Wearable Agents

Forty years ago, pioneers such as J.C.R. Licklider and Douglas Englebart championed the idea of interactive computing as a way of creating a “man-computer symbiosis”. The goal was to enable mankind to think in ways that were previously impossible. Unfortunately, in those times, such a mental coupling was limited to sitting in front of a terminal and keying in requests. Today, wearable computers, through their small size, proximity to the body, and usability in almost any situation, may enable a more intimate form of cognition suggested by these early visions. Specifically, wearable computers may begin to act as intelligent agents during everyday life, assisting in a variety of tasks depending on the user’s context. One of the main obstacles to such wearable agents is perceiving the user’s environment. To help address this issue, modern pattern recognition techniques can be employed to explore potentially new interfaces and, conversely, interface design can help compensate for the recognition errors inherent to these techniques.

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