

“AthWaruwa” an Internet-Based Services for Senior Citizens

Dr. Shamitha Pathiratne
Head of Special Projects, ESOFT Metro Campus, Colombo
samitha8@yahoo.com

P.A.C.J. S. Bandara
Lecturer, Department of Sinhala, University of Colombo

In a matter of a decade, the Internet has revolutionized the way in which people communicate, do business and socialize. Most senior citizens never used Internet accommodations in the workplace and may therefore eschew utilizing them now. Despite the benefits and advantages, it is necessary to be vigilant of threats, as Internet users are often targets of fraudulent schemes. It must be taken into account that older people differ from the younger generation in terms of both cognitive and physical abilities, making it more arduous for them to recollect usernames and passwords or to work with input contrivances such as a keyboard or mouse. The objective of the research is to develop an environment for senior citizens to efficaciously and safely utilize Internet-cognate accommodations, taking into account their cognitive and physical abilities. This longitudinal case study was conducted at a “Seth Sevana” retirement village in Mirigama, Sri Lanka, over a period of 18 months from May 2013 to October 2014. The study was undertaken in two phases: Phase 1 during 2013 and Phase 2 during 2014. From the research results it is clear that a front-end system like “AthWaruwa” is able to address the quandary of authentication and facile access to culled Internet accommodations. “AthWaruwa” makes it possible for a senior user to access their Gmail, Skype or Facebook accounts with two clicks of a mouse, firstly to substantiate identification and secondly to select the service. Predicated upon the desiderata of the elderly, it is imperative to have an administrator on site and available to avail new users with the sundry accommodations. “AthWaruwa” made it possible for the participants to be authenticated with minimal activity on their side. By using facial recognition, combined with a user-friendly, front-end system, a group of senior citizens, mostly over 70 years old, have productively used email, search engines and online social networking. But once logged into a service like Gmail for example, it was noticed that the users struggle to type an email message. Thus future plans include making use of voice recognition to assist senior citizens to compose their email messages faster and with less physical activity on the keyboard.

Key Words

Senior citizens, Internet-based services, facial recognition, single, sign-on, voice recognition, social networking