

Delivering on digital content's full potential

September 16 2005

The hardware and software developed by a European project aims to unleash the full potential of digital media by offering the secure creation, delivery and consumption of audiovisual media across a wide range of hybrid networks and platforms.

The IST-funded project TIRAMISU focuses on protection of intellectual assets by securing the content with a digital rights management (DRM) solution, while maintaining interoperability and use of open standards.

According to project coordinator Yael Lapid, the project seeks to research, develop, exploit and integrate technologies for providing easy and inexpensive access to protected multimedia content to home users on appliances such as television sets, PDAs, mobile phones and PCs.

In terms of the advantages that TIRAMISU offers over current technologies, Lapid is unequivocal that their solution offers real progress to all interested parties.

“There are two principal uses for TIRAMISU - super distribution and roaming. Super distribution applies when the customer is also a distributor,” she says. “This paradigm, usually viewed by the content industry as the biggest threat to their business, has been turned by TIRAMISU into a powerful promotion tool. Our approach encourages free distribution of [protected] content, and maintains control over the business by enumerating content consumption rather than content distribution.”

The other major plus is roaming, which Lapid describes as the ability to use licensed content independently of location, device, or network connection. “The TIRAMISU approach entitles a consumer a licence to the conceptual digital item, rather than to a physical copy or flavour. It means that a user will only need to insert a smartcard in a device and all content that was licensed will be accessible at the adequate quality of service,” she says.

“The TIRAMISU approach has been communicated through various forums and standardisation bodies and we are in the process of validating all the features of the TIRAMISU framework. Everything in the project is on target, which means that in the two months that are left until the end of the project only final tests are left to be done,” says Lapid.

In essence, TIRAMISU’s approach has been to adapt existing DRM technologies and develop new technologies where necessary using existing and emerging open standards. The project has also contributed to the development of new standards in order to provide robust, flexible and affordable protection of new multimedia formats such as object-based and advanced 3D graphics.

With content creators currently waging war on rampant Internet piracy of digital media, Lapid acknowledges that gaining acceptance for a new approach to DRM was always likely to meet some resistance.

“There were several hurdles to overcome. The main difficulties are lack of standards, divergence of efforts toward industry agreement, the paranoia of the content industry and its belated reaction to technology achievements,” she says.

While noting that these difficulties are beyond the project’s control, Lapid believes that TIRAMISU’s main message is slowly gaining

traction. “We see various efforts and alliances that have basically adopted the TIRAMISU approach and if some of these prevail it will be partly due to the project’s impact,” she says.

Given the skyrocketing demand for secure delivery of digital media, the commercial potential for TIRAMISU’s solution is very high, says Lapid.

“There are plans to commercially exploit the project's results, but these are pending until standardisation issues are sorted out. However since the prominent standardisation activities are basically in line with the TIRAMISU approach, exploitation is not expected to face any technical hurdles,” she ends.

Source: [IST Results](#)

Citation: Delivering on digital content’s full potential (2005, September 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2005-09-digital-contents-full-potential.html>

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