

This *Ph.D. thesis* by *Craig Wootton* entitled, *VoiceBrowse: The dynamic generation of spoken dialogue from online content*, and supervised by Prof. Mike McTear and Prof. Terry Anderson focusses on a dynamically evolving dialogue system that enables users to access online content. VoiceBrowse is capable of interacting with various items of unstructured online content, irrespective of content source or type. This is enabled by inclusion of a novel component known as the *Content Manager* that provides access to a wide range of online materials using live RSS feeds and real-time API-based techniques.

The thesis forms a reasonable original and independent contribution to the knowledge of Computer Science in that it develops our knowledge of algorithms and architectures for how a Content Manager facilitates a dynamically evolving dialogue system for access to online content.

The thesis demonstrates the candidate's ability to undertake successfully an investigation and evaluation of how a *Content Manager* facilitates a dynamically evolving dialogue system for access to online content.

Background discussion includes critical reference to the most relevant literature. Spoken dialogue systems are characterised with reference to a typical architecture and its components before investigating the dialogue manager in particular. Enabling technologies such as XML and voice technologies, advanced architectures and advanced dialogue research in terms of dynamic dialogue and adaptive spoken dialogue systems are also reviewed.

An evaluation study tests the performance of VoiceBrowse with respect to different user groups interacting with two different versions of the system. Data analysis highlights significant differences between the groups and systems contributing to dialogue usability research that has generally been restricted to task-based dialogues.

The thesis is satisfactory as regards literary presentation and succinctness with clear writing in all chapters including background and literature review in spoken dialogue systems and advanced dialogue research, VoiceBrowse architecture, Content Manager and Dialogue Manager, VoiceBrowse implementation, evaluation, conclusion and future work.

The abstract (summary) of the thesis is acceptable and introduces the context of the work, background, thesis focus on how a Content Manager facilitates a dynamically evolving dialogue system for access to online content, evaluation and conclusion.

My provisional recommendation is that the candidate is awarded the degree of Ph.D. with minor corrections subject to satisfactory performance in the viva voce.

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