TOPICS INCLUDE:

- How to build intelligent assistants
- How far-field microphones enable users to speak with gadgets at a distance
- How to detect emotions such as happiness and sadness
- How to identify personal traits
- How to improve dialogues using this contextual information
- How to extend traditional telephones to behave more like smartphones
- How to make voice-only dialogues more powerful by including information mode
- How to determine which design methodologies and tools are best
- How to determine if your speech application needs improvement
- How to reach a wider IVR user population
Speech technologies have invaded our homes, our cars, and our businesses. We speak and listen with mobile devices, watches, laptops, desktops, cars, and electronic appliances. Speech and dialogue technologies are enhancing how we interact with nearly everything.

Track A is devoted to conversational dialogs and personal assistants, how to design, build, and test them and avoid the pitfalls and roadblocks of this new technology. This track will explain what you need to know to make informed decisions about building conversational agents.

Track B contains customer case studies illustrating new and innovative applications using speech technologies, including speech in the home and in the car. Learn new insights for using speech technologies and how they could be used in your enterprise. Track B also contains discussions about the latest best practices and techniques for voice user experience design.

Track C contains several panel discussions offering many alternative viewpoints for critical issues plus several sessions dealing with the difficult issues of ethics and speech technologies.
SpeechTEK UNIVERSITY

1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Meeting Room 4

STKU-1  ■ Natural Language Understanding
Deborah Dahl, Principal, Conversational Technologies
Natural language understanding (along with speech recognition) is one of the foundational technologies underlying the Voice-First revolution. When it works well, the user experience is natural, frictionless, and efficient. When it doesn’t work well, the results can be frustrating and irritating. This session brings attendees up-to-date on current natural language understanding technology, explaining how it works and what’s going wrong when it doesn’t. We cover current technologies, including both traditional rule-based approaches, as well as machine learning technologies such as Deep Learning. We also review current proprietary natural language application tools such as the Amazon Alexa Skills Kit, Google Dialogflow, and Microsoft LUIS and discuss open source alternatives. Attendees come away from the session with an understanding of current natural language technology, its capabilities and future directions.

Meeting Room 2

STKU-2  ■ Principles of Conversational Design
David Attwater, Senior Scientist, Enterprise Integration Group
This interactive session is suitable for anyone seeking deeper experience and understanding of conversational design, including anyone working with home automation devices (e.g., Alexa), chat-bots, or conversational IVR. The session takes an in-depth look at the principles underlying conversational design with particular emphasis on human-computer conversation. It is suitable for designers or decision makers who would appreciate a deeper understanding of the different aspects of conversational design. Topics include the following: principle of speech recognition, including semantics, slots, and parsing; human psychology, including memory and learning; dialogue acts, grounding, discourse markers, and confirmation; language continuity, including anaphora, and narrative voice, persona, and social identity.

STKU-3  ■ Learn How to Build Engaging Voice Experiences for Amazon Alexa
Robert McCasley, Solutions Architect, Amazon
Alexa is Amazon’s cloud-based voice service and the brain behind tens of millions of devices, including the Echo family of devices, FireTV, Fire Tablet, and third-party devices with Alexa built-in. You can build capabilities, or skills, that make Alexa smarter and make everyday tasks faster, easier, and more delightful for customers. Tens of thousands of developers have built skills using the Alexa Skills Kit (ASK), a collection of self-service APIs, tools, documentation, and code samples. This is a hands-on workshop where attendees learn how to create voice experiences for Amazon Alexa. We discuss voice design best practices, show how to leverage cloud services and APIs, discuss the latest Alexa features, and share code samples to get your project started. The final hour of the session is set aside for open hacking time, where you can get one-on-one support from an Amazon Alexa solutions architect. Developers who wish to follow along should create accounts on the following sites before attending: aws.amazon.com and developer.amazon.com.

MONDAY, APRIL 29

Welcome & Opening Keynotes

9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.  ■ Grand South/Central

Algorithms In, Humans Out?
Jarno Duursma, Speaker, trendwatcher; author
Duursma discusses the most important technological development of the coming years: artificial intelligence. What can companies expect? What should we do as more and more human skills are being taken over by these kind of systems? And what will the future of AI look like? What is definitely possible, and what isn’t? How does this change your relationship with your customer? The future is also brightened by the autonomous “digital butler,” who gives you answers and answers before you know you need them. But does this trend have unintended, unforeseen disadvantages? Just as we should have done with the introduction of social media and the smartphone, shouldn’t we be asking ourselves that one important question: What do we want the era of AI to look like?

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.  ■ Grand South/Central

How Companies Are Partnering With Conversational Machines
Anthony Scodary, Co-Founder, Gridspace
Many machine-human partnerships are starting to take shape in modern contact centers. Today, machines make it possible to query and classify vast numbers of conversational interactions. Soon, machines will become increasingly proactive, conversational, and helpful. In this session we explore what real contact center tasks are best suited for machines today and how agents and machines can work together most effectively.

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
COFFEE BREAK

10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
Building Conversational Assistants

A101  ■ A Comprehensive Guide to Technologies for Conversational Systems
Yves Normandi, CEO, Nu Echo
Deborah Dahl, Principal, Conversational Technologies
Choosing the right platform for a particular application is critical. We focus on the capabilities of current natural language understanding and dialogue management technologies. We present evaluation criteria and compare and contrast a number of popular platforms. We consider technical and non-technical features such as cost, vendor commitment, support, and cloud vs. on-premise operation. We review the state of the art for these technologies and conclude with comments on advanced dialog features that are currently being researched.

Intriguing Case Studies

B101  ■ Challenges of Implementing Voice Control for Space Applications
George Salazar, Human-Computer Technical Discipline Lead, NASA/Johnson Space Center
This presentation provides the audience with an overview of the challenges for implementa- tion of voice control in space applications that include the hardware, software, environment, and, more importantly, the astronaut. Past voice control applications in space are given. Learn how to apply key learnings from these applications to applications here on Earth.

A1 in Call Centers
C101  ■ PANEL: How AI Improves the Call Center
MODERATOR: Vijay Mehrotra, Department of Business Analytics & Information Systems, School of Management, University of San Francisco
PANELISTS:
Debra Cancro, Founder & CEO, VoiceVibes, Inc.
Dan Coyer, Senior Analyst, West Corporation
Priyanka Faykus, Do-Founder & CEO, RankMiner
Ali Azerbayejanian, CTO & Co-Founder, Gogo
Learn how AI is used in a call center environment to train, assist, monitor, and advise human agents as they interact with customers as well as how to predict employee departures and prescribe targeted interventions. How a graphical representation of the client interaction assists the human agent is discussed, along with how a combination of words and non-verbal analysis can detect the emotional state of customers and agents and guide agents in-the-moment to adjust their behavior for improved outcomes.

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Building Conversational Assistants

A102  ■ Building Customer Service Digital Assistants
William Meisel, President, TMA Associates
An automated digital assistant—whether a text chatbot or a voice-interactive part of your telephone customer service—can help customers receive quick results and help agents focus on more complex tasks. Today’s natural language technology can make the experience fast and pleasant—when done properly. Like any evolving technology, it can also be done poorly. This talk discusses how to achieve effective solutions using automated natural language interaction.

Intriguing Case Studies

B102  ■ Augmenting United Way’s Help Center
David Holland, 2-1-1 Manager, United Way
Come hear how United Way implemented a visual IVR with Amazon Connect to augment its existing call center. The goal is to help those in need 24/7, so that more people quickly find assistance. The visual IVR provides smartphone callers with emergency shelter loca-
tions in an easy-to-understand visual format. The visual IVR shortens calls, improves call containment through visual self-service, decreases switching to live staff, and reduces follow-up calls.
Future of Voice Technology
C102 ■ The Distorted Crystal Ball and the Future of Ambient Assistance
Will Hall, Chief Creative Officer, RAIN
AI. Voice. Big Data. We are standing at one of the most profound inflection points in the history of technology. More than just buzzwords, each of these topics contains the very real seeds of transformation and disruption. But where to begin? This talk explores the impact of China’s 2030 AI initiatives. The staggering adoption of these emerging technologies at scale in China has uncovered key principles that the rest of the world can learn from today. Exploring these topics will provide both cautionary tales and a reliable road map for both short and long-term applications.

12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m. ■ Grand South/Central
KEYNOTE LUNCH
The Future Is Conversational, Omnichannel, and in the Cloud
Nico Acosta, Director, Product & Engineering, Autopilot, Twilio’s Conversational AI Platform
Most companies today think of IVRs as a way to shield contact center agents from customers, designing IVRs for call containment with the goal of improving operational efficiency. Customers however hate IVRs and try to bypass them because most don’t provide great customer experience. This talk discusses how to design, train, and deploy a conversational assistant over IVRs, web chats and Alexa skills. Complex challenges such as handling speech recognition inaccuracies, omnichannel deployments, and conversation state tracking, are also discussed, as well as conversational UX best practices. After this talk you will be equipped to launch an IVR, chatbot, and Alexa skill with Twilio Autopilot.

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Building Conversational Assistants
A103 ■ Best Practices for Bootstrapping an NLU System With Generated Sentences
Yves Normandin, CEO, Nu Echo
Good NLU accuracy requires a sizeable training corpus made of sentences that represent expected responses from real users. How are new chatbots developed when there is little or no training data available? We present best practices to generate a NLU training corpus to easily train a fairly robust NLU system that can be used in a customer-facing chatbot, which makes it possible to quickly start collecting real sentences from real users.

Intriguing Case Studies
B103 ■ ‘Hera,’ the Avatar for Pregnant Women
Nava Shaked, Department Head, Holon Institute of Technology
See video clips of this fascinating avatar as a virtual personal assistant for pregnant women. Learn how focus groups revealed what women really want from this application and the importance of the user-avatar relationship to the success of the project. Learn the strategy behind its design, including technical and user interface considerations. Discover which features, including trust, reliability, and visuality, are most important to real users.

Security Through Biometrics
C103 ■ PANEL: Using Biometrics & AI to Establish Trust
MODERATOR: Phil Shinn, Principal, IVR Design Group
PANELISTS:
Joshua Soto, VP, Product Marketing, Pindrop
Alexey Khitrov, CEO, ID R&D
Roanne Levitt, Senior Manager, Commercial Security Strategy, Nuance Communications
Roy Bentley, Solution Delivery Manager, LumenVox
How can voice and behavior biometrics seamlessly verify that users are who they claim to be in real time? How can fraudsters be detected based on their voice prints, behavior anomalies, reconnaissance tactics, and robotic dialing techniques? Explore use cases and real-world examples for establishing security, identity, and trust between your organization and your customers. We share best practices and bloopers to help you have a successful voice biometrics deployment.

MONDAY SESSION ROOMS

Keynote & Lunch ■ Grand South/Central
Track B ■ Congressional B
Track A ■ Congressional A
Track C ■ Congressional C
All rooms are on the Ballroom Level.

Speech-Soft Solutions
We are a global business solutions provider specializing in customer experience strategy, natural language speech and intelligent AI enabled Chat applications. Our expert PhDs collaborate with industry leading partners, leveraging innovative tools, proprietary products and emerging technologies to solve business problems Easier, Faster, & with Better value!

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2:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Building Conversational Assistants

A104 MATCHMAKING CONVERSATIONS WITH INTELLIGENT ASSISTANTS
Michael McTeer, Professor, Ulsster University

We talk with text to our smartphones, smart speakers, and other devices in a conversational style; but how conversational are these interfaces? What happens when things go wrong—when the user or agent needs to ask for clarification, if something needs to be corrected, or something has been misunderstood? Learn whether and how these “edge cases” are being handled using available tools and what new approaches are being developed in research labs.

Intriguing Case Studies

B104 USING SPEECH TECHNOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND BRAIN INJURIES
Darius Ferdows, CEO, MindSquare

Over the last few years, brain injuries have moved to the forefront of health issues and concerns, particularly highlighted by challenges in professional sports. With greater attention to the issue, the ability to diagnose injuries is evolving. Now, there is an opportunity to leverage speech technology to more immediately identify injuries. Working with MindSquare, AppTek is assisting in the diagnosis of concussions (or mild traumatic brain injuries) using a mobile device.

Extract Info Through Analytics

C104 NEW AI TECHNIQUES FOR CALL ANALYTICS & CALL ROUTING
Yoav Degani, CEO, VoiceSense
Qian Hu, Chief Scientist, Speech Technology & AI, The MITRE Corp.

Behavioral speech analytics identifies typical speech patterns—prosodic content, the non-content parts of speech—intonation, pace, emphasis—that reflect common behavioral patterns. Behavioral speech analytics can provide a fairly strong prediction of the individual’s anticipated behaviors in various life situations. Improved call classification and routing is achieved by combining speech technology with robust natural language understanding and other artificial intelligence techniques.

3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

A105 EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

Give Your Chatbot the Gift of Voice
Livio Pugliese, President & CEO, Interactive Media North America

Millions of businesses implement chatbots, with mixed success. Chatting online is useful, but often a voice conversation is better. Speaking is faster than typing, safer and much more natural, plus everyone can use a phone. In this session, we discuss how to add voice and telephony to your bot.

Utilizing AI in Your Customer Service Channel Journey

Mark Eschten, Executive Director, Speech Solutions Professional Services, TTEC

As part of overall AI strategies, organizations are struggling with how best to leverage AI to provide a seamless customer experience throughout all their channels. In this session, we discuss how to securely empower your Speech enabled IVR with AI and seamlessly extend that AI experience to an enriched associate interaction when needed.

Intriguing Case Studies

B105 WORKING VOICE INTO THE NEWSROOM WORKFLOW
Kevin Goff, Technical Product Director, Gannett

Newsrooms have complex workflows to produce content at highest journalistic standards—Gannett does this efficiently and at massive scale across its 100-plus news properties. Newsroom workflows changed from print, to web, to mobile device, and now to social. The voice revolution calls for another metamorphosis to the newsroom’s workflow. Learn how Goff transformed the newsroom workflow for voice with lessons learned from the web, mobile, and social revolutions.

Innovative Applications

C105 PANEL: INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS OF SPEECH TECHNOLOGY FROM ACADEMIA
MODERATOR: David L. Thomson, VP, Speech Technology, CaptionCall

PANELISTS:
Farshid Haider, Research Fellow, & Saturnino Luz, Reader, Ulsster Institute of Population Health Sciences & Informatics, Edinburgh Medical School, University of Edinburgh

Hear and see descriptions and demonstrations of two of the most innovative applications created at universities and selected from presentations at scientific conferences. The first, Visual, Laughter, Applause and Spoken Expression Features for Predicting Engagement Within TED Talks, explains how camera angles, audience’s laughter and applause, and the presenter’s speech expressions help in automatic detection of user engagement. The second, Cues to Deception in Text and Speech, looks at how machines detect deceptive behavior. It describes a corpus for researching deceptive natural language, features that are useful cues to deception, and the role of individual differences in deceptive behavior.

4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Building Conversational Assistants

A106 Marry Visuals With Bots for Twice the Customer Experience
Victor Morrison, Strategic Sales Consultant, Radish Systems

Phonebots are especially useful when enhanced with visual information, such as an instantly viewed, tappable menu of options instead of a long sequence of questions or a spoken list of options. Adding a visual component—maps, photos, video snippets, menus, graphics, diagrams, short documents—to an ordinary phone call clarifies the users’ requests and can encourage customers to stay on the automated bot to reach a satisfactory resolution.

B106 EXPERT PERSPECTIVES

Best Practices for Designing a Voice Bot
Dan Aharon, Product Manager, Google Cloud AI

Bots have been around for a few years now, but most aren’t considered great user experiences. In this session, you’ll learn about the right elements for building a bot that provides them using Dialogflow and Cloud Speech technologies. We will show you how to build a simple bot, as well as describe advanced techniques you can use to increase your completion rate.

Text & Voice Bots

C106 WITH ONE VOICE: UNIFYING CONVERSATIONAL INTERFACES
Michael Metts, Conversation Design Lead, & Katie Lower, Conversation Designer, Allstate

During this talk, conversation designers from Allstate share their experiences designing for a variety of interfaces with the goal of creating a unified experience for the audiences they serve. Get practical ideas for how your team can start sharing data, establishing common patterns, and iterating designs based on user research. Attendees also see a case study showing how designers working on separate voice and chat products find common ground when working on the same subject matter.

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

GRAND OPENING RECEPTION in the customer solutions expo

Join us for festive bites and beverages as you explore the latest products and services from the top companies in the marketplace. Open to all conference attendees, speakers, and sponsors.

MONDAY SESSION ROOMS

All rooms are on the Ballroom Level.

Keynote & Lunch  Track B  Track C
Grand South/Central  Congressional B  Congressional C
Track A  Congressional A


**DISCUSSIONS**

8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

**SD201 - Patent Law Is a Moving Target**

Jordan Cohen, Technologist, Spelamode
Steven Hofberg, Of Counsel, Tully Rinckey PLLC

New definitions associated with the Alice decision and the America Invents Act continue to be adjusted by the patent office and affected by court decisions. This morning session discusses new guidance about the Alice definition of Abstract Ideas and impacts of recent court decisions on the America Invents Act.

**SD202 - Knowledge Café: Meet the Consultants**

Participate in the interactive Knowledge Café, where you can share your speech technology questions and challenges with colleagues and practitioners. Topics and Consultants:

- **User Interfaces:** David Attwater & Bruce Balementine
- **Natural Language:** Deborah Dahl
- **Speaker Identification:** Judith Martowicz
- **Intelligent Assistants:** Michael McTear
- **Multimodal Systems:** Nava A. Shaked

** Speech Technology Business Strategies:** William Meister

**SD203 - ACxID Conversational Design Wiki Workshop 1: Brainstorm Content & Organization**

Kristie Flenord, Senior Consultant, Human Factors Concentrix

The ACxID organization (formerly AVIxD) created a wiki to share best practices in VUI design, but the industry is fast outgrowing the wiki. VUI professionals now design all types of conversational interactions, and it’s time to update the wiki to reflect this. We invite all conversational designers to this interactive whiteboard session where we work to expand the wiki. Come prepared to participate and lend your expertise to brainstorming where to take the wiki next!

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**Keynotes**

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. = Grand South/Central

**Digital Transformation: Driving CX Excellence**

Barton Goldenberg, President, ISM, Inc., and author, The Definitive Guide to Social CRM

Eighty-nine percent of executives say digitization will disrupt their business even more. Yet, fewer than one-third believe that their digital strategy is correct; only 21% believe the right people are setting their strategy. Why the disconnect? Using real-time case studies from global, best-in-class companies, Barton Goldenberg illustrates how these companies are using digital transformation to enhance customer experience. Hear how five components—CRM, data and analytics, social media communities, customer engagement, and emerging technologies—form an integrated framework for successful digital transformation. Learn how to assemble these components in bite-sized chunks by following a long-term roadmap that focuses on critical people and process issues, as well as technology.

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. = Grand South/Central

**Breaking Barriers with an Integrated Software Suite**

Emily Sloan-Pace, Professor in Residence, Zoho Corp.

This session discusses the ways that an integrated software system can provide you with deeper insights into your business and help you provide a better customer experience.

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.

**BREAK** in the Grand South/Central

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**A201 - EXPERT PERSPECTIVES**

- **The Connected Agent Journey: AI & AHT**
  Anthony Scadary, Co-Founder, Co-Head, Engineering, & Brett Paulson, Head, Sales & Marketing, Gridspace

Nobody likes to hold for a new customer service agent, so last year Gridspace began testing a real-time machine coach to help agents quickly find the right answers. Now the results are in. Come learn how Gridspace Relay reduces average handle times and callbacks in production.

- **Difficult Voice Design Problems**
  Bruce Balementine, Chief Scientist, Enterprise Integration Group

Non-trivial user interfaces—those that require multiple turns to accomplish complex tasks—benefit when user and machine adapt to each other. Champions of voice claim that speech uniquely exhibits this plasticity. But it doesn’t unless the interface is designed to be discoverable. Discoverability requires systematic characteristics including trust, user-initiated backup moves, rewards for experimentation, and internal transparency. This session discusses specific design techniques that allow and encourage user exploration with low risk and a likely early payoff.

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**Ethics**

- **C201 - What Is Anthropomorphism & Why Do You Care?**
  Judith Markowitz, President, J. Markowitz Consultants

Treating objects like smart speakers, robots, and smart devices as humans is called anthropomorphism. Some users may forget that some of these devices are not human and expect human-like responses and advice. This can lead to unfortunate situations with potential social and legal repercussions. Anthropomorphism can also lead to isolation and loss of human association. Designers need to understand potential social and ethical issues surrounding anthropomorphism and take steps to minimize these problems.

11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Implementation Strategies**

- **A202 - PANEL: Problem Solving in the Age of Microservices**
  MODERATOR: Moshe Yudkowsky, President, Disaggregate Corp.
  PANELISTS:
  - Thomas Howe, CTO & Technical Lead, TEN DIGIT Communications
  - David Casem, CEO, Telnyx

When all your technology resides in-house or with a single vendor, you can find all the data you need to monitor performance, resolve errors, and make improvements. However, if you rely on microservices from multiple vendors, without careful planning, you might not even notice errors. This talk focuses on strategies and possible solutions to solving problems in a multi-vendor/microservices environment.

- **Difficult Voice Design Problems**
  - **B202 - Return of the User! Usability Principles for Designing Skills That Stick**
    Neha Javalagi, Lead, UX Research and Design, Willingo

Consider the analogy of “bad first dates” and “failed engagements” to highlight with examples the common pitfalls designers must avoid to design voice experiences that people enjoy and, more importantly, come back to. We discuss why so many voice interactions don’t go beyond the “first date.” Using the intimate dating experience as a metaphor, Javalagi explores how the subtle conventions of human-human interactions help us outline some key, guiding principles for designing delightful and meaningful voice interactions.

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**Ethics**

- **C202 - PANEL: The Ethics of ASR Lie Detection: What Could, and Should, We Determine?**
  MODERATOR: Brian Garr, Chief Revenue Officer, GoVivace Speech Technologies
  PANELISTS:
  - Nagendra Goel, CEO, GoVivace Inc.
  - Steven Hofberg, Of Counsel, Tully Rinckey, PLLC
  - Peter Soufleris, Founder & CEO, Voice Biometrics Group

With the advent of machine learning and neural nets and the proper amount of data, we can guess with much accuracy the gender, language, maybe age, and more. What are the ethics involved in creating a biometric-based lie detector, or possibility a sexual-preference detector? Where should—and how do—we draw the line?
KEYNOTE LUNCH
Injecting AI Into Your Contact Center
Dan Aharan, Product Manager, Google Cloud AI

AI can now help improve contact centers in ways that up until just a few years ago were not possible. Google Cloud AI enables anyone to tap into AI built on Google tech that up until recently has been exclusive to Google employees. This includes our pre-trained ready-to-use models, including speech recognition that is now twice as accurate for phone calls, WaveNet-based neural network speech synthesis, conversational NLU, and conversational analytics. Together with partners, Google is now bringing this technology to contact centers via Contact Center AI solutions. Companies with contact centers of all sizes can now automate conversational experiences, and improve performance of human agents.

1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Implementation Strategies
A203 ▪ Delivering AI Directly Within the Telephony Fabric
Alon Cohen, EVP & CTO, Phone.com, Inc.
The talk shows basic AI and ML architectures and discusses current AI limitations. Some environments such as voice networks require a different and unique AI approach to deliver value. We discuss the topic of ambient AI and how it differs from Siri or Alexa. Finally, we give the audience a few pointers about cloud-based tools that make AI accessible to any developer, while showing a demo. This presentation is a collaboration between Phone.com and Second Mind.

Difficult Voice Design Problems
B203 ▪ Writing for Listenability
Crispin Reedy, Director, UX, Versay
Spoken English is not the same as written English. This session reviews some of the academic research on the differences between spoken and written English and discusses how research results might be applied when writing material that is intended to be spoken aloud for a voice-enabled interface. Also, do these principles apply to casual text conversations such as chatbots? How might these principles be factored into a “listenability index”?

Ethics
C203 ▪ Will AI Replace Humans in Customer Engagement?
Andy Peart, CSO, Artificial Solutions
If you listen to the scaremongers, the future of the human race is at the mercy of AI. Are we destined to become a sluggish race ruled by robots, or will our own emotional intelligence prevail? This presentation examines the constraints of conversational AI, looks at the differences in skill sets between man and machine, and discusses why humans will always have a job when it comes to customer engagement.

2:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Implementation Strategies
A204 ▪ Conversational AI in a Disconnected World
Brian Garr, Chief Revenue Officer, GoVivace Technologies
When disconnected or occasionally connected to the internet, delivering a conversational experience has its own unique requirements. How do you prepare to deploy a large vocabulary speech recognition engine? How to update the content? In this session, we explore multiple options in disconnected and sometimes connected technologies, and demonstrate multiple capabilities from multiple vendors. Attendees come away with a better understanding of what is possible in a disconnected world and some of the architectures and technologies that can make this happen.

Speech Recognition Challenges
B204 ▪ Voice-Enable All Things, Cloud-Free!
Bernard Brafman, VP, Business Development, Sensory
Learn how to create a cloud-free voice UI for your next project, including low-power sound detection, wake word recognition, small vocabulary speech recognition, natural language understanding, and biometric authenticators. Learn about the various building blocks that go into engineering a voice-enabled device, such as sourcing the right integrated circuit and voice input system hardware, accessing SDKs, building command sets, training voice models, and more. See a live demonstration of an on-device personal assistant that functions totally free of an internet connection.

Ethics
C204 ▪ Say the Right Thing: VUI Design Ethics
Diana Deibel, Lead Designer, Grand Studio
Just because we can build something, doesn’t mean we should. Voice is positioned at the forefront of technology, and as VUI designers, we are confronted with ethical decisions. This talk walks you through the kinds of ethical considerations to incorporate into your voice designs and presents tips on how to judge whether a design is ethical. Learn how to have the hard conversations with your clients and companies.
**Speech**

**THE SMART CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS EVENT**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 1**

**Sunrise DISCUSSIONS**

8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

**SD301** Creative Strategies for Choosing a Name for Your Voice Application

Neha Javalagi, Lead, UX Research & Design, Witlingo

Learn the key selection criteria for choosing the perfect invocation name. Choosing a name for your voice app is a strategic and creative process, and Javalagi highlights three key perspectives: brand identity, platform capability, and usability. With real-world examples and design exercises, this discussion equips you with best practices for naming a voice application that will be successful in the real world.

**SD302** Handling Undesirable Audio in Speech Systems


Speech recognizers are usually not equipped to deal with poor audio quality. Poor audio quality, characteristics of which include packet loss, etc., degrades recognition accuracy significantly. However, one can address this problem in a way to make the user experience more human-like. We discuss the characteristics of poor audio, ways to automatically detect these factors, and, armed with this knowledge, how we can make our automated systems more intelligent, thus improving the user experience.

**SD303** ACxID Conversational Design Wiki Workshop 2: Assembling the Road Map

Crispin Reedy, Director, User Experience, Versay Solutions

The ACxID (formerly AViDx) interactive whiteboard session continues for a second day. We will discuss the direction of the wiki, its organization, and brainstorm new sections to be added. As a work product, we want to produce a set of next steps to continue to support and maintain a wiki that addresses the needs of conversational interaction designers.

**Keynote**

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. = Grand South/Central

**Just Like Talking to a Person: How to Get There From Here**

Deborah Dahl, Principal, Conversational Technologies

Virtual assistants have been around for nearly 10 years, since Siri was introduced in 2010. Now is a good time to look at what they can currently do and to think about what they could do for us if only they were smarter. How close are today’s virtual assistants to human conversational abilities, and how much closer can they get? Is it important for future systems to just be able to do more things, or should they also be more emotional and sympathetic? How important is it for them to be able to socialize informally with people and have wide-ranging conversations? This talk reviews the state of the art of virtual assistants, goes over 10 important new capabilities, and discusses the technical challenges involved in improving their abilities. We also look at some interesting current academic research and talk about how it could be applied to future systems and applications. The talk concludes with some ideas about how the industry can help advance the state of the art.

10:00 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

**BREAK** in the Customer Experience Expo

10:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

**Machine Learning**

**A301** Putting the Voice Assistants to the Test: Surprising Results in the Real World

Kathleen Walch, Principal Analyst, Cognilytica

Ronald Schmelzer, Analyst, Cognilytica

Cognilytica recently tested voice assistants from Amazon, Google, Apple, Microsoft, and others and quickly realized just how un-intelligent these devices are. Many are not able to provide answers to very simple questions that require simple decision making or reasoning. These assistants provide inconsistent answers among platforms and can’t deal well with variable sentence structure and other issues. We identify where these voice assistants are failing, what sort of intelligence needs to be built into the devices to make them smarter and more useful, and the current pitfalls and opportunities for companies looking to build the next generation of voice assistant.

**Speech Recognition in Home & Car**

**B301** Conversational Interfaces in the Car

Thomas Schalk, VP, Voice Technology, Sirius XM

The conventional push-to-talk speech experience is being completely redesigned in an effort to achieve a conversational interface. With autonomous vehicles on the horizon, intelligent assistants can become multimodal and effectively leverage voice as a presentation modality. Learn about the current intelligent assistants for the car, what to expect with vehicle integration, and how things will change with autonomous vehicles. Finally, we discuss the optimum speech experience for the driver and what’s required to achieve this optimum experience.

**Emotion**

**C301** The Engineering of Emotion

Wolf Paulus, Principal Engineer, Intuit Futures, Intuit

Not only what, but how, a virtual assistant speaks will determine its success. We need to create a believable illusion that a bot concerns itself with the user’s situation. We need to deeply care about every word and every pause, what to emphasize, and how to respond empathically. This talk explores and demonstrates possibilities of a more personalized, contextual and likeable customer engagement by using affective computing technologies and emotion analytics.

11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Machine Learning**

**A302** On Weakness Exploitation in Deep Neural Networks

Nagendra Goel, CEO, GoVivace Inc.

During the past 10 years, deep neural networks have transformed the field of speech recognition. However, we are still discovering some peculiarities of these networks, such as how susceptible they are to attacks. By adding an extremely small but controlled noise that is imperceptible to humans, any regular speech or music sound could be modified to generate a transcript of your choice. We give some theoretical background on this vulnerability and provide real examples of modified audio.

**Speech Recognition in Home & Car**

**B302** From Screens to Scenes: Voice Control in the Digital Home

Bryan Kissinger, Director, Digital Home Product Management, Comcast

The X1 voice remote has revolutionized the TV viewing experience. Leveraging AI to transcribe and understand what users are saying, Xfinity uses direct voice controls to connect users to the content in which they are most interested. The digital home voice experience will take on concierge-like capabilities, launching features like Phone Finder, Find My Tile, and act like a search engine to connect users with more information about available services.

**Omnichannel**

**A302** Unlocking the Puzzle of AI & Omni-Channel Integration

Greg Stack, VP, Speech-Soft Solutions

We address AI integration methods and draw practical road maps for migrating to digital omnichannel architectures by leveraging existing investments in IVR, chatbots and backend database interactions. Specifically, this includes incorporating Google+ and Amazon Lex AI into existing IVR investments; leveraging existing IVR business logic, flow, and backend database interactions to create an AI-based chatbot in a fraction of normal time; and standardizing a digital omnichannel approach across voice, chat, SMS, mobile, and intelligent virtual assistant channels.

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**LAST CHANCE** to visit the Customer Experience Expo

**WEDNESDAY SESSION ROOMS**

All rooms are on the Ballroom Level.

Keynote & Lunch

- Grand South/Central

- track B, SD302, STKU-5
- Congressional B

- track C, SD303, STKU-6
- Congressional C

- STKU-7
- Renaissance West A
STKU-4 - Evaluation, Testing Methodology, and Best Practices for Speech-Based Interaction Systems

Nava Shaked, Department Head, Holon Institute of Technology

Testing and evaluation processes are crucial to the success of any NLP conversational system, but testing IVR and multimodal systems presents unique challenges. Focusing on multimodal applications that involve speech and other modalities, we describe the multiple layers of testing and QA: engine quality, functional application, VUI, interfaces and infrastructure, load balancing, backup, and recovery. Learn how to set testing goals, targets, and success factors; specify and measure metrics; test and measure "soft" and "immeasurable" targets; test documentation in all stages; manage a testing project; and identify who should be on the testing team.

STKU-5 - Build a Conversational Chatbot for Google Assistant Using Dialogflow

Michael McTear, Professor, Ulster University

This practical, hands-on workshop introduces attendees to the concepts, methods, and issues involved in the design and development of conversational chatbots using Google’s Dialogflow tool. Following a brief introduction to chatbots and conversational interfaces, the course explores relevant technologies and tools. The main part of the workshop is devoted to hands-on design and development of some sample conversational chatbots. Bring your laptops to learn how to develop conversational chatbots.

STKU-6 - Natural Language Application Development

Deborah Dahl, Principal, Conversational Technologies

This workshop provides an in-depth overview of the process for developing a natural language application with current tools such as the Alexa Skills Kit and Microsoft LUIS. We start with requirements and then discuss design considerations, such as when and how to use multimodality, how to decide what intents and entities to use (and what to do if you change your mind). We address using nested and composite entities and the effect of the design on the machine learning process. Some platforms have limitations on the number of entities allowed. All platforms have some limitations on their natural language understanding capabilities—we talk about work-arounds for both issues. Finally, we review important post-development considerations, including testing, versioning, and maintenance.

STKU-7 - Identify Skills for the Far-Field, Voice-First Interface

Navya Nayaki Yelloji, Product Manager, Voice Platforms, Gannett
Neha Javalagi, Lead, UX Research and Design, Witlingo
Brielle Nickoloff, Voice User Interface Designer, Witlingo

What use cases lend themselves to delivering a great Alexa skill/Google Assistant action? How does one go about identifying such use cases? This workshop begins by diving deep into several Alexa skills and Google Assistant actions to identify which ones deliver value and which ones fall short of the mark. Then we walk through the basic characteristics and principles that help us methodically assess why some skills/actions are a good fit for the Voice-First, Far-Field interface and why some are not. Finally, the presenters work through several exercises with the workshop participants and apply those characteristics and principles to systematically move from a general use case and pinpoint experiences that are best delivered through the Voice-First interface.

Where AI and machine learning come alive

Speech Technology magazine is recognized worldwide as the leading source of news, information, and analysis relating to the speech technology industry. From chatbots to speech analytics, from AI to biometrics, Speech Technology covers everything you need to know as a developer, vendor, or buyer of speech-related technologies.

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CUSTOMER SOLUTIONS EXPO HOURS

Monday, April 29 ................................................. 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
   Grand Opening Reception

Tuesday, April 30 ............................................. 10:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 1 ....................................... 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

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www.twilio.com

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Twilio is the cloud communications platform that enables innovators across every industry—from emerging leaders to the world’s largest organizations—to reinvent how companies engage with their customers. Twilio has democratized communications channels like voice, text, chat, and video by virtualizing the world’s telecommunications infrastructure through APIs.

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