For Immediate Release

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Spider Networks' Defines New Rules for Britain's e-Learning System

Interactive web communications leader launches ePortfolio; every schoolchild in Britain can now have a personal online portfolio showcasing best work and allow parents and teachers online access to that work; to be showcased at BETT 2006

London, November 7, 2005 - Spider Networks, the power behind interactive web communications, today launches nationwide a new online solution that supports one of the Government's key goals in transforming e-learning in Britain. Called ePortfolio, the solution enables every schoolchild in Britain to have a personal online portfolio showcasing best work and giving parents and teachers online access to that work.

The first public showing of ePortfolio takes place on Spider's stand N21 at BETT 2006 (11-14 January, 2006, Olympia, London), following on from the first successful LEA-wide implementation in late 2005. Live demonstrations will be given throughout this leading educational ICT event.

The launch of ePortfolio follows beta-testing and refinements to the product with the Wolverhampton Local Education Authority, which has since adopted Spider's new solution as the *de facto* online learning portal for all pre-14 students in the City.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) views ICT as core to British learning. A component of the DfES' vision and advice to LEAs is that each learner should have their own personal online learning portfolio, where work-in-progress and exemplar completed work can be stored and accessed from any connected platform.

Wolverhampton City Council teamed with Spider to become the first LEA to implement the DfES' vision. From the outset, Wolverhampton and Spider recognised that learner ownership of each online portfolio was vital, as was simplicity, security and customisation of each portfolio for sustained use. In differing school environments, the LEA and Spider also recognised that the varying degrees of ICT skills, and the low level of parental involvement in their childrens work, would need to be considered and addressed for ePortfolio to become an authority-wide success.

Spider Networks worked closely with Wolverhampton's Education Authority staff to set clear project objectives from the start. Delivery platforms, software functionality and the ethos behind the service were all established at an early date. A web-based application was developed, to be driven and managed by learners, giving limited access to teachers and parents. Each child's e-Portfolio would be accessible from a standard PC web browser or handheld wireless device.

During beta testing, ePortfolio was released to a small number of teaching and ICT professionals and then further refined to reflect the daily learning experience of students at home and in schools. At all times, students remained at the centre of the service, not teachers, who usually drive e-learning applications**.**

At launch, Wolverhampton experienced a dramatic transformation in the attitude of staff, students and parents to online learning. Wolverhampton's e-Learning Co-ordinator, Rebecca Orszulan, comments: "A month after launch, ePortfolio became the service-of-choice for all pupils. We now see students taking a real pride in their work and in displaying it to others. Parents have also become impressed with ePortfolio and many have written to schools expressing their delight at being able to see their children's work progress every evening."

Not only have students taken the service to heart, but many have exceeded the requirements of their curriculum. Ms. Orszulan explains: "For example, Key Stage 1 and 2 students were given five lessons in how to use ePortfolio, and the result far exceeds QCA objectives for these age groups. Students flew through the lessons and experienced no problems in either grasping the technology or using it to support their classwork."

Students have also integrated ePortfolio with other services already in place. Without prompting, one student worked to complete work over several days, using ePortfolio to securely store draft work online and accessing it from home and the school. When complete, the student used Spider's integrated email service to deliver finished homework to her teacher. "When word got round the class that this had happened, staff inboxes were full with completed homework before we knew it," adds Ms. Orszulan.

With over 1,400 personal student ePortfolios created and used in the first few weeks of deployment, Ms. Orszulan was asked to summarise the success of the new solution: "Students own the solution. As teachers, we can only look in from the outside with the content of each ePortfolio being the responsibility of each student. There is also recreation space available in each ePortfolio, so students can customise their virtual home with other content including pictures, music, documents and videos."

Has ePortfolio changed the way the students view life at school? "Absolutely," says Ms. Orszulan. "The traditional Show-and-Tell now happens online, with students emailing teachers their digital pictures instead of bringing along paper-based versions. At our last Worship, a 7 year-old student demonstrated his newfound learning skills, went to an online study site, generated picture content, copied it to his ePortfolio, and bookmarked the study site ... all in front of a hall filled with his peers."

About Spider Networks
Based in London, Spider Networks is the power behind interactive web communications. From one integrated online environment, over 500,000 users in education, businesses, sports clubs, government and charities use Spider's technology to create new revenue streams and to better communicate and interact dynamically within an organisation and beyond with customers, suppliers, channels, partners, members, donors, fans and sponsors. For further information on Spider Networks' solutions, visit www.spider-networks.net, or email enquiries@spider-networks.net.

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