



February 17, 2007

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Program Assists the Fashion-Challenged

Tracy Staedter, Discovery News

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Feb. 15, 2007 — We can't all be fashionistas. Most of us look in the closet everyday with the same question hanging over our heads: "What am I gonna wear?"

The answer could soon get easier.

Researchers have developed a computer program that applies artificial intelligence techniques (since real intelligence in these matters is sometimes useless) to help the fashion-baffled.

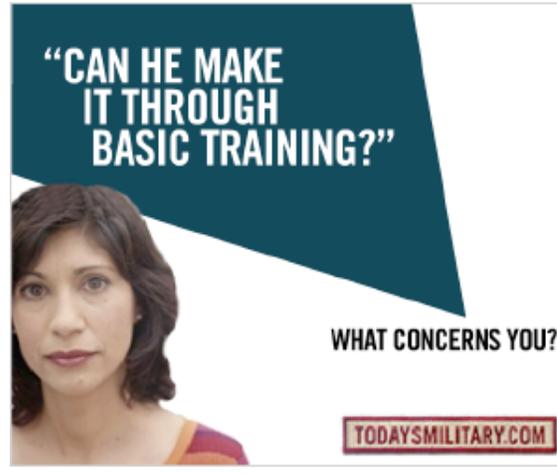
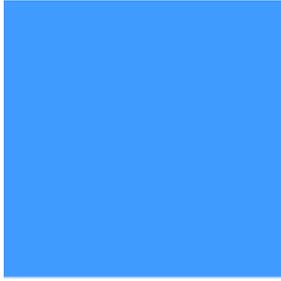
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Laying Out the Options





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The program could work for getting dressed, as well as to assist online shoppers in search of a range of products, including shoes or sporting equipment.

"Our recommender is based on the user telling us a scenario of how he or she would like to use the product. For example, 'I want to buy a dress to go to my boss's birthday party,'" said Henry Lieberman, a research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA.

Lieberman leads the project with graduate students Edward Yu-Te Shen and Francis Lam.

According to Lieberman, his team's scenario-based recommender is different from conventional programs already in use by online stores, such as Amazon.com. These programs suggest additional purchases based on the buyer's previous purchases or on items bought by other customers who have similar taste.

But these programs work best for customers with a substantial buying history and don't work at all if the customer doesn't know exactly what he wants.

Lieberman's program, on the other hand, lets a person pose a scenario, and then spits out a recommendation.

The style-confused person uses a website database application to enter the scenario immediately or he can supply descriptions and photos about himself and the clothes he already owns. He can use brand names labels (Nike, Armani, Calvin Klein, etc.) and annotate any piece with comments ("These jeans make me look sexy").

And because it's a website application, he can give friends in his social network permission to view the clothes and provide commentary.

The application uses an artificial intelligence program based on 800,000 common sense sentences (contributed by a network of

★ Edward
 ★ USA
 ★ Male (26)
 ★ 140 Votes
 More Info

★ Now Wearing
 giordano levi's calvin_kl

★ Favorite Items
 nike dior tommy_hi
 dior calvin_kl calvin_kl

★ About Edward
 I am a music lover. I like to swim very much. I love my clothes!!

★ Friends

★ Sort by: Date Brand Type Freq.

american_ american_ american_
 american_ american_ calvin_kl
 calvin_kl calvin_kl calvin_kl
 calvin_kl dior dior
 dior gap gap
 gap giordano h&m
 levi's levi's levi's



MIT

Laying Out the Options

A computer program designed by a Massachusetts Institute of Technology researcher stores records of a person's wardrobe and then offers outfit possibilities for any occasion.

Pictures: MIT

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volunteers) that describe a broad range of subjects concerning people and everyday life. The so-called knowledge database contains information that, for example, a wedding may take place in a church or that a boss may be an important figure.

The program uses the knowledge to categorize clothing and situations. For example, a silk T-shirt might be "luxurious," a suit "formal," a jacket "funky," a watch "elegant," a pair of sunglasses "trendy," and a sweater "sporty."

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