

Theme: Technological Innovations**Text:** Wikipedia entry: Ananova (extract)

Ananova [http://ananova.com] is a Web-oriented news service that originally featured a computer-simulated animation of a woman newscaster, an embodied agent named "Ananova," who had been programmed to "read" newscasts to Web users. [...] Ananova could be requested to:

- 5 • Read a two-minute newscast summary
- Read a customized newscast based on selected preferences
- Give selected sports scores and weather information as it develops
- Alert subscribers by e-mail when a story of interest becomes available
- Periodically scan a targeted group of Web sites and notify subscribers of new changes

Ananova launched on April 19, 2000. Her first words were "Hello world", follow by "Here is the news. And this time it's personal". The service combined live Web newscasting from an animated "talking head" with an intelligent agent service. The animation was described by her designers as 28 years old, 5 feet 8 inches tall, and with a "pleasant, quietly intelligent manner." (147)

Annotations: 2 newscaster – person who reads the news 3 request – ask 5 customize – change according to your wishes 7 alert – inform 8 notify – here: send email 9 launch – start

Assignments: 1) You are to design a flyer advertising *Ananova*. On the front would be an illustration with the most important features (as given in the above text). Describe this illustration (that can also contain elements of text). (10')

2) In 2001 a user writes an email saying why he would not want to miss *Ananova*. (10') **3)** Sometime in 2004 the animated *Ananova* character disappeared from the website. Think of reasons for that cancellation. (10')

Technological innovations – Ananova [Expectations]

I) The flyer- design and contents [6/6]

- Flash headline: Ananova – customized news service
- Central position of talking head – physical looks
- Speech bubbles: boasting Ananova's features
- 24/7 of weather forecasts and sports scores
- snippet of email from Ananova
- contact info + launch date

II) Email of appreciation to Ananova [6/6]

- info any time – no wait
- convenience of having news read out
- portable service, e.g. on cell phone
- suits different tastes of members of the family
- physical attractiveness of avatar
- saves time in scanning specific websites

III) Ananova Character Cancelled – Reasons [6/6]

- not human – job losses for human speakers
- programming difficulties
- not much in demand - low interest
- too expensive to maintain
- bad quality visually and acoustically
- complaints from competitors