VISIBILITY IN THE STAR USER INTERFACE

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ABSTRACT

The Xerox 8010 "Star" Information System is a personal computer designed for office professionals. It incorporates many innovations in human-computer interface design. In 1982 it was chosen by Computing magazine as the most "user friendly" system in the world. This talk will focus on one aspect of Star's user interface: its large bit-mapped graphical display. Star's display contains 800,000 dots, each of which can be individually turned on or off, at a 72 dot-per-inch resolution. Obviously this has considerable graphic potential. I will discuss how we have exploited this potential in Star and the methodology by which we did the design. In the process, we made a surprising discovery concerning the way human beings perceive visual user interfaces: if everything in a computer system is visible on a display screen, the display becomes reality.

KEYWORDS: user interface, bit-mapped display, office system.