The Internet Can Become More Human-Like

By: Dan Kikinis

Every week brings new computer components and capabilities to eager and willing people who have realized the enormous synergy of a rational human plus a powerful computer. Faster and more powerful components are the result of developmental triumphs in hardware, and new capabilities are the result of ever more proficient software.

Given a hardware platform and peripherals, it is well known that it is the *software* – in most scenarios an assortment of different types of software – that imparts function and personality to the platform. Software has been developed for a multitude of noble purposes. We have software for word processing; for drawing and illustrating; for scanning photographs and approximating them in raster images; for manipulating information in matrices, such as with spreadsheets; for calculating and problem-solving in enormously complicated situations, such as in sequencing the human genome; and for more, much, much more.

The development of software, as in almost all product development, is necessarily an incremental process. Even as a useful program comes to general use, a new version is surely in development and will soon follow, rendering older versions less desirable, or even obsolete. Unfortunately, problems are typically solved by addition of code to a succeeding version, rather than by simplification and innovation. The result is ever-increasing complexity of the product.

A closely related software phenomenon is the fact that every class of software functionality comes with a unique form of a digital file. Even in a closed class, different products produce files of enough dissimilarity that vast difficulties are created in translation and integration. In addition, new classes of files central to new software functionality are regularly being invented. Among these new classes are voice-mail, electronic mail, fax-mail, instant messaging (IM), IM mail, SMS, etc. Finding those is aided by recently added desktop search functionality. However it still *requires the user to remember* (for the computer) the *right keywords*.

This proliferation of search capabilities overloads the normal user by requiring him to remember too many keywords, and in which case to use them, effectively *turning the user into a server* of his or her computer, instead of vice versa. What is really required is a simplification, a new direction allowing a human being to deal with all sorts of electronic documents and files through one simple system that does not compel endless administrative memorizing, selection and decision processes from the human – a system that allows the human to do what he or she does best – ***to think like a human*** – adding the cognitive and creative dimension to the raw power of a computer, hence *turn the computer back into a server for the human user*.

We at Otopy have recently released the world's first software program using a new, revolutionary technology that allows users to search and find any digital piece of information using human-like concepts instead of the limiting and often frustrating keywords that are currently used.

Otopy's solution addresses the problem of not knowing exactly what keyword or words will elicit a useful search result. For most Internet users, finding a specific tidbit of information is like trying to find a word in the dictionary without knowing how to spell it. For the first time, Otopy eliminates the guesswork and frustration of trying different keywords to describe what is being sought.

Using semantics and linguistic analysis, the Otopy search assistant seamlessly converts initial keyword entries into multiple relevant terms. Results for all relevant terms are delivered in an easy-to-use interface.

We identified an opportunity to better connect buyers and sellers. The problem is that sellers describe an item one way, and potential buyers may search for that item using different terminology. As a result, items may go unsold simply because the buyer and seller aren't using the same terms to describe the same item. Otopy bridges that gap by linking terms that relate to the same concept. By grouping these terms together with our proprietary technologies, we significantly increase the accuracy, speed and ease with which buyers can find what they're looking for.

While our current release is tuned for shopping, we are optimizing additional databases for general web searches as well as for domain-specific information in the fields of law, medicine, and other applications, including other languages and corporate applications.

The Otopy search assistant is a free, downloadable, browser plug-in. It's now available from the Otopy website at http://www.otopy.com. The beta release is available for Internet Explorer 6.0 and above and currently supports the search engines A9, Google, MSN, and Yahoo!; plus shopping sites eBay, Froogle, MSN Shopping, and Yahoo! Shopping. Otopy plans to release additional versions of the software that work with other popular browsers and sites.