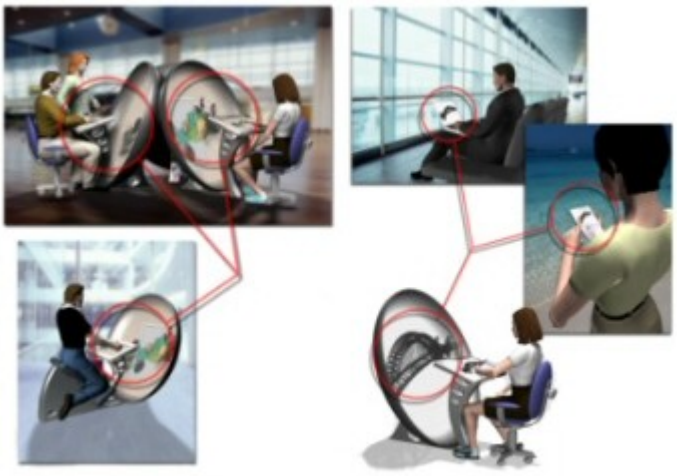
Topic:
Collaborative Solutions

Collaborative Virtual Workspaces

An insight into a major new innovation for Engineers – lead by the University of Salford…

Collaborative virtual workspace plans unveiled



A major European project has been announced to enable engineers in the aerospace, automotive and construction industries across the globe to interact using virtual reality technology.

Led by the **University of Salford's School of the Built Environment** (http://www.sobe.salford.ac.uk), partners in the €12m European Commission project met at the University in May 2007 to discuss the development of future collaborative workspaces which will allow engineers from different countries to meet and work as a team in cyberspace to design automotives, aeroplanes and buildings.

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About CoSpaces

CoSpaces is an IP project funded by the EU under the Information Society Technologies (IST) section of the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6). The overall objective is to develop organisational models and distributed technologies supporting innovative collaborative workspaces for individuals and project teams within distributed virtual manufacturing enterprises. CoSpaces proposes to validate these collaborative workspaces against three sectors: **aerospace, automotive and construction**. However, the impact of this research will go beyond these three sectors due to the generic nature of the technologies.

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The evolution of IT over the past 20 years has led to the development of individual CAD/CAE workstations. While the computational power available to Engineering professionals has grown exponentially, the collaborative dimension of the workspace has been largely under developed. CoSpaces will provide an evolutionary path towards new and more collaborative work environments. Users of CoSpaces technologies in manufacturing and design, in cooperation with their suppliers, will be able to configure their own collaborative workspaces and utilise groundbreaking innovations in context-aware interfaces, natural interfaces, and "human-centric" workspaces supporting a range of collaboration scenarios and product lifecycles.

It is hoped that in just a few years these collaborative workspaces will be available for industries across the world – saving them the time and cost of international travel and helping to reduce carbon emissions.

For the past year a total of 20 international industry and research partners in the CoSpaces project have been working to develop the collaborative workspace technology, led by the University's Professor Terrence Fernando. He said: "This is truly pioneering technology. It will allow colleagues to work in the same space, but in different countries. This way of working will revolutionise the way that the construction, aerospace and automotive industries currently design and interact. The possibilities for other areas are vast and we are already thinking about developing the concept for industries such as urban planning."

The partners met at the University of Salford's Think Lab - one of the most advanced virtual environment centres in the world and unique in Europe – on 25 May 2007 to demonstrate an early version of the technology that will be advanced over the coming months.

For more information about the CoSpaces project go to: http://www.cospaces.org/

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