NHK Learning Fair 2002

STRL's Technologies Exhibited at NHK's Autumn Fair

The Japan Prize Awards ceremony and the NHK Learning Fair 2002 were held in November at the NHK Broadcasting Center in Shibuya,Tokyo. Coincident with these events was the "ABU Asia-Pacific General Assembly 2002". The fair's themes were children's education and the role that the public broadcaster plays in education. Various events related to education were held, including exhibitions, demonstrations, and live performances by the hosts of various NHK educational programs.

The fair showed how NHK makes educational programs fun and informative. These exhibits included a demonstration of the robots that participated in the "ABU Robot Contest", and a live show featuring a CG of the principal character of the children's program "Ojarumaru". At the exhibit called "Forest of Wonders", visitors could view the nature of a forest by looking through a special camera. Also exhibited were the latest digital technology for producing educational contents and assisting the handicapped. By providing a learning experience that incorporated play, these events demonstrated to the visiting children that learning can be fun.

Play with CG Characters!

By interacting with moving images projected on the floor of the exhibit, children could enter the world of one of their favorite animation characters, "Ojarumaru". The images were projected with "Invisible Light", which was visible to the children, but invisible to the camera.

Catching Colors Invisible to the Eye

Butterflies and flowers were displayed through an ultraviolet-sensitive camera, BeeCAM (with a mechanism like the eyes of a honey bee), which captures ultraviolet rays invisible to the human eye. The children easily understood how insects distinguish between male and female, and how they find the nectar in flowers.

Investigate the "?" in the Dark

Figures moving in the darkness of the "Forest of Wonders" were revealed with the ultrahigh-sensitivity New-Super-HARP camera, which can capture images too dim for the human eye to see.

Let's Take a Look at the Little Guys

What do insects' faces look like up close? What do their footsteps sound like? The visitors to this exhibit became familiar with Crickets' faces, viewed with a small camera called the "endoscope camera," and with their footsteps, heard with an "Insect Microphone" that can pick up sound transmitted through solids.

Seeing with Your Fingertips!

On display were reception terminals that convert data broadcasting information into Braille to assist people with visual impairments. This technology allows for the visually impaired to "see" the screen with their fingertips. Users could access by touch data broadcasting menus and feel graphs and maps with their hands.

Ear-friendly Slow Audio

Application of a speech rate conversion technology makes it possible for a user to listen to a program at a slower or faster than natural rate, while maintaining the quality of sound.

In the exhibit, a "slowed-audio" radio* offered ear-friendly audio, and the variable-rate audio-visual player allowed users to choose the speed of speech they were most comfortable with in listening. *see page 23 in this issue

Check your Japanese -See How You Speak!

This exhibition featured a pronunciation lesson in which the student could compare his or her own Japanese pronunciation against a model in the form of a graph by using the language training tool "Pronunciation Training System."

Professor Rice & the Virtual Classroom

Students attending this virtual classroom learned together about rice, with the help of a computer network. CG characters representing a teacher and his students could talk to each other to answer questions based on messages typed by participants.