

## A Novel Text Free Interface for a Deeper Web

### Summary

We seek to develop a new intuitive user interface that allows people with low literacy to access non-textual content on the World Wide Web without special training..

### Description

Although the World Wide Web has global reach, it is still a somewhat “shallow” technology, having a current user base that is only about 25% of the world’s population<sup>1</sup>. Over the next few years, this user population may double as mobile and broadband technology penetrates into developing country markets. However, most of these new users will have low or zero literacy levels, especially so in English. For these users, the prevailing browser-based interfaces to the Web (webpages with hyperlinks, menus etc.) will prove unusable.

We seek to explore new ways of interfacing with the Web that are both culture and language agnostic and rely as little as possible on the ability to read text. This involves both the input interface, which must allow a user to usefully communicate his intent without using text; and the output returned to the user, which must concentrate on audio and visual elements such as videos, images, audio files, animations and other non-textual content.

Ultimately, we hope to create a set of user interfaces and associated software for general use that allows users with low literacy to find useful information on the Web without special training.

### Current Work



At this time we have created a small prototype application called Symbolyze: Text Free Web which is available online for public access at <http://www.symmetri.com/symbolyze>

This prototype allows a user to manipulate a set of universal symbols to compose a search string; search results are then returned and displayed in video and image format. This application is not intended for general use but as a proof-of-concept.

### Future Work

We want to design further iterations of the text-free interface and conduct testing in the field to identify a universal and simple common interface that is usable by low literacy users in different contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>