Using technology in creative ways with people with dementia

Claire Craig
Welcome and introduction

Invite you to think about technology generally and what it offers

• Interactive session: thinking about technology

• Focus on technology as a means of sharing experiences, building relationships, promoting wellbeing

• Focus on creative potential offered by technology
Why look at technology in relation to people with dementia?

Technology is moving apace
Toyota and the University of Tokyo have jointly developed a humanoid robot aimed at household chores. In a demonstration earlier this month, the robot was shown cleaning up a room, clearing dishes from a dining table, and loading shirts into a washing machine, the Japan Times reports.

The device can identify objects such as furniture and cleaning equipment, its developers reportedly said. It’s also said to be able to analyze past failures and modify its behaviour accordingly.

Every household needs one of these!
Last decade of unprecedented technological change

- Impacting on how we live our lives
- Seems only fitting that we consider the potential of such technology in relation to individuals we work alongside
- To do this we need to begin by thinking more generally in relation to what technology offers
A starting point

• A good starting point is to think about what technology offers you
• Just for a second please identify your ‘must have’ gadget
• What makes this so desirable?
• What does technology offer you generally?
In relation to people with dementia

• Much emphasis has been placed on technology in relation to function: way-finding focusing on GPS systems, orientation, verbal prompts embedded into everyday objects that act as prompts

• Example COGKNOW project

• The system has the potential to start issuing reminders from wake-up time in the morning until bed time. These can be recorded in a friend or relative's voice, and give instructions for all sorts of activities such as picking up the morning newspaper, brushing teeth, preparing or warming pre-prepared meals, laundry and dish washing and myriad other daily activities.
Another story…

- These elements are important: reflect associated changes in cognition, memory and communication

- However, there is another story told by people with dementia and their carers, one focusing on the impact of these changes, the growing isolation, shifting relationships, limited opportunities for choice and control
Leisure and pleasure…

• Until recently, less emphasis on leisure and pleasure
• Yet know people with dementia experience isolation and loneliness, reduced opportunity for leisure
• Exception to this is CIRCA (Computer Interactive Reminiscence and Conversation Aid)
• 'an interactive reminiscence experience based on interactive multimedia'
Today, focus on everyday technology
Focus for today

• Camera and digital picture frames
• Internet: blogs and wikis
• Digital scrapbooking
• Video: video portraits, digital stories
• Web-2 technologies such as You-tube, social networking sites
Blogs and wikis

A new year has arrived, and I have decided to use my blog as a tool to help me gauge my condition throughout 2008. Hopefully, at the end of the year, I will find little decline.
Currently, I must say that my short term memory is very poor. I don't recognize my vacuum cleaners. The other day, I "found" a missing dinner plate in the refrigerator. (I bet I'm not the only one guilty of that !)

I recognized the plate, but not the pieces of deluxe pizza on it. I don't remember having ordered a pizza, but my husband tells me we did. Whole conversations are lost to me. My husband has to continually remind me about them.
Possibilities

• Outlet

• Speaking out into the ether

• No responsibilities

• Not being judged

• Letting others know how it feels

• Good for individuals who can write and use a computer: other possibilities such as gabcast
Photography

• My research
• Features of digital cameras
• Providing new insights into who people are
• Offering a voice/an alternative way of communicating
We turn to the next picture, which is of her bed bay. She pauses for a moment, thinking and then pointing to the blue lino she simply states, 'that is the moat with the house where I live'. I am suddenly reminded of her reluctance to move from her room and ask whether she likes it there. 'Oh no' she says. 'I never learned how to swim.'
Shared experience: Building relationships
Self-esteem

I strongly recommend early onset dementia people to get out and take pictures and put them onto some type of digital scrapbook. Your mind will used through making endless choices and critiquing your work as you go. And, in the end, you will have something to show others and to be proud of.
Technological advances

Mindbook: digital scrapbook – a multimedia package that enables people to create an online repository of memories including photos, letters, cake recipes, and even musical clips.
Telling a story

• Digital storytelling/video portraits
• Empowering experience
• Equal relationship
As a stimulus for creativity

- Dementiapositive
- Meet me at MoMA
- Time-slips
He is beautiful. I think his name is Edward after his father. Just look at his face. Like my son when he was small. They don’t stay like that though. Oh no, it won’t be long until he breaks someone’s heart.

Edith
Sharing: public spaces

- You tube
- Social networking
- Breaking down stigma, finding like minded others
Finally…

- Everyday digital technology offers many opportunities to hear the voice of people with dementia

- Challenge is to share the range of possibilities available and support individuals to access and use the medium that works for them
For more information

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