

Glasgow's joking computer

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The Glasgow Science Centre in Scotland is exhibiting a computer that makes up jokes using its database of simple language rules and a large vocabulary.

The "Joking Computer" was developed by scientists at Aberdeen University for the Science Centre, to show children and young people what computers can do and help them explore language and engage with the underlying science. The software was originally written for children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, to help them develop [language skills](#) and have original jokes to tell their family and friends.

Dr Judith Masthoff from the Department of Computing Science at Aberdeen University said the software was developed jointly by the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee. Dr Masthoff said the Joking Computer is intended to be a fun way to show children that

computers can have a positive impact on people's lives. If young people can engage with the computer, the hope is that some may consider [computing science](#) as a career or academic pursuit later.

Chief Executive of the Glasgow Science Centre, Kirk Ramsay, said the exhibit is a good example of how [computing power](#) and sophistication can be used for all kinds of applications. The Joking Computer is perfect for achieving the aim of the Centre, which is to use fun and thought-provoking exhibits to promote science and technology.

The [Joking Computer](#) project was funded by a £105,000 award from the EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) as part of their *Partnerships for Public Engagement* award scheme. It will be exhibited next year in science workshops and festivals in the UK.

The Joking Computer can generate millions of cracker-style jokes, all based on puns. A few examples of its jokes are:

- * Q: What kind of temperature is a son?
- * A: A boy-ling point

- * Q: What do you call a shout with a window?
- * A: A computer scream

- * Q: What do you call a washing machine with a september?
- * A: An autumn-atic washer

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