

You Will Talk to the Web... and the Web Will Talk Back

“Going” to the web is about to change. Literally how you interact with the content, services and people that are online will be as easy as calling your Mom to clarify how to make her best recipe. We know this can happen because the technology is available, but we also know it can happen because it must.

People in countries around the world have skipped over the computer as we know it, where primary input is a keyboard and the primary output is results on a monitor. In places like India, where the spoken word is more prominent than the written word in education, government and culture, “talking” to the Web is leapfrogging all other interfaces, and the mobile phone is outpacing the PC.

In the next five years you will be able to surf the Internet, hands-free, by using your voice – therefore eliminating the need for visuals or keypads. New technology will change how people create, build and interact with information and e-commerce websites – using speech instead of text.

Imagine being within a phone call’s reach from the ability to post, scan and respond to e-mails and instant messages – without typing. Or sort through the Web verbally to find what you are looking for and have the information read back to you – as if you are having a conversation with the Web. You could ask about your favorite recipe while cooking to confirm baking temperature or missing ingredients, update your favorite online social network site or blog, or find reviews of a restaurant as you drive by it and decide if you would like to go there while you are in the area.

Through the use of these “VoiceSites,” people without access to a personal computer and Internet, or who are unable to read or write, will be able to take advantage of all the benefits and conveniences the Web has to offer. And by the web becoming more accessible by using voice, it will become easier to use for everyone.

IBM has developed a new technology to make the Internet affordable, accessible and available to over a billion new users around the world, without the need for a traditional computer. Dubbed the *Spoken Web*, this technology will transform how people create Web content, access information and transact through the use of voice interactions over mobile phones instead of computer and textual interfaces.

The *Spoken Web* is the World Wide Web in a telecommunications network, and it will change how people create, build and interact with information and e-commerce websites – using speech instead of text. No longer will being without a computer or being unable to read or write prevent you from accessing the Internet.

What the Spoken Web Can do for You

- Feel connected at all times. No longer will you be tied to a keyboard and a computer.
- Enable the underprivileged to create, produce, host and share information and services with others.
- Provide simple and affordable access mechanisms to let people use technology services and applications that are currently available only to computer users.
- Provides a cost effective ecosystem that enables users to create and sustain a community parallel to what the World Wide Web has done.

The *Spoken Web* is based on the concept of a “VoiceSite.” These “VoiceSites” are analogous to websites but accessible via phone through a voice interface. People can simply create and browse “VoiceSites”, traverse “VoiceLinks”, and even conduct business transactions, simply by

talking over the existing telephone network. This is particularly compelling for people who don't have access to a personal computer and Internet, or who are unable to read or write.

Imagine being within a phone call's reach from being able to:

- Post, scan and respond to online advertisements.
- Access your favorite recipe while cooking to confirm baking temperature or missing ingredients.
- Update your favorite online social network site or blog.
- Obtain driving directions to your destination, and make restaurant reservations based on proximity and reviews.

Even today, barely 17 percent of the world's population has access to the Internet. Many factors serve as a hindrance for Internet to impact the remaining 83 percent of the human population: poverty, handicap, illiteracy, a lack of computer knowledge and irrelevance of available content. On the other hand, the cost of a phone is significantly lower than a computer, and the knowledge required to operate a phone is minimal as compared to a computer, especially when the phone is used as a device.

Spoken Web will supply people in emerging countries without reliable computing infrastructures, as well as those who are handicapped, or who are unable to read or write, with all the benefits and conveniences the Web has to offer. From buying food to cars, to researching how weather patterns will affect crops, the *Spoken Web* offers people from all different backgrounds and societies the chance to take advantage of all the Internet has to offer.