

BENTECH BULLETIN

Fifth Edition August 2014

“New technologies – New Abilities”



“NEW TECHNOLOGIES—NEW ABILITIES”

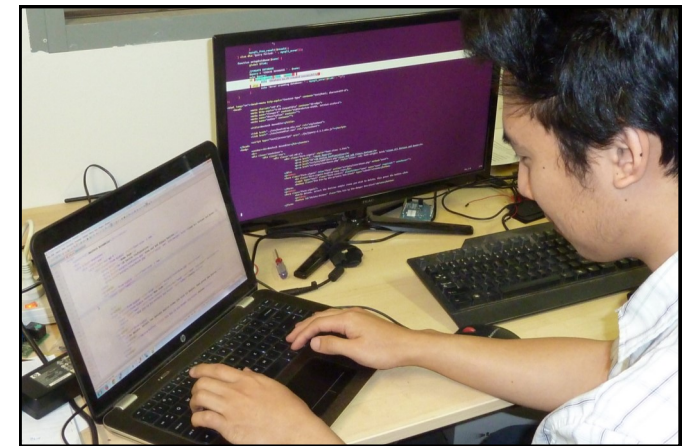
The Partnership

Sad to say but the partnership we had with My Place Foundation has been dissolved. The four My Place members of the steering committee decided that they wished to dissolve the MOU that we had with them. They notified us and we had no choice but to go with their decision. The worrying aspect of their decision was that they not only wanted to dissolve the agreement, but they also intended to keep the funding from the Department of Local Government and Communities. This would mean that Bentech would only have the funding that had been donated to us by private individuals.

Subsequently, My Place have dissolved the MOU that they had with the DLGC and have agreed to move the funds that they were holding, back to the Department.

We made representation to the DLGC to assure them that we intend continuing with the Ben's House Project but would clearly need funding to maintain the project with the present energy. The department clearly understands this and assured us that it would make a decision. There has been a good deal of deliberation on this matter and we are pleased to say that the DLGC has agreed to fund us to the 30th of September. In that time DLGC will appoint an assessor who will do a review of what we are doing and, assuming a good report, will fund us directly. DLGC has said that we are not to start trials in homes.

“A computer's attention span is as long as its power cord “



Trial Houses

The other part of the partnership dissolution that is of concern to Bentech, is the accessibility of trial houses. Part of the agreement with My Place was that Bentech would have the access to the homes of My Place clients for use as trial homes. Our trial homes were to be selected from the group of 27 clients who we originally interviewed.

We have started to look at a group of new candidates for trialling, if we get the go ahead from the DLGC.

Bentech Incorporation

One of the essential outcomes of the dissolution of the MOU is that, to hold the government funds Bentech would need to become a not for profit incorporated association. This has been completed so we are now officially known as Bentech Assistive Technologies Inc. As well as this a number of other “boxes had to be ticked” which we are almost through. We are in the process of registering to become a Deductible Gift Recipient which will mean that anyone who donates to Bentech will be able to claim tax deductibility. This all should be completed in the next few weeks.

WAIITA Award

Earlier on in the year Derek Milton invited a good friend, Jim Ellis, to visit Bentech. Jim is on the board of the Independent Living Centre and is also a member of the Australian Computing Association. When Jim saw what we were doing he strongly recommended that we take part in the Western Australian Information Technology and Telecommunications awards. Three of us presented to the WAIITA judg-

ing panel and we were selected as a finalist in our Community division. This gained us a WA award in that division and the opportunity to take part in the national competition. We deliberated over this opportunity and decided that we would decline to compete nationally, as we did not think we were really ready for that level and did not want to expend more of our valuable funds. If all goes to plan, we will enter the awards next year with a more complete presentation.



WAIITA Award

From the Lab

Colin, Tom and Alex have been doing some outstanding work with the technical development. We have our own “hub” up and working. It is capable of taking inputs from a

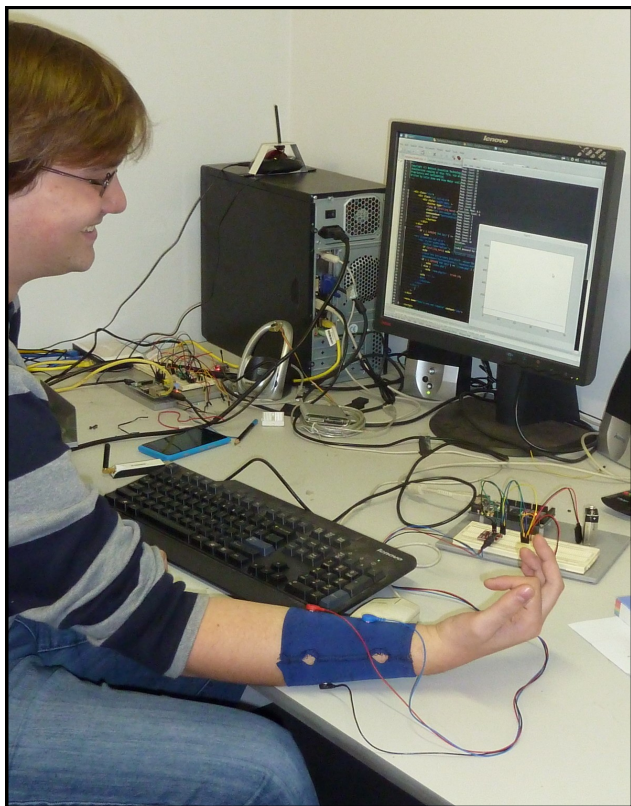
range of different sources, processing those signals and then sending out signals to a range of actuators. We came to the realisation that, if the client had their own computer, then there is no reason why that could not be used as the hub. The result is that we now have a software solution that enables the program to be loaded onto a computer and be activated. It will then read what actuators it is required to drive, configure itself and generate the required menu structure for the user. The main input for this system is a browser based menu which will operate on any device that can access the web. This means that the client can operate it from any brand or model smart phone, tablet or computer that can access the web. This makes it far more versatile than commercial systems, as it is not brand or model specific.

The other input we developed is voice recognition. This enables the use of simple voice commands to operate the system. This means that the client can operate, say a door, by simply saying “Ben, Open Door”. The system will also respond back verbally to the command and as the action is carried out by the actuator.

The third form of input that we are working

“A user friendly computer first requires a friendly user.”

on at present is muscle sensing. This is at proof of concept stage and is showing great potential for those who have very little motor control and poor speech. The system requires the user to have con-



Testing Muscle Sensing

trol of one muscle. When activated, the muscle sends a small electrical signal to sensors attached to the skin. This signal is used to activate a user selected device. This selection is done by a rolling menu where the devices to be controlled are rolling

through a menu and when the desired device is highlighted, the user simply flexes the muscle and the device is activated e.g. a light is turned on.

There are other concepts in the pipeline but they can be developed in the future.

Thanks

There are so many people who we need to thank.

The last few months have been highly disruptive and very stressful, but the advice and assistance that have been offered by the Bentech Community has made it all worthwhile. At one stage when we were about to run out of money we had several offers to put up cash to see us through. So many people have stepped up to help with advice and time, too many to thank individually, but we can sincerely thank you here for your faith in us and your support.

Special thanks goes to Colin, Tom and Alex who have faithfully supported us, even at times when there was no prospect of us being able to pay them. In all this time they have continued to solve the problems that we throw at them, with no complaint. We could not have got this far without their skills and knowledge, but most importantly their dedication to and belief in,

“Will the information superhighway have any rest stops?”

the project.

The Bentech Community continues to expand, each week we have people that call us or see what we are doing and offer their encouragement and often their assistance. To them thank you, like all the others that make up our community, you make our efforts worthwhile.

Our Web Site

www.bentech.org.au Is our website address

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