



Media Release
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NICTA and VastPark enter into licence agreement for NICTA's distributed virtual worlds technology

NICTA, Australia's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Research Centre of Excellence, has signed a commercial license agreement with VastPark, a leading virtual worlds platform provider.

NICTA's Peer to Peer (P2P) project has developed software which will revolutionise the virtual world and online gaming experience.

Massively multiplayer online (MMO) applications, such as large multiplayer games and on-line virtual worlds, have attracted an enormous user population on the Internet. In fact, thousands of users can be on-line simultaneously in the same virtual world. This creates a significant challenge for the creators of virtual worlds.

The traditional client-server approach does not scale affordably as server capacity needs to be upgraded to meet the anticipated demand for a service; rich media content requires the underlying network to be upgraded to handle the expected network traffic; and central servers are a single point of failure and require constant maintenance.

Researchers at NICTA's P2P project, based at the Victoria Research Laboratory, have developed a decentralised network engine for virtual worlds that can scale to an unlimited number of users, thereby enabling creators to develop and deploy online games and virtual worlds more efficiently and cost effectively. It enables virtual worlds to scale to an unlimited number of users without the need to upgrade infrastructure.

For gamers it will mean a better gaming experience and it may be cheaper to play games as the cost of infrastructure for the creators can be greatly reduced. It also means that the "flash mob" problem (where suddenly a massive crowd appears on one world) is actually handled without additional centralised infrastructure.

NICTA's agreement with VastPark will provide VastPark with access to technology developed in the P2P project. The agreement also provides the P2P team with a commercial platform to conduct a large-scale trial, and a commercialisation path with VastPark as an industry collaborator.

"NICTA's technology will reduce the cost of maintaining expensive game servers by delegating data processing to individual participants," P2P project leader Dr Santosh Kulkarni said. "This will also improve resilience to failures by removing the single point of failure and reduce game traffic in the core network, improving system performance."

"VastPark has a mature platform that has received excellent reviews from the industry pundits," he added. "When you combine such a platform with cutting edge technology from NICTA, it has the potential to shake the virtual world space."

"This is the beginning of what we expect to be a long-term relationship with VastPark as a partner in the development and commercialisation of the virtual world technology coming out of NICTA," Dr Kulkarni said.

VastPark Chief Executive Officer Bruce Joy said: "VastPark is about making virtual worlds useful and convenient to create and deliver and NICTA's technology helps extend VastPark by allowing thousands of simultaneous users to meet each other without creators needing to pre-invest in expensive infrastructure. This is potentially revolutionary stuff."

"I am delighted that NICTA is entering into this agreement with VastPark," NICTA Victoria Research Laboratory Director Professor Rob Evans said. "The partnership between NICTA and VastPark is an example of how NICTA's user-focussed research is enabling Australian companies to position themselves for valuable global business opportunities."

About NICTA

National ICT Australia Limited (NICTA) is a national research institute with a charter to build Australia's pre-eminent Centre of Excellence for information and communications technology (ICT). NICTA is building capabilities in ICT research, research training and commercialisation in the ICT sector for the generation of national benefit.

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NICTA was established and is supported by its members: The Australian Capital Territory Government; The Australian National University; NSW Department of State and Regional Development; and The University of New South Wales. NICTA is also supported by its partners: the University of Sydney; University of Melbourne; the Victorian Government; the Queensland Government; Griffith University; Queensland University of Technology; and The University of Queensland.

About VastPark

VastPark is a virtual worlds platform supporting an ecosystem of creators, consumers and user generated worlds. Built on five years of research and development and focussed on effective open standards, VastPark features free tools that enable users to create and publish 3D virtual worlds quickly and easily. Communities can create and monetize their own highly interactive worlds and empower their users creativity.

For further information:

Kelly Mills
Communications Specialist, NICTA
Ph: +61 2 8374 5489 or +61 448 434 858

Liz Chung
Marketing, VastPark
liz@vastpark.com