

5 March 2008

CeBIT 2008 (Tuesday, 4 March to Sunday, 9 March)

HOT TOPICS

A service for the daily and business press, radio and television

A cellphone that speaks your language

The language technology experts at Linguattec are unveiling a world first at CeBIT 2008 in Hannover, Germany: "Shoot & Translate" — the first translation software for cellphones and smart phones which uses the phone's built-in camera plus Internet access to perform its functions. The principle is beguilingly simple: Simply shoot a photo of the text, then send it off via the Internet to be translated.

This translation capability turns your cell phone into an indispensable companion you can take with you anywhere. Shoot & Translate uses optical character recognition (OCR) to convert the photographed text into a standard text file, which is then sent for translation to Linguattec. This Munich-based company's proven Personal Translator technology returns the translation promptly, which the phone then displays or even speaks aloud. If you find yourself at an out-of-the-way restaurant in Spain, for example, and are not quite sure what "criadillas de toro" is on the menu, you might want to get the translation ("fried bull testicles") before placing your order.

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Watching satellite TV anywhere in your home has been cumbersome up to now due to all the additional co-axial cabling and signal amplifiers required. But now you can enjoy easy viewing pleasure anywhere at home thanks to the new "dLAN TV Sat" adapter being presented by the devolo company at CeBIT 2008 in Hannover.

This new development delivers television signals through the power socket. The technology involves distributing a DVB-S television signal in SDTV/HDTV quality over your home's internal power grid — no additional co-ax cables are required. dLAN TV Sat uses an integrated dLAN 200 AV adapter to feed the DVB-S TV signal into your power network. The TV signals can be received at the other end using an additional dLAN 200 AV adapter, which is then connected to a PC.

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Introducing: a new laser toner that "finally comes clean"! This color toner boasts its own environmental certificate. The Bavarian office of trade and industry (LGA) has certified the color toner, produced by TBS Printware, for very low toxic levels. The toner modules are designed for use with selected Hewlett Packard printer models.

What is so special about the toner is the low level of toxic substances like benzene, styrene and heavy metals, all of which are suspected of being carcinogenic. According to the manufacturer, the relevant levels for these TBS products are well below the maximum legal limits. The R&D department of this Zeesen-based company already received the same environmental seal for its black toner back in 2003 — now the color toner has also been certified.

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Writing by thinking

On Friday, March 7, CeBIT 2008 attendees can try out a new technology firsthand — or better, “first-brain”, because at the g.tec stand in Hall 8, you can actually write using only your thoughts.

This technology works by measuring the user’s brain waves and sending them to a computer. Linked to the computer, the subject needs only to think of a word, and after a few test runs, the word appears instantly onscreen. Presently still at the development stage, the system is intended to someday allow disabled people to get by living alone. The goal is for the system to register not just words, but also activate switches, and more.

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Future vision — Software that can guess where you're about to look

Do you usually look at the pictures first? Or are you rather the type who is attracted by banner headlines? Whatever you end up looking at first, the "Good Gaze" Web service knows in advance where your gaze is headed.

Developed by the Institute of Cognitive Science at the University of Osnabrück and presented for the first time at CeBIT 2008 in Hannover, this technology can predict the recipient's line of vision when viewing websites. Based on a series of neurological studies, the researchers have analyzed complex cognitive processes to the point where they can now accurately predict a person's line of vision. Within a matter of seconds website owners can find out which areas of their website, including ads and user navigations elements, are receiving the greatest or least amount of attention.

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Tip, don't click: the new super-mouse

Look Ma, no buttons or scroll wheel! This could be the slogan of the new computer mouse being presented by Taiwanese manufacturer Genius at CeBIT in Hannover. The scroll wheel has been replaced by a touch sensor which registers the stroking motions of the user's fingers. And the two click buttons are also gone.

To emulate the old right-button click, the user simply tips the mouse to one side; for the left-button click, the motion is to the other side. The manufacturer has named this innovation "Float to Click Design".

For anyone still enamored of clicking, the mini-mouse does actually have two special keys mounted on top of the mouse shell, which however can only be used with the Vista operating system. One click of a button and the user can activate either Flip 3D or the Smart IE Internet search function.

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Calling 115...

Anyone who has tried calling their local city hall to be connected with the right department knows the problem: After getting a busy signal from the central switchboard several times until finally getting through, the operator connects you, and you begin the long march through the bureaucratic maze. But now, there is a potential solution to the problem: a nationwide government directory under the number "115". At CeBIT 2008 in Hannover, the University of Duisburg-Essen will be on hand to demonstrate just how this "AmtDirekt" (lit. "Direct Office") product works.

This new development is based on the use of open source technologies, allowing the user to install AmtDirekt quickly and easily and integrate it with almost any conventional application or operating system.

AmtDirket processes and structures mounds of government directory information using a specially developed model for standardized descriptions of municipal services. It employs processes like Web services and ontological algorithms to structure and standardize complex information in a user-friendly way.

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Putting data and programs under USB lock and key

USB flash drives continue to grow in popularity as a means of mobile data storage. While protecting the information stored on the drives from unrestricted access is nothing new, the Karlsruhe-based Wibu Systems company is now demonstrating at CeBIT 2008 in Hannover how these drives can be used to protect data on the computer as a whole. The new USB hardware Cm-Stick/M allows the user to access programs or documents which have been protected using the Codemeter encryption technology. The flash drive acts as a sort of "key", which is inserted in the USB port, thus "unlocking" user access.

The ruggedness of this compact data protector is evident in its full metal casing. Depending on the model, the flash drive can store up to 8 gigabytes of SLC Flash memory, delivered by memory specialist Samsung. To ensure rapid data transmission speeds, the flash drives support read-write speeds of more than 20 megabytes per second. These and other features are intended to open the door to industrial applications for the Cm-Stick/M flash drive.

And anyone interested in protecting access to their Internet or intranet websites more reliably than through the mere deployment of user names and passwords should take a closer look at the "Codemeter Identity" innovation. Wibu Systems will be demonstrating a foolproof authentication system of this type at CeBIT 2008.

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Lifesaver for damaged hard disks

Hard disk drives are sensitive beings. If they take a hard knock or are dropped on the floor, the data stored on them may be forever lost. But now there is a solution: at CeBIT 2008 in Hannover, TrekStor is unveiling what it claims is an internationally unique data recovery service.

When the customer buys a new TrekStor DataStation maxi m.ub hard drive with the appropriate label on it, the data recovery service is included for up to 12 months for all users who register the product. If an emergency occurs, the user supplies a detailed description of the problem online, then mails the hard disk to the TrekStor lab. There, experts will examine the damaged hard disk and attempt a number of individual recovery procedures. In most cases they can recover a considerable portion of the lost data. But for data which is accidentally deleted, their ability to work miracles is limited.

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The telltale teapot

Access codes, firewalls and many other tools are used to protect computers from data theft. But the benefits of this may all be naught, given a "carelessly" placed teapot on one's desk. This new variation on the data espionage theme will be demonstrated by researchers from the University of Saarland at CeBIT 2008.

The computer scientists in Saarland discovered that the images displayed on an LCD screen are neatly reflected by curved surfaces like glass teapots or cups. These distorted mirror images can be captured even over a fairly long distance by a telescope, then photographed and deciphered using special software. The researchers achieved their best results using the reflection from a user's eyeglasses as well as from a glass teapot which was placed next to the LCD screen on someone's desk.

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