

Maavis Information for facilitators

Website

Home website address	http://maavis.fullmeasure.co.uk
Quick guide	http://maavis.fullmeasure.co.uk/quick-guide
User and Developers online communication	http://groups.google.com/group/maavis
Developers online community	http://www.assembla.com/wiki/show/maavis

Types of stakeholders

The design of Maavis has kept in mind the people who will be involved and assumed several roles and levels of technical skill:

- End users – no or very little technical interest or experience in IT
- Facilitators – basic IT skills including the ability to get media onto computer copy and rename files
- Technical facilitators – intermediate skills including editing formatted files to update screens and provide web pages.
- Developers

There are 2 levels of developer

- Developers – experienced. Ability to create new web pages using XUL (like HTML), JavaScript and CSS
- Core developers – very experienced – as developers but for platform core, plus possibly Python for Skype integration, C for XPCOM components, Inno setup for installer

Notes on Maavis installs

Currently Maavis does not work properly on Windows 7.

Note that the default install results in all files and folders being installed in a folder called “MaavisPortable” on the desktop. You can choose to rename this folder - wherever you choose to locate it as it can be placed on any drive or folder you wish at install or after it has been installed. Within the above folder there is a second folder called “MaavisPortable” – all mention of the MaavisPortable folder below refers to this second folder NOT the first one.

Alongside the MaavisPortable folder there is a second called MaavisMedia where all the user files including their Maavis content are located. All the files run programs. One just opens your browser and takes you to online resources. The second, “MaavisPortable Settings”, runs a utility that allows you to alter certain settings. The remaining files are applications that run Maavis for the user. One that runs Maavis for the default user set up and the second that runs Maavis via a login process. In other words the first is appropriate where you will only have a single user and security is of no concern, and the second where you have 1 or more users and security is of some concern.

Facilitator shortcut keys – quitting Maavis

- Alt+Q quits Maavis

MaavisPortable Settings Utility

The facilitator chooses the user they wish to change settings for. The utility then presents the facilitator with a menu of various parameters that can be altered for the chosen user by selecting the setting shown. Each setting is a simple toggle – i.e. repeated selection of the item results in cycling through the options (as usually there are just two options, it switches back and forth). The changes are usually made immediately and since the utility is itself run by Maavis they can be seen straightaway. This can include some items appearing/disappearing from the menu as sometimes this is appropriate. When you quit the application all settings are saved.

So if you wish to change a user's settings, quit from their Maavis. Run the Maavis settings application, make the changes for that user. Quit from the utility application. Login in Maavis as that user and the changes should have happened.

How to add or change the content that appears on screens

Some definitions

In general Maavis screens are arranged into 3 screen levels:

- Choosing an activity (Home) – top level screen offering the activity choices
- Activity content chooser (Chooser) – offers selection of the specific 'topic' or content
- Interaction controller (Players) – presents the chosen content and media controls

Each button on the home screen leads to a chooser, the buttons on the choosers perform an action such as making a call or running media players with the selected media set.

Each user has a folder with their name as the folders name. This folder will be referred to as the *user activities or home folder*. Each activity has a folder located in the latter folder, each with a meaningful name (to the user). These folders will collectively be referred to as *chooser folders*. The files or folders within these folders that are or identify the content for the activity will be known as *content files or content folders* as appropriate to the activity.

Setting up Activities

The contents shown in each of the choosers is automatically created from the contents of folders under "MaavisMedia". Samples are provided with Maavis and can be found in MaavisMedia → Users. In each user activities or home folder you will see a folder for each activity/chooser available to them, in default you will see all the possibilities :

- 1;Photos – contains albums stored in sub folders which contain collections of still images
- 2; Videos – contains "albums" stored in sub folders which contain one or more videos
- Call – contains files whose names identify Skype contacts who can be called or who can call¹
- Information – contains a file that lists the web/Internet sites that can be visited and operated
- Music – contains albums stored in sub folders which contain collections of audio files
- Programs – contains a file that lists the programs that can be run from Maavis
- Speech – contains communication topics stored in sub folders which contain image files whose names are the phrases that can be generated by the computer

The "1;" and the "2;" prefixes to folder names is a way to allow facilitators to force a particular order of items on Maavis screens. This also works on individual file names. *Note on any drive (e.g. USB memory sticks) where the standard Microsoft file management is not used and the order of items is important its currently necessary to move all the files or folders you want to re-order to another location and then move them back again.*

The names of the folders above have been chosen from the original and obvious use. In fact the type of activity and content is selected by the presence of a file with one of the following filenames _choosmusic, _choosephoto, _choosevideo, _choosecall, _chooseprogram, _choosespeech, _chooseinfo. The name of the folder becomes the name of the button on the Maavis home screen and each folder may contain an image file called Thumbnail which appears on the button. So a facilitator is able to choose any name for the activities, e.g. instead of "Programs" it might be more appropriate to use 'Writing' if the only programs available allow writing.

¹ Its necessary for the facilitator to understand how to use and set up Skype. Skype set up should include registering with the desired Skype contacts, choosing the option to only allow communication with registered contacts, appropriate video settings.

Any of the above folders/activities can be completely removed as a particular user requires – see the Bert or Ethel user activities folders. Similarly the activities can be added if previously removed or duplicated with a new name. For example, if more than one Internet accessing activity is needed, e.g. in a school it may be desirable to separate Art from Science.

How the folder names and contents are used

- All folder names within a user activities folder are used as the text on the button on screen.
- An optional image file called **Thumbnail** that becomes the image on the button for the folder. Most image formats can be used. Note if no Thumbnail file is present Maavis just displays the name of the folder in the button.
- Image, video or audio files in content folders names are used as the text that appears on the button - along with the image itself when that is the type of file
- Media or content files are automatically detected by the player. Most media formats except Real are supported.
- A content text file **_items.ini** which lists the activity contents and provides access to that content. Each line is of the form “item = value” where value is optional. Item is the name of the item and is shown as the Maavis button text. If an image file of the same name as the item exists it is displayed on the button with the text. The order of the items on the Maavis screen follows the order of the lines in the file. Value depends on the folder the file appears in and may be a skype id, a program filename, a website address or the web address of a media item.
- A plain text file called **links.txt** that contains a list of online media, one per line (e.g see Photos → Events) – Been superseded by **_items.ini**.

Videos, Music, Photos

These folders contain subfolders each of which is an album of media content. The audio player and video player play each of the media files in turn in a continuous loop. The audio player allows the user to select individual files to play and uses the media filenames for the button labels. At least for photos instead of multiple media files in the folder there can be a “_items.ini” file with website links that are used instead. Note that if the website address becomes invalid the image is skipped.

Presentation order of media files can be forced using the numeric prefixes as shown in the default user install and mentioned in ‘Setting up activities’ above.

Call

This contains image files whose names have a unique arrangement for Maavis. The image file name comprises the text you want to appear with the image on the Maavis screen, “ – “ (i.e. space, hyphen, space), and then the contacts unique Skype ID. An example is “Skype Test Call - echo123”.

Presentation order can be forced using the numeric prefixes as shown in the default user install and mentioned in ‘Setting up activities’ above.

Using Call, and because this uses Skype, does introduce some additional installation steps – which are a bit clumsy but cannot be avoided by the facilitator. Key points to note are : you will need to register the user with Skype, because of the way Maavis drives Skype there is a need to confirm the ‘connection’ between them every time Maavis is used on a different computer or is moved from one location/drive to another.

Information

This activity uses the **_item.ini** text file to set up the content. The typical use would require Internet access but web/html pages with a ‘local’ url would always be accessible.

Speech

This activity is aimed at people who have difficulty making spoken communication. Setting it up is exactly the same as for Photos, but the difference is how the files in the content folders are used. Instead of all of them being presented one after each other, all appear on screen (or if more than 6 on a sequence of more than one screen) in buttons. When one is chosen the text, i.e. filename, is spoken by the computer.

Presentation order can be forced using the numeric prefixes as shown in the default user install and mentioned in “Setting up activities” above.

How to change the start sound

If the Maavis Media folder contains an audio file called `startsound` it will be played when Maavis starts up (unless the `-quickstart` option is specified in the shortcut).

Managing Maavis user set ups

It is expected that the facilitator will install and set up Maavis for the user. This is not least because the examples as have already been said aim to show possibilities and choices rather than being targeted at particular groups. In any case apart from some educational situations each individual will have individual needs, interests and goals.

Our recommendations are

1. Facilitators set things up for the user when they are not sat beside them waiting to use Maavis. Unless the user says otherwise they will not be interested in what you are doing and may get bored and/or frustrated waiting while you sort it out.
2. If you plan to use the Videoconferencing feature allow more time. You will need to set Skype up and this requires several re-starts of Maavis.
3. As its necessary to set up the activities and the content the user wants it will be worth making sure you have an idea of what the user wants before you spend a lot of time on setting everything up when they may not want them.
4. It is worth making a back up copy of the very first installation because this will provide you with templates to work from whenever you want to make additions.
5. When setting up a new user – e.g. Mandy – copy one of the installed users that seems most appropriate and rename the user activities folder to Mandy. Add, delete and rename the activities, choosers and content as needed. Use the MaavisPortable Settings utility to set up the right accessibility.

Login and Passwords

Maavis can be set up to support single or multiple users with or without passwords. Passwords can only be used through the “MaavisPortable with Login” executable. Also the users home folder must be called something other than default.

Note the security is currently very simple and is perhaps more about reducing the likelihood of accidentally accessing of someone else’s contents. Of course increasing the number of choices used as ‘passwords’ will make it take longer to ‘break the password’.

Single user

Create your new user home folder (and contents), then delete all the other users. Put a suitable Thumbnail image file in the Home folder.

Multiple users

Create all the users you need, delete any you don’t need. You can return later and add more. Put a suitable Thumbnail image file in the Home folder of each user.

Setting a password

Put an appropriate number and type of image files in a folder called Passwords (in the Home Folder). The image file that is the correct selection should have an exclamation mark as the first character of its name. Use the `_items.ini`

file to define the order in which the images are displayed. This is done through simply listing the file names one to a line each with an “=” appended.

The images can be anything, words, numbers, people, cartoons, colours, etc.