

Huge touchscreen to allow for real-time analysis

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Huge touchscreen built for analysis wall.

A massive touchscreen measuring more than 4 square metres has been built at the University of Dundee by EPSRC-funded researchers in the School of Computing.

The Analysis Wall can be used to plot the path of a debate, separating out the arguments in real time and allowing direct participants and those contributing online to make contributions in parallel. It is believed to be the first giant screen to be used in this way.

The Wall is seen as a tool that can remove much of the distinction between, for example, a television or radio studio debate and the resulting discussion and commentary that it prompts online.

Researchers in the School of Computing developed the Wall for use in

the field of argument analysis and have road tested it live by dissecting the discussion on the BBC Radio 4 programme 'The Moral Maze'.

A team of analysts and stenographers can quickly place each comment made in the debate on to the screen and then arrange them in different patterns, structuring comments and new threads of discussion.

Professor Chris Reed, who leads the team that built the Analysis Wall, said, "Whether you're looking at real time environmental risk management, intelligence analysis, criminal investigation, or plotting the path of a political debate, it comes down to getting many smart, well-trained analysts together, supported by the right hardware plus smooth, well-engineered software underpinned by solid theory of reasoning and argument.

"That's what we've done with the Analysis Wall, with new research all the way from the philosophy through the [artificial intelligence](#), to the practical engineering.

"Some tasks are simply not suited to being divided up amongst many people who quietly work on their own part of the picture. Wherever you have complex, highly connected webs of reasoning you need a big shared work space. If you add in time pressures nothing beats the direct, physical manipulation that a touch screen offers."

Professor Reed said the Wall added a new dimension to monitoring, directing and participating in live discussion.

"This blurs the boundaries between what is happening on a radio or TV programme and any associated discussion online. It brings the two together.

"One of the things we are trying to encourage as part of this research is

an improvement in the quality of reasoning online. Current technology often hampers reasoned debate leading to poor levels of critical literacy online. This project is part of an international push towards the 'Argument Web' which is tackling this challenge.

"It is a very exciting and dynamic system to work with. Potentially it is also a very good tool for allowing people to host their own debates online – you could be Michael Buerk, directing the conversation, prompting new lines of enquiry, shutting off others when they have run their course, and so on.

"Our own specialist field is in argumentation theory, breaking down the nature of arguments and debates, and the Analysis Wall allows us to do this live, rather than waiting for a week or two to receive full transcripts and associated comments."

The Analysis Wall measures 3.2 metres by 2.1 metres with a touch-sensitive area of 3.1metres by 1.4metres and is big enough for a team of eight analysts to work on it at the same time.

"I'm not aware of too many devices like this which have been built on this scale," said Professor Reed.

Provided by Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

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