

A social network for talkers

By David Gelernter, Wall Street Journal

No group needs social network software more than the elderly. We have built a frenzied society full of shriek TV, shriek music, shriek movies, shriek ads. Texting and phone-fondling go on ceaselessly. None of this welcomes the elderly, who were often lonely even before we turned up the volume on American society.

So it's too bad that today's social networks are virtually useless to them. The elderly don't want to type; they want to talk. And if they can't make sense of new software in 10 seconds, they move on.

Audio is our first requirement. Losing dexterity is part of aging, and arthritis is not exactly rare. Your speed doesn't matter when you type alone, but slow "conversational typing" hurts the flow. Anyway, unless you do it for a living, writing is an impoverished version of speaking.

Human contact is what too many older people lack. Why deprive them of voice? And why not let them take part in networked conversations while lying on a lounge chair or flat in bed?

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