Say goodbye to your thermostat

It used to be that when you felt hot or cold, you’d push the little dial on your thermostat up or down accordingly. But that’s so old-tech. Students at SFU’s School of Interactive Arts and Technology are building an “adaptive living interface” that promises to send the thermostat the way of the rotary phone. (Hang on to your Honeywell: it may be worth a fortune on eBay in a decade or two.)

The SFU interface will not only regulate the air temperature in your home, but will measure all factors at play when you hit your personal comfort level, including measures that don’t show up on a thermometer, such as radiant heat and air circulation.

“We want to use the project to visualize what the house is actually doing, how it’s performing, how changes you make might improve its performance,” explains Rob Woodbury, a professor at SFU’s School of Interactive Arts and Technology and one of the project leaders.

The actual interface will likely be a BlackBerry or similar mobile communication device that is linked to sensors and controls in the home. “We want to use mobile technology so that people are better informed of the consequences of their decisions,” notes Woodbury.

The interface will be wired into a demonstration home to be exhibited at the U.S. Department of Energy’s Solar Decathlon in the fall of 2009. The University of Waterloo is drawing up the architectural plans for the demonstration solar house, while Ryerson University is providing the technical engineering expertise.

The house will be on permanent display Toronto following the Washington exhibition.