

CANARIE ASSISTS WITH ACCESS GRID DEVELOPMENT AT RYERSON

In conjunction with the University of Calgary and Sheridan College, Ryerson University will assist in the development of the Access Grid in Canada. Access Grid is an Internet based conferencing application developed using multi-cast backbone protocol. It allows research teams, separated by great distances, to collaborate on the same project simultaneously using high quality video, audio and data sharing. Aided by CANARIE Inc., the Rogers Centre will explore the use of broadband technology and how it could be used to improve on long-distance communication among research teams via video conferencing, video streaming, and real-time simulation or modeling.

Access Grid was developed because of the limitations of Multicast Conferencing made possible by Mbone technology. With Multicast Conferencing, one is able to conference with many people simultaneously. However, Multicast Conferencing effectively limits the number of people that are able to work from one workstation as each workstation is equipped with a single video port; meaning that realistically, only one person can conference with others from one workstation. This is not the case with Access Grid. Access Grid provides multiple video ports that feed into a huge display area so that a group of people at one workstation (i.e. one node) can

conference with a group of people at several other nodes; creating a much more dynamic conferencing experience and facilitating multi-node to multi-node conferencing between multitudes of people. In other words, with Multicast Conferencing, an individual at a single work station can conference with several individuals at several other workstations; but with Access Grid, a group of people at a single node can conference with several groups of peoples at several other nodes.

Ryerson was selected to participate in this study, which is funded by CANARIE, to examine interface and usability issues associated with Access Grid, along with the University of Calgary and Sheridan College. The Rogers Centre itself is being used as a test location for this research. A multi-camera environment has been established, allowing staff at the Rogers Centre to conference with others outside the Institution. According to Many Ayromlou, one of the key research personnel at the Rogers Centre, Access Grid is a bandwidth intensive application and institutions should take this into consideration before deciding whether to implement it within their organization. At the end of the study, the research team will submit a publication citing recommendations on the strengths and weaknesses of Access Grid and how to improve it in collaborative research applications.



MANY AYROMLOU

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