



Technology Award Winners 2005

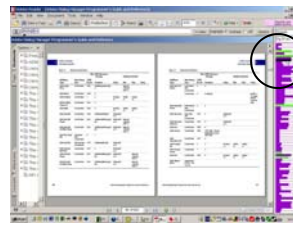
Lemur win medal at the British Computing Society Technology Awards

The British Computer Society IT Professional Awards, in association with Computer Weekly, are the most important events in the IT calendar. They mark the key contribution made by the IT profession to economic prosperity, to business efficiency and to our public services.

Lemur Consulting, in collaboration with the Smart Web Technologies Centre at The Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, has won a medal in these Awards for developing ProfileSkim, a plug-in for the popular Adobe Acrobat program.

ProfileSkim allows users to skim large documents such as electronic reports, books and theses, and see at a glance the sections of the document that are relevant to them. The user enters a query and ProfileSkim produces a bar graph which indicates the relevance of each page in the document.

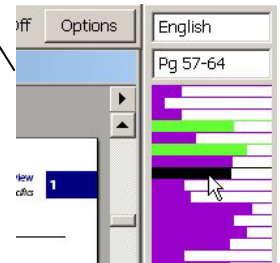
By clicking on the relevance bar, the user can jump straight to the relevant page of the document.



The tool is inexpensive, having been designed for personal use as well as for organisations that need to search large electronic documents to pin-point specific information, such as government agencies, companies, libraries and educational establishments.

Professor David Harper of RGU's School of Computing said, "We've undertaken trials of ProfileSkim with local Councils and the feedback has been very positive with users describing the software as intuitive, quick

and easy to use. Winning this medal is recognition of the hard work that Lemur Consulting and the Smart Web technologies team at RGU have put in to the development of ProfileSkim."



The product was developed from an initial prototype by Lemur Consulting. Charlie Hull, Managing Director of Lemur said, "There are plenty of software tools designed for finding relevant documents, such as Google, but ProfileSkim does something new – it makes it much easier to find relevant information within a long document."

Syndicated search

Despite the power of global Web search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, many websites still incorporate their own search feature. If well implemented, these local search engines can be extremely valuable when looking for specific content as they can take advantage of their integration with the rest of the site, using information which may not be accessible to an external search engine. For example, on a shopping site, the local search may allow products to be found by internal product codes, which may not be visible on the products' descriptions, so could not be found by a global engine.

However, when a user doesn't know which website to search for an item, there has traditionally been no option other than to use a global search engine. All this changed last year with the launch of the *A9.com* search engine from Amazon, which allows users to send a query to a number of local search engines, as well as a global search engine, and the results are displayed on a single page. This is called syndicated search.

Significantly, *A9.com* also defined a new protocol, called *OpenSearch* to allow webmasters to link their local search engines into *A9.com*, or any other search engine supporting the *OpenSearch* protocol. This is a good first step, but *OpenSearch* is still fairly

limited, allowing only very simple searches to be performed. For example, searches cannot return results divided into multiple categories; a feature used by many searches on shopping sites. Lemur Consulting is working with other information retrieval experts to remove limitations and design successors to the OpenSearch format, ensuring the next generation of syndicated search will allow the full power of modern information retrieval technology to be available to everyday users.

European Parliament Congratulations

On 6th July, the European Parliament voted to reject the software patent directive, ending the attempt to force unlimited patentability of software throughout the European community. Lemur Consulting, which has campaigned against software patents for several years, applauds the Parliament's decision to safeguard European innovation.

Contrary to the claims of the patent lobby, software is adequately and appropriately protected by copyright law. The cost of fighting patent cases is prohibitively expensive for most SMEs; only large corporations benefit by crushing competition from smaller companies, as has been seen time and again in the US. The result is that innovation is held back, monopolies are shored up, and software users suffer.

Despite this victory, problems remain. The European Patent Office continues granting software patents and there is no harmonisation of practice at a national level. Special interest groups are continuing their push to control the software industry. We hope that as a result of the increased awareness of this threat, good sense will prevail.

For more information, see <http://swpat.ffii.org/>