Social gadgets added to iGoogle homepages

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The Internet giant announced the US debuts on iGoogle of 19 community-oriented mini-programs including chess and trivia game play and firing off updates about one's life.

"Social gadgets let you share, collaborate and play games with your friends on top of all the things you can already do on your homepage," Google vice president of search products and user experience Marissa Mayer and iGoogle product manager Rose Yao said in a joint message posted online.

"Your friends are able to see what you share or do in your social gadgets either by having the same gadgets on their homepages, or through a new feed called Updates."

People using iGoogle can create a "Friends" group to designate who they want to share digital data with.

The iGoogle social gadgets were launched recently in Australia and are being rolled out in the United States, according to Mayer and Yao.

"The Google homepage has always been a place that connects people to information, and we're excited to now also be a place that connects people to each other," the executives said in their message.

"We hope these social gadgets make iGoogle an even more fun and personal homepage for you."

There are more than 60,000 mini-applications in a gadget directory that can be used to customize iGoogle homepages with hip, playful, or functional programs, according to the California-based Internet goliath.

The addition of social gadgets comes as Google competes for people's online time with social-networking services Facebook and MySpace and microblogging sensation Twitter.

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