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This bed, invented by an MIT scientist, has many high-tech features. (ABCNEWS.com)

Sleep With Your Computer?

MIT Researcher Computerizes Life



April 10 Ñ Imagine a bed that gently wakes you up at the crack of dawn and reminds you of your upcoming appointments.

This multimedia bed is a reality Ñ and it's only one of myriad high-tech, computerized inventions Ted Selker's recently dreamed up in his media laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Previously the head of user systems research at IBM, Selker, co-inventor of the TrackPoint cursor control button, accepted a professorship at MIT last fall. Since his hiring, the inventions are pouring forth Ñ and some might make life just a tad easier for us in years to come.

Sleeper's Paradise

The multimedia bed is a sleeper's paradise. While lying down, you look up at a ceiling that is actually a large computer screen. Using a wireless mouse Ñ or someday, eye-tracking technology Ñ you run sunset screen savers, check e-mail, surf the Web, or fall asleep listening to music. The bed even senses when you've fallen asleep and turns itself off. It can even detect if you've stopped breathing, setting off a series of alarms.

But Selker's inventions don't stop there. Consider his "Office Doorway." The system senses through a sensor-filled mat when a co-worker approaches an office door. The door asks: "Hello, I am the assistant for [Ted Selker]. What is your name?" When you say your name, the computer checks with Ted's schedule in Microsoft Outlook to see if you have an appointment. If you don't, you may be turned away. But the computer will attempt to schedule you an appointment.

The Talking Couch

Selker's "Talking Couch" Ñ with sensors under its cushions Ñ greets new arrivals and may encourage you to relax if you sit forward for too long. If you are carrying a Net-connected personal digital assistant like a Palm VII, the couch might check your schedule and verbally remind you of upcoming meetings or when it is time to leave.

Critics of these devices say we will inevitably become lazy creatures thanks to such convenience. But Selker just keeps on dreaming.