NASA and Google to Bring Space Exploration Down to Earth

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NASA Ames Research Center and Google have signed a Space Act Agreement that formally establishes a relationship to work together on a variety of challenging technical problems ranging from large-scale data management and massively distributed computing, to human-computer interfaces.

As the first in a series of joint collaborations, Google and Ames will focus on making the most useful of NASA's information available on the Internet. Real-time weather visualization and forecasting, high-resolution 3-D maps of the moon and Mars, real-time tracking of the International Space Station and the space shuttle will be explored in the future.

"This agreement between NASA and Google will soon allow every American to experience a virtual flight over the surface of the moon or through the canyons of Mars," said NASA Administrator Michael Griffin at Headquarters in Washington. "This innovative combination of information technology and space science will make NASA's space exploration work accessible to everyone," added Griffin.

"Partnering with NASA made perfect sense for Google, as it has a wealth of technical expertise and data that will be of great use to Google as we look to tackle many computing issues on behalf of our users," said Eric Schmidt, chief executive officer of Google. "We're pleased to move forward to collaborate on a variety of technical challenges through the signing of the Space Act Agreement."

Recently, teams from NASA and Google met to discuss the many challenging computer science problems facing both organizations and possible joint collaborations that could help address them.

NASA and Google intend to collaborate in a variety of areas, including incorporating agency data sets in Google Earth, focusing on user studies and cognitive modeling for human computer interaction, and science data search utilizing a variety of Google features and products.

"Our collaboration with Google will demonstrate that the private and public sectors can accomplish great things together," said S. Pete Worden, Ames center director. "I want NASA Ames to establish partnerships with the private sector that will encourage innovation, while advancing the Vision for Space Exploration and commercial interests," Worden added.

"NASA has collected and processed more information about our planet and universe than any other entity in the history of humanity," said Chris C. Kemp, director of strategic business development at Ames. "Even though this information was collected for the benefit of everyone, and much is in the public domain, the vast majority of this information is scattered and difficult for non-experts to access and to understand.

"We've worked hard over the past year to implement an agreement that enables NASA and Google to work closely together on a wide range of innovative collaborations," said Kemp. "We are bringing together some of the best research scientists and engineers to form teams to make more of NASA's vast information accessible."

NASA and Google also are finalizing details for additional collaborations that include joint research, products, facilities, education and missions.

Source: NASA