

Swedish researcher launches unique search engine for the Web

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Sweden-based company Polar Rose will soon be introducing a Web-based search engine that can find photographs of people by analyzing pictures and identifying faces. The search engine-which will be the first of its kind in the world-is the result of research carried out by Jan Erik Solem at Technology and Society, Malmo University College. He will publicly defend his thesis on Friday, September 29.

Jan Erik Solem is part of a research team in applied mathematics that is working with image analysis and computer vision. In his dissertation he shows how computers can be made, through mathematical processes, to create three-dimensional models of objects or persons on the basis of regular photographs.

Simply put, it's a matter of calculating where the camera was positioned in relation to the object and then doing the geometry, according to Jan Erik Solem.

"For faces it's possible in principle to create 3D data on the basis of a single photograph, but most often we have worked with 5-10 still photos or with film sequences."

The technology is applicable to a number of fields, as Jan Erik Solem sees it.

"Much of our research is geared to automating work at the computer. In city planning, for example, and architecture many hours of work are

devoted to creating 3D models manually. If that process can be simplified, there will be incredible amounts of money saved. Another conceivable area of use is in gaming, where this technology would make it possible to put objects into the virtual world by photographing them," he says.

Jan Erik Solem himself hopes to soon be living proof that the results of his dissertation can be commercialized. He has started a company called Polar Rose, which has developed a technology for recognizing faces based on his research findings. The productthe Web-based search engine will be the first in the world that can search for faces and not text.

The search engine will soon undergo testing by a number of beta-users, and roughly by year's end it will be launched full scale, according to Jan Erik Solem.

"Since there is no such search service in existence today, it's going to be really exciting to see how it is received. And if it's a success, then we'll be saddled with the luxury problem of competing with giants like Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo."

Source: Swedish Research Council

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