, biomechanics and rehabilitation engineering, sensors, feedback and control, neuroscience, and systems engineering. Users are involved in all phases of the

project; from requirements analysis, through system development, to evaluations in practice.

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Italy – Mosan Eurosalute 2001

Mosan (www.mosan.com) is both an exhibition and a conference on research, technology and management for health. It is organized yearly by the Italian Region Lombardia (www.sanita.regione.lombardia.it; www.famiglia.regione.lombardia.it), the Italian Consortium for Medical Research (www.cirm.net), the European Commission Joint Research Centre, and by the Assembly of European Regions (www.are_regions_europe.org). 2001 saw the 4th edition that took place from October 2-6 with 532 active speakers. A conference of European Regional Ministers for health and social affairs was part of the program. In total 4,667 participants were present in person, while 3,293 attended with the aid of Web Television. Mosan's main issues concern new health and social policies, freedom of choice, information towards integration, governance, and devolution. Some aspects involved Gerontechnology, such as ageing in urban contexts, barriers that increase frailty in the very old, driving for disabled, information technologies, and telemedicine. Emphasis is on models and resources rather than on products.

The 5th edition will be held in October 2002 in Milano.

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Netherlands – Award for Anne-Sophie Melenhorst

On October 10, 2001, Anne-Sophie Melenhorst, a PhD student at Eindhoven University of Technology, received the Arnold M. Small Memorial Award 2001 during the Human Factors and Ergonomics

Society Meeting in Minneapolis. Her award-winning paper, entitled: 'The use of communication technologies by older adults: Exploring the benefits from the user's perspective', was co-authored by Wendy A. Rogers and Evan C. Caylor, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

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Europe – Cover-Age

Cover-Age, the newsletter of AGE -European Older People's Platform-, started in January 2001 and has appeared in monthly issues ever since. EPSO, FIAPA and Eurolink Age took the initiative to join forces, inviting others to do the same. The resulting AGE aims to voice and promote the interests of older people in the European Union and to raise awareness of the issues that truly concern older people. Everyone in the European Union is increasingly affected by decisions taken by its institutions: the Council of Ministers, the Commission, the European Parliament, and the Court of Justice. Such decisions affect the daily lives of all its inhabitants – including older people. CoverAGE is published in English and French on a monthly basis. It is divided into five sections. (i) News from the European institutions: Brief summaries of reports from Committees of the European Parliament, initiatives by the European Commission, and decisions taken at meetings of the Council of Ministers; (ii) News from AGE and its member organisations; (iii) A briefing on a specific topic; (iv) Readers pages; (v) News of calls for proposals and tenders of potential interest to organisations working in the field of gerontechnology and other age related issues.

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USA – TAG

The Formal Interest Group Technology & Aging of the Gerontological Society of

America (GSA-TAG) sees it as its mission to investigate possibilities and to apply the results of rapid advances in technology for the improvement of healthy lifestyles of the growing number of older persons in a world-wide society. Its activities include the organization of symposia, peer networking, and publication activities. For the last convention of the Gerontological Society of America, GSA-TAG has organized two workshops and three symposia, two of those events co-sponsored by the Association of Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE). GSA-TAG members can be roughly divided into (1) assistive devices specialists and (2) computer specialists. The former group subdivides into conventional assistive technology experts (also including home and environmental modification specialists) and the high-tech subgroup that is involved in the planning, design, and implementation of new devices, such as from the health robotics fields. The latter group breaks down into (i) 'Internet and the elderly' researchers and practitioners, (ii) 'computer applications for the elderly' party, and (iii) distance-learning professionals. Additionally, some GSA-TAG members are highly specialized in fields such as driving ability and the demented, technological devices for developmentally disabled elderly or aging issues in transportation.

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