How Do Blind People Surf The Net?

Internet has become an essential need these days. We heavily rely on the internet for various reasons. Whenever we get stuck with some problems, the first thing we do is turn towards the internet for rescue. While surfing the internet, the texts presented on the screen of the computer convey a lot useful information. In a way, our ability to see, read and derive meaning out of those information makes life easier for us. But what about the vision impaired? Can they even make use of the internet? Afterall, they cannot even see or read the information on the screen.

Previous attempts have been made by web designers to make some kind of web browsers that would read the entire page to facilitate the blind users. Their whole objective was to convert every texts on the computer screen to audible sound so that the users could listen to the information and relate to them. Although, such efforts have not been great successes. The browsers would read the entire page which not only consumed a lot of time but also overloaded the users with unwanted information. In addition to that, it would be very difficult to deal with web page features like tables and images. So, considering all these, a variety of applications like WebbIE, Franck Audio Data’s WebFormator, etc have been made recently to allow the blind users to surf internet based on their personal requirements and self-command. (webbie)

The way these applications work is based on the theory of self-screen reading. A blind person when trying to do anything on the computer would be directed on every steps by a voice command from the application. The voice command will inform the users when the web browser opens up, when the required websites appear on screen, when the browser is directed to a new link and so on. Besides, whenever the users are hovering around the page, they will hear voices about the contents they are hovering over. This function of the application lets the users to go through certain sections of their choices rather than listening to the entire page at once. The best thing about these improved applications is that different sections on the web pages are distinctly located. For an instance, navigation bar appears in one particular corner of the web page while main contents and other features are put in some other locations. This enables blind users to know where exactly to hover to achieve what they want. (everground)

*References:*

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