

The Photostroller

The Photostroller, an interactive device developed by the Interaction Research Studio (Department of Design at Goldsmiths, University of London) has recently been introduced into a care home in York to enhance the daily lives of its residents.

The Photostroller shows a never-ending sequence of images drawn from the Internet, some related, others more random, like an electronic daydream. The flow can be influenced to stay close to a selected category of images, or allowed to drift away to more tenuously related subjects.

Prior its introduction, the research studio carefully studied the appropriate level of interaction for the elderly residents before designing the Photostroller to complement and enhance their daily lives. This informed the design of a wireless controller to enable the residents to tune the type of photographs displayed in the slideshow. The tuner includes a large dial and sliding input mechanism specifically designed for people with limited hand mobility. A moment of wonder for the team, during the deployment, was witnessing a 99 year old arthritic resident handling the controller with relative ease.

Members of the research studio, along with their collaborators from the University of Northumbria and Newcastle University, have visited the care home regularly during the Photostroller's deployment. Both the residents and the carers seem to have been very happy with it. For instance, some residents have taken responsibility for turning it on and explaining it to others, and its mobility has made it possible to use flexibly within the care home environment. It has been particularly interesting to see how the residents' engagement with the Photostroller has grown and changed over the months they have had it.



The wireless controller tunes into different categories of photographs and controls how far the topic may drift.



The wide variety of images encourage story-telling amongst the residents.

The Photostroller was developed in collaboration with researchers at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities as part of the New Dynamics of Ageing (NDA) programme, a seven-year multidisciplinary UK research initiative with the ultimate aim of improving quality of life of older people. The programme is a unique collaboration between five UK Research Councils - ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC - and is the largest and most ambitious research programme on ageing ever mounted in the UK.

