

Yahoo Japan develops 3D search engine-printer

September 18 2013



A woman demonstrates a voice-activated Internet search engine linked to a 3D printer in Tokyo on September 17, 2013.

Yahoo Japan Corp. has developed a voice-activated Internet search that links to a 3D printer, letting users look online for blueprints to deliver solid objects in a few minutes, the company said.

The search engine scours the Internet for information that it can use to print palm-sized renderings of items as diverse as hippopotamuses or [fighter jets](#).

Heralded as a technology that is potentially as game-changing as the [steam engine](#) was in its day, 3D printers have become a more commonplace reality over the last few years.

The devices use slices of information about a three-dimensional object and gradually deposits fine layers of material—such as plastic, carbon or metal—to build a copy.

Design information for a working handgun was posted online earlier this year, sparking warnings that the technology needed to be tamed amid fears of a wave of home-built weaponry.

Yahoo Japan, which is part-owned by Japanese mobile carrier Softbank and US Internet giant Yahoo! Inc. has no firm plans on commercialising the technology.

As part of the project, Yahoo Japan has introduced the 3D search engine to a school for blind and visually impaired students in Tokyo on a temporary basis, it said, adding they can use it for free until mid-October.

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Citation: Yahoo Japan develops 3D search engine-printer (2013, September 18) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-yahoo-japan-3d-engine-printer.html>

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