

**PRESS INVITATION:**

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## **Cambridge Weblab goes live**

Friday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006

The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge

Many universities have excellent teaching facilities which, because of their nature, are only used for a few hours per term and then lie idle for the rest of the year. What if this equipment was accessible 24 hours a day from everywhere in the world? This would allow much more intensive use of existing facilities, saving resources and would allow many universities access to teaching facilities which they would not have otherwise.

The Cambridge Weblab does exactly this by allowing users anywhere in the world to use a laboratory reactor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cambridge over the web. The Weblabs, a collaboration between MIT and Cambridge University, were funded by the Cambridge-MIT Institute. Dr Markus Kraft, Reader at the Department of Chemical Engineering in Cambridge, and his team from the Computational Modelling Group explored during the project new, web-based methods of teaching by successfully setting up and using internet-accessible equipment.

The Cambridge Weblab consists of a reactor, auxiliary equipment and state-of-the-art industrial process control devices and software. Due to the significant contribution of Siemens it was possible to set up the Cambridge Weblab as a fully functional “plant” with monitoring, controlling, and data output performed by a Siemens SIMATIC PCS7 process control system. The Cambridge Weblab goes operational on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006 when Martin Kremer, Science Director at the German embassy,, will launch the system at a ceremony in Cambridge.

Prof Mike Gregory, Executive director of the Cambridge-MIT Institute said: “This project is a shining example of how we have collaborated to devise new ways of business to yield significant educational benefits”.

In trials, the system has already been used successfully in teaching at the University of Cambridge, at MIT and at Imperial College London. Interest has also been expressed by other universities such as Birmingham and Newcastle. It is likely that interest will spread around Europe and the rest of the world as successful use of the system yields great educational and economic benefits.

Prof Lynn Gladden, Head of the Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Cambridge said: “We are delighted to have the Cambridge Weblab in our department. This gives our students an excellent opportunity to get valuable experience on real industrial equipment.”

## Notes for Editors

1. The Cambridge-MIT Institute was established to explore how academics, industrialists and educators might work together to stimulate competitiveness, productivity and entrepreneurship. As many UK institutions have considerable expertise in knowledge development and exchange, it has collaborated with a wide range of partners. It has sought to make a difference in three main areas:
  - Education for Innovation
  - Knowledge Integration in Research
  - Engaging Industry in Knowledge exchange

It has also developed a better understanding of how to organise and manage complex industrial relationships.

The first phase of The Cambridge-MIT Institute is now complete and the lessons learned are being captured and shared. Its website ([www.cambridge-mit.org](http://www.cambridge-mit.org)) provides an introduction to its activities and links to its many partners, projects and initiatives.

The ongoing Cambridge-MIT Partnership will encourage wide participation in the many collaborative activities and communities that have developed and will act as a catalyst for the growing transatlantic academic and industrial community.

2. The Weblabs project has been funded by the Cambridge-MIT Institute (CMI) since 2003. Having arisen from a CMI-sponsored student exchange, Weblabs has furthered that cooperation through the collaboration of Dr Markus Kraft, Reader in Chemical Engineering at the University of Cambridge and Prof Clark Colton, Professor of Chemical Engineering at MIT in taking the Weblabs from concept to realisation.
3. Siemens' Automation & Drives division collaborated in the project by contributing significant industrial state-of-the-art process control equipment and technical support in setting up the equipment.
4. The opening ceremony on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2006 will bring together delegates from industry and universities with a common interest in process control, chemical engineering, and e-learning. In addition, there will be several dignitaries in attendance, including the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Prof Ian Leslie, and the Executive Director of the CMI, Prof Mike Gregory. Demonstrating the Weblab's capacity for remote operation, the opening will take place via an internet connection, with the official commissioning accompanied by speeches and talks. After the opening, the delegates are welcome to get hands-on experience of the Weblab during the discussion and demonstration.

The schedule for the event will be:

10.30	Arrival
11.00	Welcome - Prof Ian Leslie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of University of Cambridge - Prof Lynn Gladden, Head of Department of Chemical Engineering - Prof Mike Gregory, Executive director of CMI - Brian Holliday, General Manager Siemens
	Introduction to the Cambridge Weblab
	Siemens in the UK - Stephen Hughes, General Manager Siemens
12.00	Cambridge Weblab goes live - Martin Kremer, Science Director at the German embassy
	Discussion and demonstration
13.00	Lunch
14.30	Close

5. For further information, please contact

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