



Information Communications Technology Newsletter

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Foundation for Information Technology Accessibility
Improving the quality of life of disabled persons through ICT.

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Software of the month

++ Ubiquity

It Doesn't Have to be This Way

You're writing an email to invite a friend to meet at a local San Francisco restaurant that neither of you has been to. You'd like to include a map. Today, this involves the disjointed tasks of message composition on a web-mail service, mapping the address



on a map site, searching for reviews on the restaurant on a search engine, and finally copying all links into the message being composed.

This familiar sequence is an awful lot of clicking, typing, searching, copying, and pasting in order to do a very simple task. And you haven't even really sent a map or useful reviews—only links to them.

Enter Ubiquity

Ubiquity is a Mozilla Labs experiment into connecting the Web with language in an attempt to find new user interfaces that could make it possible for everyone to do common Web tasks more quickly and easily.

The overall goals of Ubiquity are to explore how best to:

- Empower users to control the web browser with language-based instructions. (With search, users type what they want to find. With Ubiquity, they type what they want to do.)

- Enable on-demand, user-generated mashups with existing open Web APIs. (In other words, allowing everyone—not just Web developers—to remix the Web so it fits their needs, no matter what page they are on, or what they are doing.)
- Use Trust networks and social constructs to balance security with ease of extensibility.
- Extend the browser functionality easily.

More:

<http://labs.mozilla.com/2008/08/introducing-ubiquity/>

Contributed by: Stanley M. Debono

Website of the month

This month we continue to build on the web accessibility theme, based around websites recommended by our readers.

This interesting article by an ICT industry employee, presents some interesting information for the web developers and designers. The information will prove enlightening for many website users as well.

What Makes a Good Web Accessibility Guide for the Business?

With pressure mounting on web developers and companies alike to provide quality eAccessibility products and services, it makes good business sense for companies to have their own eAccessibility guidelines to help ensure development objectives are being met in efficient and cost-effective ways.

However, just knowing guidelines are needed is one thing, producing and integrating them into a development workflow is something else.

What breadth and depth of information should they cover? How should they be written and structured for maximum understanding? What format provides the best utility? Seemingly, the preparation of eAccessibility guidelines is not a fundamental task, the considerations are many.

Once you read the articles at <http://wion.com/articles/what-makes-a-good-accessibility-guide> one should still keep in mind that this is only one practitioner's view.

A major fault, identified through FITA's own activity in this field, is the lack of practical involvement by end users. The creation of an accessibility guide will undoubtedly stimulate greater awareness across the organisation. However the reality of an ever changing industry (changing standards) and the fact that products are developed for use by humans and not machines, must be given their due importance.

Articles

++ Ubuntu Linux Releases

The Ubuntu project has detailed plans for the April 2009 version of its Linux distribution, continuing its habit of naming its software after animals by dubbing Ubuntu 9.04 "The Jaunty Jackalope."

The news comes as the project last week made available an advance testing version of its Linux distribution, Ubuntu 8.10, the "Intrepid Ibex," which is scheduled for release in late October.

"As we approach the launch of Ubuntu 8.10, it's time to create space for future plans... [Jaunty] will be the focus of

our efforts from November through to April next year," wrote the project's founder and patron Mark Shuttleworth in an email to developers this morning.

Shuttleworth said Ubuntu 9.04 would focus on improving boot time and blurring the line between desktop applications and the incoming wave of web-based software.

"The Jackalope is known for being so fast that it's extremely hard to catch, and breeds only when lightning flashes," wrote Shuttleworth. "Let's see if we can make booting or resuming Ubuntu blindingly quick." Operating system rival Microsoft has also recently stated it wanted to make boot times one of its priorities for its incoming Windows 7 operating system, which has not yet been formally named.

On web application integration, Shuttleworth wrote: "Is it a deer? Is it a bunny? Or is it a weblication: a desktop application that seamlessly integrates the web? This hare has legs, and horns, and we'll be exploring it in much more detail for Jaunty."

The 9.04 release will also see Ubuntu's entire code repository moved into the project's Bazaar version control system, to make it easier for developers to work with the software. "For the first time, any developer will be able to branch any Ubuntu package with a single bazaar command, publish their changes, and perhaps even publish builds of that package in their own package archive," wrote Shuttleworth.

Shuttleworth said the project would be planning the 9.04 release in much more detail at its Ubuntu Developer Summit, to be held in Google's Mountain View campus from 8-12 December this year.

Shuttleworth said 2009 would see Ubuntu compete strongly with its commercial rivals. "The warrior rabbit is our talisman as we move into a year where we can reasonably expect Ubuntu to ship on several million devices, to consumers who can reasonably expect the software experience to be comparable to those of the traditional big [software vendors]: Microsoft and Apple," he wrote.

"The bar is set very high, and we have been given the opportunity to leap over it. It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to shine, and we want to make sure that the very best thinking across the whole open-source ecosystem is reflected in Ubuntu, because many people will judge free software as a whole by what we do."

++ TACMON project update

The TACMON project kickoff meeting was held in Budapest, Hungary on 6th November. Mr. Michael Micallef and Mr. Saviour Cachia of MITTS represented FITA during this event.

The project revolves around the creation of an accessible touch screen interface, that can be accessed by the visually impaired.

FITA will be responsible for carrying out usability testing, ensuring the accessibility of user interfaces and creating the relevant training materials and methodologies.

FITA will be collaborating with local organisations representing these user groups in order to carry out the necessary testing, locally.

++ New FITA staff

FITA welcomes Ms. Maria Mercieca and Mr. Leone Sciberras amongst its staff members. Mr. Sciberras will be managing the ICT training courses and assisting Mr. Michael Micallef with ICT Accessibility Audits. Ms. Mercieca will be managing the day-to-day activities related to the administration of FITA partner offers and related services.

Question Box

++ Recognize phishing scams and fraudulent e-mail

Phishing

Phishing is a type of deception designed to steal your valuable personal data, such as credit card numbers, Windows Live IDs, other account data and passwords, or other information.

Often phishing scams rely on placing links in e-mail messages, on Web sites, or in instant messages that seem to come from a service that you trust, like your bank, credit card company, or social networking site.

What does a phishing scam look like?

Phishing e-mail messages take a number of forms. They might appear to come from your bank or financial institution, a company you regularly do business with, such as Microsoft, or from your social networking site.

Spear phishing is a targeted form of phishing in which an e-mail message might look like it comes from your employer, or from a colleague who might send an e-mail message to everyone in the company, such as the

head of human resources or IT. For details, see Spear phishing: highly targeted scams.

Phishing mail often includes official-looking logos and other identifying information taken directly from legitimate Web sites, and it may include convincing details about your personal information that scammers found on your social networking pages.

The main thing phishing e-mail messages have in common is that they ask for personal data, or direct you to Web sites or phone numbers to call where they ask you to provide personal data.

To make these phishing e-mail messages look even more legitimate, the scam artists may place a link in them that appears to go to the legitimate Web site (1), but actually takes you to a phony scam site (2) or possibly a pop-up window that looks exactly like the official site.

Here are a few phrases to look for if you think an e-mail message is a phishing scam.

"Verify your account."

Businesses should not ask you to send passwords, login names, Social Security numbers, or other personal information through e-mail.

"You have won the lottery."

The lottery scam is a common phishing scam known as advanced fee fraud. One of the most common forms of advanced fee fraud is a message that claims that you have won a large sum of money, or that a person will pay you

a large sum of money for little or no work on your part.

"If you don't respond within 48 hours, your account will be closed."

These messages convey a sense of urgency so that you'll respond immediately without thinking. A phishing e-mail message might even claim that your response is required because your account might have been compromised.

What does a phishing Web site or link look like?

Fake, copycat Web sites are also called spoofed Web sites. They are designed to look like the legitimate site, sometimes using graphics or fonts from the legitimate site. They might even have a Web address that's very similar to the legitimate site you are used to visiting.

Once you're at one of these spoofed sites, you might unwittingly send personal information to the con artists. If you enter your login name, password, or other sensitive information, a criminal could use it to steal your identity.

Here's an example of the kind of phrase you might see in an e-mail message that directs you to a phishing Web site:

"Click the link below to gain access to your account."

HTML-formatted messages can contain links or forms that you can fill out just as you'd fill out a form on a Web site.

Phishing links that you are urged to click in e-mail messages, on Web sites, or even in instant messages may

contain all or part of a real company's name and are usually masked, meaning that the link you see does not take you to that address but somewhere different, usually an illegitimate Web site.

Example of a masked Web address

Con artists also use Web addresses that resemble the name of a well-known company but are slightly altered by adding, omitting, or transposing letters. For example, the address "www.microsoft.com" could appear instead as:

- *www.micosoft.com*
- *www.mircosoft.com*
- *www.verify-microsoft.com*

How can I protect myself from phishing scams?

Keep your operating system up to date, and install up-to-date antivirus and antispyware software.

Your first level of defense against phishing scams and other malicious humans or software is to secure your computer.

To help prevent spyware or other unwanted software, use Windows Defender. Windows Defender comes with Windows Vista and is available at no charge for Windows XP SP2.

Learning how to spot social engineering techniques is the next step in protecting your computer, and Windows Vista makes that easier to do:

- Internet Explorer 7 is available for Windows Vista and has a Phishing Filter built in that scans Web sites and alerts users to phishing sites.
- Windows Vista Parental Controls offer parental controls for children

- to help prevent kids from downloading unwanted software.
- Windows Defender helps you avoid spyware and other malicious software that can be part of a social engineering scam. Windows Defender comes with Windows Vista. If you use Windows XP SP2, you can download Windows Defender for no charge.
 - User Account Control built into Windows Vista requires your consent before allowing potentially dangerous programs to run. This helps reduce the impact of viruses, spyware, and other threats you might encounter through social engineering.

<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/yourself/phishing/identify.msp>

*Contributed by: Stanley Michael Micallef
Source: Anti-Phishing Working Group
Archive*

Credits

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