

Let SLDs decide for you... if you can decide to get one

We are about to be hit by a new wave in personal computing but DICK LUMSDEN has a stark warning for us all

THERE was a time, not too long ago, when fully grown adults were expected to make decisions for themselves.

What to eat, what to drink, what to wear, when to go to bed, when to get up and even when to call the doctor, were all everyday things that we had to master in order to navigate our short time on this earth.

But no more. This time next year we'll all be plugged into the mains and our every movement will be monitored and shaped by super-geeks who are hell bent on creating the ultimate electronic handcuffs.

You might think I'm exaggerating, but next time you walk down any High Street, just count how many people are walking round with their faces glued to the screen of a smartphone or a touch-screen tablet.

It's only just over two decades ago that the concept of a "mobile" telephone was born and now, our future generations can't live without them – and the "apps" that are slowly but surely taking over their lives.

But the geeks who invent these apps are not content with that. Oh no. Their huge brains are working furiously to find new and more devious ways of getting us hooked.

This Christmas, the market is going to see the first real attempts to sell SLDs in any kind of volumes – and if mobile phones are anything to go by, it won't be long before they have completely taken over our lives.

Well I say 'our lives', I'm sure that those of us in the autumn of our days will be able to resist the lure – but you do worry for the younger generations who are powerless to resist the combination of two highly-addictive "drugs" – electronic gizmos, and having someone make a decision for you.

You will note that I slipped in a nice little abbreviation a couple of paragraphs back – SLDs. You almost certainly won't have heard of them yet but you will do. They are Sensory Laden Devices and they are being churned out at a rate of knots by geeks in Japan, China and, of course, California.

Just when you thought the iPad and the iPhone were the cutting edge of personal computing, along



NEW GENERATION: The smart gloves of the future may see us all adopting the one-gloved Michael Jackson look

Photograph: AP

wristband, you are hooking yourself up to the future. For a little over £100 (excluding p&p) you could have someone on the other side of the world send a vibrating signal to your wrist if you sit inactive for too long.

Or if you happen to wake up a little early, you can have the comforting message that because you appeared to sleep a little less than normal, you should increase your protein intake at breakfast. Really?

One SLD on the market is in the form of a single black glove. So, at the risk of looking like a Michael Jackson tribute act, you can wrap your hand in a bag of electronic sensors that can tell everything about your diet, your drinking habits and your appalling lack of exercise, sending messages and instructions to your personal bit of cyberspace, telling you what to do to change your life. Buying a matching glove for the other hand may be one option.

stuck to your chosen body part, dumbly recording everything about your life.

I, of course, am already ahead of the game with my own set of SLDs. I wear one full-time on my face to help my optical recognition – I call them spectacles. I have another one on my wrist, which I constantly refer to when making decisions about travel plans and mealtimes – I call that one a watch.

And at the ends of both my legs, I have interchangeable ones which can relay information about where I walk and the conditions underfoot – these, I believe, are called shoes.

Clearly, I am not the market for the up and coming SLDs. But I'm sure I could help out with a few suggestions.

How about a pair of interactive earrings that tell you when to turn left and right? Or a pair of highly sensitive socks with built in GPS so you can always find

of the human race. And, no doubt, there will be some good applications for use in measuring blood pressure or blood sugar levels and alerting the appropriate medical staff.

But if they fly off the shelves as fast as smartphones, then in only a few short years, we will have generations of young adults who have lost the ability to make a decision without consulting their electronic oracles – handing even more power to big international corporations with their 300 year business plans leading to world domination.

Take my advice – steer clear of SLDs this Christmas and just buy some ordinary gloves instead.

■ Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part occasionally in some gentle