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EURON

European Robotics Research Network

Network of Excellence

Information Society Technologies Priority

DR 10.5

Web Site Structure and Statistics

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Dissemination level: PU

1 Summary

The EURON website is a widely used resource both in the EU and outside, attracting on average 4800 hits per day.

2 Web Site Structure

The web site has been designed to serve both network members and other visitors, the latter being experienced roboticists, students and also the general public. Its principal design goal is therefore to provide information about and for EURON members in an attractive and accessible manner. The colourful graphic design contributes to this, as does the organisation of the site into five different logical areas.

3 Statistics on Web Site Usage: Period 4

By March 2008 the web site contained approximately 300 “real” EURON HTML pages (i.e., excluding pictures, PDF files, HTML pages sent in by others and displayed “as is” ...). These pages are organised into five major sections, each colour-coded to aid navigation. Only headings for these main sections and the “home” icon are visible in every page. A right-hand column gives the opportunity for important information to be carried between related pages.

During 2007–2008 around 2,500,000 distinct IP addresses successfully fetched 1.7 million elements from www.euron.org, of which 427,500 were actual pages and many of the rest pictures. The site received nearly 4,800 successful hits producing 1,200 pages per day on average and transferred around 110 megabytes of data each day.

Of course, the home page is fetched most often (c. 41% of successful page fetches). People then seem to jump to almost any page, indicating that the menus work successfully without requiring long strings of clicks to reach the desired page. The second most popular page, the news index, was fetched only 1.5% of the time. Only six other pages: the robot gallery, three other major section index pages, and jobs pages achieved 1% popularity.

About 15% of total site accesses are due to search engine web spiders, not included in the figures above.

The number of fetches is much higher than the number of pages accessed since it includes pictures, style files and the like. However, the number of pages looked at is actually higher than shown in the log files, since retrieving cached versions of pages generates no hits.

Analysing the Internet addresses from which webpage requests come allows us to see roughly which countries use www.euron.org most. Note that this analysis cannot be accurate, since not all Internet addresses have a specific geographical location.

American addresses account for about a fifth of requests. Germany, a tenth. Italy, the UK, Spain and France between them account for over a quarter. China also appears in the top 10 countries, with India, Canada and Korea not far outside.

4 Summary of Web Site Usage and Development over 4 Years

The task of providing EURON’s web infrastructure was assigned to SDU at the end of month 6 of the network, in response to the high cost of proprietary solutions offered by the originally planned

provider(s).

A preliminary design for the web site was produced by month 7 and was active and public by month 8–9. In response to internal comments and comments from the EURON reviewers at the first annual review, the initial design was reworked structurally and graphically to yield the present successful organisation and appearance. The new design was published in time for the second annual review.

The usage of the site has been substantial, as the statistics above for period 4 demonstrate, with growth over the years from 100 hits per hour on average during period 2 to the present 200 or so. Analysis of Internet addresses reveals widespread use of the site with accesses from many countries. There has been no substantial change in this aspect of the web site usage since the site redesign, apart from a substantial increase in the number of distinct Internet addresses originating requests over the course of period 4.

The conclusion is that EURON’s web site is now an established, visible and active presence and an important asset of the network.

5 Summary of Web Site Development

The original proposal accepted by the EURON Board was for provision of the network’s web presence using Open Source tools and technologies. The principal cost of the web site was the provision of a content editor, whose task was to ensure that the site was up-to-date, well presented, and contentful. The intention was that the site would in due course become self-authored by the membership of the network, with editorial consistency provided by the content editor, though hosting the content using a suitable CMS infrastructure.

The first two of these goals — Open Source hosting of an attractive web site and content editor provision — have been met for most of the period of the network, following the finalisation of structure and graphic design accomplished during period 2. The content editor has maintained attractive and contemporary site content, researched and authored regular robot-of-the-week columns, and developed several hundred site pages. She has also assisted with preparation of various EURON publicity materials.

Completion of the third goal, of implementing a self-authored CMS-driven site, has been more elusive, depending for the first three periods on the spare time and abilities of the Key Area Chair. Additional ‘distractions’ in the form of web data entry systems needed for EURON activities meant that the implementation of the CMS infrastructure was deferred.

In period 4, this goal became high priority.

Using the TikiWiki infrastructure — chosen, as reported earlier, for its cleanness of implementation, easy customisability, good documentation, extensive feature provision and active development community — the CMS infrastructure has been implemented and at the time of writing is undergoing final testing. The look and feel of www.euron.org will be unchanged by the new infrastructure, with the editing interface for the CMS being deployed at a new location tiki.euron.org. We expect the main site to be running under the new software in early June.