

# Smart computers to be a fact of life: expert

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A shopping mall where advertisements address you by name. A car that suggests you stop when you're passing a venue where your favourite band is about to go on stage. A house that anticipates your homecoming, even though you are blocks away. Sounds like science fiction, right? Wrong.

Research at ANU is paving the way for computer systems that will track the movements of users in time and space.

Dr Chris Johnson, the Head of the Department of Computer Science in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, has recently completed three years leading projects in context-aware computing with the Smart Internet Technology CRC.

“Computers have successfully burrowed into many everyday gadgets like handheld phones, calculators and cars. Information services that come through devices like these are now starting to take advantage of these computers knowing approximately where they are while their owner is on the move,” Dr Johnson says.

“Location-aware services give many opportunities for business to provide information to people who are on the move, whether by providing advertisements about the local area, or sight-seeing and guidance information, and to extract information to change the way some surprising services such as car insurance are provided and charged for.

“The technology brings concerns about personal privacy and security as well as opportunities for commercial services, and it is a good example of how information technology is taking on a businesslike point of view.”

Dr Johnson says the challenges in developing such technology will revolve around balancing the privacy of individuals with increased access to information and services. But whatever the end outcome, he says the possibilities are very bright.

“The end uses of such technology could simply be convenience like my house knowing when I wake up and what radio station I like to listen to without waking up the rest of the house. On the other hand, it could be life saving by detecting when I have fallen and need medical help.”

Source: ANU

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