CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

Access Grid Enables Distance Conferencing

UF Information Technology

UFIT

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Table of Contents

Access Grid Enables Distance Conferencing ..............................................................3
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It looks like any conference room anywhere on campus...but this room, located in the Bryant Space Sciences Research Building (SSRB), is like only a few in the country. From this room, a conference, a meeting, or a class can take place, even if the participants are in far-flung parts of campus or of the country.

The Access Grid is an ensemble of resources that can be used to support human interaction. Access Grid nodes are "designed spaces" that explicitly contain the high-end audio and visual technology needed to provide a high-quality compelling user experience. This environment will support large-scale distributed meetings, collaborative work sessions, seminars, lectures, tutorials and training. The Access Grid target is group-to-group communication, thus differentiating it from desktop-to-desktop-based tools that focus on individual communication. Large-format displays integrated with intelligent or active meeting rooms, such as the one in the SSRB, are a central feature of the Access Grid nodes.

The Access Grid had a test run on Wednesday, March 6. Dave Pokorney, Greg Goddard, and Joella Walz, all of OIT-Network Services, were in the active conference room in the SSRB, home to OIT-Network Services, NERDC, and the Department of Astronomy. John Hughes was in the Brain Institute, and Andy Quay was at the Digital Worlds Institute at the Computer Science and Engineering Building. Despite being scattered over campus, they were all virtually in the same room, talking to each other in real time. Windows of various sizes, which were projected on blank screens on a wall, showed each of the participants in his or her own environment, including Pokorney, director of OIT-Network Services, from his own desktop.

"We were very pleased with the way the test run went," said Goddard, network engineer for Network Services. "The next step will be to have the access grid venues server-hosted at NERDC, so that the information stays at UF. Currently, the data goes from UF to Argonne National Laboratories and back to UF."

The room is available for use on a limited basis. If you are interested in using the active room (SSRB 217) please contact both Astronomy Department Secretary Janice Douglas at (352) 392-2052 x201 or via e-mail at janice@astro.ufl.edu and Greg Goddard at (352) 392-2061 x165 or via e-mail at gregg@nersp.cns.ufl.edu. For more information, please see http://www.accessgrid.org.

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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