

Reading your daily newspaper without a PC!

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Abstract

For many it is a problem not to be able to read the daily newspaper. Compilations of a week's newspaper articles are a compromise. Computer owners do not need to compromise as they can read their daily on their pc. But what if you don't have a pc? For non- pc-owners the ORIONWebbox can be a godsend.

The ORIONWebbox is a simple device that can easily navigate through a daily newspaper supporting the DAISY protocol and making use of TTS.

In Finland and Belgium we have access to daily newspapers.

Explanation of management of content per user follows.

1 Introduction

For many with a visual impairment it is a problem not to be able to read the daily newspaper. Compilations of a week's newspaper articles offered on a tape cassette or CD ROM by a library for the blind are a compromise. Computer owners, however, do not need to compromise as they can read their daily on their pc. But what if you don't have a pc? For non-pc-owners the on-line ORIONWebbox can be a godsend.

That is the theme of my presentation in the following minutes.

After a short introduction I will give you a description of the hardware namely the ORIONWebbox, explain how it works and how easy it is to navigate using the few buttons at your disposal, explain the structure of the newspaper and then give you a live demonstration. And lastly talk about content management

Whether you are sighted or partially sighted, all of us have an equal desire to be informed about the goings on of the world around us whether near or far. News and current information from very far away or on a national level reaches us through TV and radio stations and daily newspapers. If you have a computer and are a subscriber you can use a screen reader or TTS engine to read the daily paper. But what if you don't have a computer?

What if you are a senior citizen and you don't want to learn about computers anymore?

Then either someone has to read it to you, or you can simply wait for the week's compilation of interesting articles to arrive by post on a CD-Rom, USB stick, SD card or tape cassette.

With the state of today's technology it is no longer necessary to wait **even if you don't have a computer.**

If you have an ORIONWebbox you can listen to your daily newspaper, your local newspaper and any other local news that interests you provided it is accessible as audio over the Internet. That is the least of our problems, because that has to be done anyway for the PC owners.

The fact that we live in a digital age means that information is recorded in such a way that it can be easily stored and easily transported over the Internet. The ORIONWebbox is a device that can access this information stored on a server connected to the Internet.

2 What is the ORIONWebbox?

The ORIONWebbox is an acronym for On-line reading and information on demand. The ORIONWebbox is a very simple to use device, that must be connected to the Internet – so yes, you need a broadband connection, but you do not need a PC. I repeat: you do not need a computer.

The ORIONWebbox has only 5 push buttons and one dial. The push buttons have only ONE function, which makes it easy to use. It has a display, which has its uses, such as fault recognition if the device is in trouble. (there is often a family member or someone who can read the message if necessary...)

On the back of the unit are a number of connectors.

From left to right: a connection for the telephone (optional), then one for headphones, next to that Cinch connectors for the hifi system, then one broadband input (the optional WiFi antenna is built in the unit) and lastly a power connection. There is also a slot for an SD card.

On top of the unit is a very good loudspeaker. There is also a remote control, which duplicates all the functions of the buttons on the webbox itself.

3 Accessing a newspaper

Connect the ORIONWebbox to the Internet with the Ethernet cable and connect to power. Switch on the unit and within seconds a menu will be spoken out. The ORIONWebbox works on the hierarchy principle. It has a main menu and sub-menus. It is like a tree with branches.

Now you are here because of the daily newspaper. So let me explain this with an example.

When the unit is switched on it speaks out the following menus: X, Y, Z.

In the menu of this specific ORIONWebbox you would first go to **Publications**, which contains talking books, magazines and newspapers.

Then you would select **talking newspapers**. You would hear a choice of newspapers (if you are subscribed to more than one). Press OK for your daily.

Having selected e.g. **The Daily Mail** you will hear the main sections: home affairs, foreign news, sports, finances, entertainment.

Say you are a sports fanatic and want to hear that first, press OK for Sports and it will tell you that there are 50 items on sports. You can then scan all the headlines and stop at the one you would like to listen to. Press OK and you will hear the article being read out. And if you don't like it you skip to the next item. Or by pressing the BACK button go back to the SPORTS headings and choose another

sports article or press BACK again and change to FOREIGN AFFAIRS. In DAISY language this is called levels.

With a tape cassette you need to listen to it all or you can fast forward, but then have to search for the beginning of an article. You cannot scan the items and then decide what you want to listen to. If you have a DAISY player then you can do this with a DAISY CD, but in the case of a daily newspaper that is always a day late! It would be very costly if a human voice had to transcribe every daily newspaper, then make a CD and post it. And if you are environmentally aware you know that this is not an ideal solution! If that very same newspaper were accessible in DAISY structure on a server then you could read it just as easily as on a DAISY player. Probably even easier.

4 DAISY Content

The ORIONWebbox recognizes the structure of DAISY content and reacts in such a way that operating the device is completely logical for everybody – even a 97 year old lady.

If you are used to a DAISY player then you know that you have to switch consciously to a different level. In the case of the ORIONWebbox this is done completely automatically and at your own instigation. Whenever you confirm your choice by pressing the OK button, you move to a different level. And if you want to go back a level, then all you do is press the **BACK** button.

How is this possible? Well, before starting to stream the DAISY content the webbox loads the NCC files and recognises the structure of the document and arranges it in such a way that they can be navigated with just a few buttons. OK, BACK and UP and DOWN. So now you have already heard of all the 5 buttons. ON, OK and BACK and UP and DOWN like on your TV remote control. In fact we adopted the way the controls of a NOKIA mobile phone and BlackBerry work. We have found, and this has been confirmed by libraries and users, that this is what is needed for leisure reading for all kinds of talking books, magazines and newspapers. What is also important for the user is that the keys react in a consistent way, whether choosing between radio station or talking book, or choosing from one of the podcasts or navigating in a daily paper.

I will now give you a LIVE demo of playlist with a newspaper. Note that all I will be doing is pressing the OK button to confirm what I wish to listen to.

5 DEMO

6 Content management

Now something about content management: The ORIONWebbox is not a stand-alone device. It is part of a system and as is to be expected it then requires some management. Our management tool is powerful and offers different levels of management.

We are able to manage the **player** itself. We can manage its settings remotely. Think for instance of switching the built-in loudspeaker on or off. Or switching the unit off after a number of hours. We can do remote firmware upgrades, bug fixing and implement new features.

The new or different firmware determines the kind of playlist. Each playlist gives access to different content. The content for someone in the UK is entirely different to the one for a partially sighted person in the US.

The **playlist** also determines the structure or layout of content. This too can be changed around in the order you wish.

Then the **content** itself needs to be managed. It has never been Solutions Radio intention to become a content provider. We see our device and the system behind it as a facilitator to access audio content on the Internet. Our Webbox is merely a playout device. We know that content providers have acquired their content at a cost and they wish to protect this investment. So libraries, on-line book store, publishers or any other suppliers of content need not fear us. Our management tool even goes so far that a content provider can give access to or deny access to his content. In our business strategy the content provider remains in charge and remains owner of the content. Let me give you examples of possible content. There is general content (available to all!) such as radio stations, podcasts, subtitling of TV programs. Whereas content from libraries such as talking books, magazines, newspapers are controlled by membership or subscription. The management goes so far that each individual unit can receive individual content.

The **user** too can manage his own content by bookmarking his **preferred audio content** (pre-select radio stations, podcasts etc) and also bookmarking his own talking books etc.

For those who wish this we are able to give you **logging** information- such as how many people listened to what in a certain period.

So in closing what are the advantages of the ORIONWebbox for streaming your **daily newspaper**

- You have **immediate** access to your paper
- You can **choose** what to listen to and skip what you don't
- You can make **your own** choice what you want to listen to, the choice is not made for you.
- And you can do so sitting at the breakfast table **like everybody else**, and not from behind your computer in your study.
- As we make use of streaming technology, we save on storage devices itself and also the charge on postal services. It cannot be more **environmentally friendly** than that.

- And as soon as the protocol for access has been defined we too will follow it. Solutions Radio is friend of the DAISY consortium and part of the technical work group defining the on-line access to libraries.