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Discoveriesbriefs

COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

'Smart' surveillance system may tag suspicious or lost people

Engineers here are developing a computerized surveillance system that, when completed, will attempt to recognize whether a person on the street is acting suspiciously or appears to be lost. Intelligent video cameras, large video screens and geo-referencing software are among the technologies that will soon be available to law enforcement and security agencies.

James Davis, associate professor of computer science and engineering, and doctoral student Karthik Sankaranarayanan report that they've completed the first three phases of the project: They have one software algorithm that creates a wide-angle video panorama of a street scene, another that maps the panorama onto a high-resolution aerial image of the



scene and a method for actively tracking a selected target. The ultimate goal is a networked system of "smart" video cameras that will let surveillance officers observe a wide area quickly and efficiently. Computers will carry much of the workload.

"In my lab, we've always tried to develop technologies that would improve officers' situational awareness, and now we want to give that same kind of awareness to computers," said Davis. The research isn't meant to gather specific information about individuals, he explained. "In our research, we care what you do, not who you are. We aim to analyze and model the behavior patterns of people and vehicles moving through the scene, rather than attempting to determine the identity of people."

osu.edu/researchnews/archive/surveillance.htm

PSYCHOLOGY

College students find comfort in their pets during hard times

A new study suggests that college students may handle stressful situations better if they have a pet. Research has already shown that pets can improve the quality of life for people who are aging or those who are chronically ill. But researchers here recently found that many college students may also benefit from owning a cat or a dog. A survey of students at a large university and other adults in the area found that nearly a quarter of college students surveyed believed their pets helped them get through difficult times in life. Students who chose to live with at least one dog, one cat or a combination of the two were less likely to report feeling lonely and depressed — something they directly attributed to their beloved pet.

These findings highlight how even younger, healthier young adults can benefit from living with our four-legged friends, said Sara Staats, lead author of the study and professor emeritus of psychology at OSU Newark. "We might not think of college students as being lonely, but a lot of freshmen and sophomores are in an early transition from living at home to living in dorms or off-campus. College is a very stressful environment for them and sometimes they can feel isolated or overwhelmed with the change," she said.

"We found that a lot of young adults are choosing to have an animal companion for important reasons. Many feel their pets will help get them through these difficult and stressful situations, and many more say that without their pet, they would feel lonely."

osu.edu/researchnews/archive/petowner.htm



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