



As humans, we see, hear, feel and smell. Human interaction is enriched by the concomitant redundancy introduced by multimodal communication. In contrast, computer interfaces have relied primarily on visual interaction—today’s interfaces are like the *silent* movies of the past! As we approach the turn of the millennium, computers now have the ability to talk, listen and perhaps, even *understand*. Integrating new modalities like speech into human-computer interaction requires rethinking how applications are designed in today’s world of visual computing.

Auditory User Interfaces (AUI) form an important class of user interfaces. The speech-enabling approach first implemented by Emacspeak leads naturally to the design of high-quality AUIs that treat speech as a primary means of communication. This powerful audio desktop is distributed free of cost on the Internet and has helped hundreds of visually impaired users gain complete independent access at work and home.

Emacspeak uses audio formatted speech and auditory icons to convey information succinctly. The user interface innovations introduced by Emacspeak are relevant to the larger area of information appliance design.

## Announcing Emacspeak-8.0

For Immediate Release:  
San Jose, Calif., (May 1, 1998)  
Emacspeak Re-Establishes User-Centric Computing  
Interactive Accessibility enhances audio Desktop.

### Emacspeak, The Complete Audio Desktop

Emacspeak is an audio desktop that provides *eyes-free* access to computing. Audio formatting—a technique pioneered by AS<sub>T</sub>ER—and full support for W3C’s Aural CSS (ACSS) allows Emacspeak to produce rich aural presentations of electronic information. By seamlessly blending all aspects of the Internet such as Web-surfing and messaging, Emacspeak speech-enables local and remote information via a consistent and well-integrated user interface.

### Independent Test Results

Independent test results have proven that unlike some modern software, Emacspeak-8.0 can be easily uninstalled without adversely affecting the continued performance of the computer. These same tests also revealed that once uninstalled, the user *stopped* functioning altogether.

Industry experts welcome this refreshing breath of Courage Certainty and Clarity (CCC) at a time when users reel from the Fear Uncertainty and Doubt (FUD) unleashed by complex software and even more convoluted press releases.

Speaking with Aster Labrador this morning, the creator of Emacspeak pointed out that this emphasized the user-centric design of Emacspeak; “It is the *user*—and *not* the computer—that stops functioning when Emacspeak is uninstalled!”.

## History

Emacspeak-8.0 (code named *BlackDog*) is a major upgrade of the Emacspeak audio desktop. Emacspeak-95 (code named *Illinois*) was released on the Internet in May 1995 as the first complete speech interface to UNIX workstations. The subsequent release, Emacspeak-96 (code named *Egypt*) made available in May 1996 provided significant enhancements to the interface. Emacspeak-97 (*Tennessee*) went further in providing a true audio desktop.

Emacspeak-98 integrated Internetworking into all aspects of the audio desktop to provide the first fully interactive speech-enabled *WebTop*. This release re-establishes user-centric computing as demonstrated in the test results described earlier in this announcement.

## About Emacspeak

Based at <http://cs.cornell.edu/home/raman>—home to AUI on the WWW— Emacspeak is mirrored worldwide by an international network of software archives and bundled with all major Linux distributions.

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