No more getting lost around school

BY LEOW SI WAN

STUDENTS of the School of Computing at the National University of Singapore (NUS) have little reason now to claim they are late for class because they cannot find the classroom.

Help is now available from a touchscreen directory kiosk for the school, thanks to the work of fraternal twins Kent Nguyen and Torin Nguyen, both 25, as part of their final-year project last year.

The directory allows users to obtain specific instructions on how to get to their desired location. Mr Kent Nguyen said the old directory was outdated and too basic.

“It gives you the address of a location. The new one has a 3-D map; you can use fingers to zoom in and out of the map, and it provides step-by-step instructions on how to get to somewhere in the school.

“If you key in your mobile number, the information is sent to your phone,” added the Web developer who works for a start-up specialising in Web applications.

He and his brother – both came here from Vietnam when they were 15 – had “wanted to make a difference” to the school. “We were thinking that if this works out, we can expand it to the rest of NUS,” he said.

He added that it took 10 months of work before the directory was unveiled. He was in charge of the software while his brother handled the hardware.

The directory covers the entire School of Computing whose two main buildings comprise four and five levels respectively. It also occupies four other levels in two other buildings.

The directory kiosk is located at the entrance of one of the two main buildings. Mr Torin Nguyen, an engineer, said: “I had difficulties with the physical structure but I received support from the robotics laboratory in Singapore Polytechnic, from which we both graduated.”

They had guidance from Associate Professor Tan Tiow Seng from the Department of Computer Science at the NUS School of Computing. Said Prof Tan: “We have received positive feedback and I see great potential for the kiosk.”

NUS provided the computer, projector and materials for the project. The total cost is about $5,000, said the brothers who are looking into developing an iPhone application for their kiosk and discussing the possibility of expanding it to the rest of NUS. They are also “waiting for the right opportunity” to commercialise the project.

Said Mr Anuj Khemka, 20, a second-year student in the School of Computing: “I find it useful and interactive. It is very detailed. It tells you to take the lift to a certain level, walk through the glass door and so on.”