ISNM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF NEW MEDIA
at the University of Lübeck

Press Release

Paper about a Game for Physically Impaired Players Accepted for the 1st Mindplay Conference in London

Lübeck, 21 January 2006. The paper "Fruit Salad: A Mixture of Virtual and Tangible Interfaces for Social and Accessible Pervasive Gaming" by the ISNM alumni Wendy Ann Mansilla, Soenke Dohrn, and Alma Salim was accepted for the 1st Mindplay Conference on Digital Media theory, culture, practice and play in London on 20th January 2006.

The authors developed a pervasive game prototype using tangible user interfaces (TUIs) where players interact physically and virtually through TUIs with the game environment. This game is critically examined against the needs of physically impaired people and its degree of value added. From this analysis, a set of key indicators of virtual and tangible user interface prerequisites are mapped against the needs of these gamers to finally propose TUIs deployment guidelines.

The project is a socially significant and useful one because many publishers in the gaming market prefer to stay mainstream resulting in a limited variety of gaming experiences available to physically impaired gamers. To the disabled people, TUIs that support the use of physical objects as intuitive interfaces can be the solution to overcome hardware difficulties that they are facing when playing computer or real-world games. TUIs allow tangible and virtual interfaces as a functional supplementary to real-world activities such as playing board games. Playing games in the real world may be extremely hard, tiring or perhaps impossible for disabled people. Since TUI's are real objects used as in non-computer games and are shared by individuals they support social interactions. Even though the game "Fruit Salad" cannot be used by disabled people who cannot hold or move physical objects, it targets the following four common types of disabilities: visual, auditory, motor, and cognitive.

Creating new experiences in a funny, challenging and rich way is a major focus of gaming. Nowadays, new media methods and tools enable the enhancement of these experiences by combining natural physical and social interaction methods of humans with the capabilities of pervasive gaming technologies using tangible user interfaces. The project supports physically impaired gamers experiencing some social digression when playing computer games. The challenge set is to provide these players with both freedom from conventional computer gaming restrictions and enjoyment from traditional board games; thereby also proposing new ideas to the gaming industry.

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