Putting knowledge gained to good use

IT students construct keyboard for visually challenged

K. Manikandan

Two final year information technology students from a private engineering college in Tambaram have constructed a keyboard which, they say, could help visually challenged persons operate computers with ease.

The project titled 'hardware keyboard for visually impaired' won the first place at a national-level technology meet at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and was also presented at Worldcomp 2007, a global conference on embedded systems and their applications in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, last month.

S. Sivaraman and R. Srikanth, students of Sri Sai Ram Engineering College, said they had been doing projects in different areas since their first year but wanted to do something that would benefit a disadvantaged section of the society. They wanted to make life easier for the visually challenged.

Their keyboard features 17 logical switches equipped with soft 'touch sensors'. Using them, 62 characters can be typed.

Twelve of the switches were in the 'hash' pattern and the rest in the 'cross' pattern on the keyboard. There was also an integrated text-to-speech conversion system to minimise the probability of errors.

According to the students, visually challenged people would need just a week to get used to the keyboard and type about 40 characters a minute.
Our Alumni – Mr. G. Vinod at Infosys

A mindgame for all
Lateral thinking, logical skills, entertainment, fame. Quizting gives you all this and much more.

Gone are the days when quizting was synonymous with the class room. Straightforward questions such as "Which is India's talent hunting ground?" were thrown open to quizmasters to weave their magic. Now, the quiz is the game, not just for gathering fame, but also for sharpening their grey cells as well.

"Quiztacular!" is a healthy and interesting mindgame where your analytical and logical skills are tested, says quizmaster Suresh Kumari.

"Participants are not just interior designers. They prepare round the year. And quizmasters have to chalk up more questions that will test the sharpness of their 'tongue'," she says.

The influence of media and the ideas of American game shows have made quizmasters in India give their spectators the thrill of guessing. "All these elements help improve lateral thinking," says Suresh. Especially, if you have to find the connection between a video clip and the clue given by the quizmaster.

Suresh has been involved in various quiz games, from inter-institutional to media programmes. More recently, he has been involved in quiz games related to culture and music.

"It's not like examinations where you must strike up the right question. I like quizzes where you have to think on your feet and come up with solutions on different subjects. For that, you have to keep your wits and ears open.

"What helps is the thinking that goes after marriage. I was always interested in quizting because you tend to read up on a lot of subjects. After marriage, I just became more interested."

And how did it all begin? Vinod says long term quizting helped him acquire problem-solving skills in college. "I enjoyed it so much that I decided to do a little bit of quizting in college."

"And when I got a job, I continued to quiz. It helps me to keep my mind sharp. Quizting widens your sphere of interest. I do quizzes to help keep my interest alive."

"I like quizzes that provide a fine balance between entertainment and information. It's a mental pastime which allows you to improve your knowledge. And all knowledge is good."

Suresh Kumari.