

Research transforms image search market

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Imprezzeo, an image-search software company established by university tech-transfer company, UniQuest, has launched into the global market with its innovative platform technology developed by researchers at The University of Queensland (UQ) and the University of Wollongong (UOW).

With backing from Independent News and Media PLC (INM), Imprezzeo is expected to transform the image search market by allowing users to use images to search for images, rather than the traditional keyword-based approach.

Imprezzeo helps the user to better refine a set of returned images by selecting those which resemble what they are looking for. By analysing the characteristics of the selected sample, the Imprezzeo engine can quickly and seamlessly re-order the results or the whole image collection to show the images that best match the sample. The technology has been designed to complement existing search engines by acting as a very powerful refinement tool after any initial image results set has been returned.

As well as dramatically enhancing the user's search experience, Imprezzeo also benefits content providers such as photo agencies. By delivering a wider and more relevant range of images they will be able to generate more usage and sales, and promote greater customer loyalty.

Imprezzeo's unique accuracy and speed, even when dealing with collection sizes of more than a million images, were built upon on an

amalgam of facial recognition technology developed at UQ by computational scientist Dr Kevin Gates and a content-based image retrieval method discovered by UOW researchers Professor Philip Ogunbona and Dr Lei Ye.

Imprezzeo is the first start-up company to enter the international market arising from the commercialisation collaboration signed between the two universities in 2005.

For UniQuest's Managing Director, David Henderson, Imprezzeo's global launch is particularly exciting.

"In this digital age, people are creating image content like never before," Mr Henderson said.

"When we first became aware of Professor Ogunbona and Dr Ye's technology in 2005, just after UOW came on board with us, we recognised its commercial potential immediately and got the process underway for filing the patent.

"We had previously patented Dr Gates' discovery and the market synergies between the technologies were obvious, so the next step was to package together the Intellectual Property of both discoveries and fund the important proof-of-concept research."

"The project was also shortlisted for UQ Enterprize in 2006 and a full business plan was prepared with help from UQ MBA students.

"Now we have an Australian company with technical development and R&D taking place in Sydney, and sales and management functions based in London where the major image libraries and media end-users are located. We're very proud to have played a key role in making this happen for both universities."

UOW's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Lee Astheimer, believes the young company's success demonstrates what can be achieved when the challenges of getting an idea into the marketplace are tackled collaboratively and leveraged by the resources of Australia's more experienced commercialisation teams.

"The University of Wollongong has a well-established reputation for introducing innovation to the world across a range of disciplines, including IT," Professor Astheimer said.

"Imprezzeo's success, after a relatively short period of development, affirms the University's strategic decision to take a collaborative approach to commercialising our intellectual property with UniQuest.

"The global launch is great news for everyone who has been involved with the research and the establishment of the company. We congratulate them on achieving this milestone for their new enterprise."

Building on UniQuest's initial support and funding, Imprezzeo sought additional commercial partners and secured capital investment from INM in June 2007. It has spent the past 12 months refining its software applications and patent protection in preparation for the global launch.

Provided by University of Queensland

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