



*****PRESS RELEASE*****Wednesday 18 August 2004

HEADLINE: Workshop on New Internet Social and Business Opportunities
1-2 Sept, NUI Galway

The Friend of a Friend (FOAF) project (<http://www.foaf-project.org/>) is a practical experiment designed to identify and solve social and business concerns arising from the next generation of web technology – the “semantic web”.

According to Dr Stefan Decker, one of the conference organizers, and a senior researcher (cluster leader) at The Digital Enterprise Research Centre (DERI) at NUI Galway

“The Internet is a tool to connect people, and Online Social Networking is the next step for the internet. “

Online Social Networking sites and the Friend-of-a-Friend standard make it possible for communities to exist on the internet and allow companies to build infrastructure to connect people and manage connections. FOAF and Online Social Networking also open significant business and usage opportunities.

“The FOAF standard acts as a crystallization point for development of the Semantic Web”, says Dr Decker. “People are extending the FOAF standard to manage their own personal digital picture collection, state information about their pets and hobbies”.

Dr John Breslin, another organizer, and also a researcher at DERI, says

“Until recently, each site kept its own database of personal information. This meant that each time you visited a separate site you had to re-enter the same information. A similar thing happens each time you buy something off the internet. Go to a different shopping site and you have to retype in the same information over again. The semantic web will allow your computer to do this automatically for you. The challenge is to enable your computer to “know” what information is appropriate to give out about you.”

There is a growing user and business interest in being able to transport relevant information between sites. This obviously raises big security issues. No one wants information that they enter for personal reasons to be available to marketers, spammers or fraudsters. For example, if you join a social network of food lovers, you don't want your mailbox to be stuffed by advertisements for

restaurants, or maybe you do? How do we decide the rules by which our information is shared amongst other internet users?

FOAF is trying to reduce the need for data re-entry, while allowing users to control who sees what information about them.

The first FOAF Workshop on 1-2 September at NUI Galway is bringing together people from all perspectives to discuss the issue. It will be attended by, social technical, legal, business and academic parties to try to shape and mould the evolution of these new social applications of internet technology with the budding semantic web.

Topics to be discussed will include, among others

- Applications of online social networks
- Trust Issues in social networks
- Privacy, etiquette and best practice issues for aggregators
- Exchange of social network information
- Integration with desktop and mobile applications.
- Business Models for the Semantic Web (Life after banner advertisements)

For further information please contact

Brian Cummins,
DERI Communications Manager
Digital Enterprise Research Institute
NUI Galway
Ph 091 524411 ext 5180
e-mail: Brian.Cummins@deri.org

*****ENDS*****