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Zoo Atlanta's "Virtual Gorilla" Exhibit Gets Virtual Makeover from Cybernet Systems

Upgraded software creates realistic gorillas and habitat for interactive educational tool

Ann Arbor, MI, January 28, 2003 — Cybernet Systems Corporation, an Ann Arbor-based research and development firm focused on advancing the state of human-machine interaction, today announced the completed upgrade of Zoo Atlanta's "Virtual Gorilla" computerized educational tool. Partly funded by a National Science Foundation project led by Dr. Kenneth Hay at the University of Georgia, the Virtual Gorilla program is used to help students become familiar with using the scientific method and form a better understanding of gorillas by interacting with them in a virtual environment. Cybernet Systems improved the program's realism by giving the virtual gorillas newly enhanced physical features and motion detection capabilities, and by placing them in a more realistic habitat. As a result, users can actually experience the gorilla's social structure by interacting with virtual gorillas in a believable setting.

"The gorilla continues to be one of the world's most endangered species," said Shelly Lakly, Ph.D., Director of Education for Zoo Atlanta. "By engaging our students in an interactive learning environment with such a charismatic animal, we hope to foster a lifelong interest in science and empathy for preserving the gorilla and its habitat. The Virtual Gorilla exhibit is just one of the cutting edge tools Zoo Atlanta has developed to elevate the quality of education for the students and teachers of Georgia."

Cybernet used its graphics technology associated with its OpenSkies™ network architecture to upgrade the Virtual Gorilla exhibit. Originally developed to meet military training requirements, OpenSkies is the first state-of-the-art, immersive three-dimensional simulation environment for both training and recreational gaming. The

OpenSkies technology improved the Virtual Gorilla's animation and behavior capabilities and added to the visual effects of the virtual environment. In conjunction with updated hardware such as a new PC with a video card based on Nvidia's GeForce4 graphics chipset and a new Head Mounted Display (HMD) and a head tracker, the Virtual Gorilla program now allows a student to virtually interact as a gorilla while other students view the exchange on a screen.

"The Virtual Gorilla upgrade demonstrates how easily Cybernet's OpenSkies software can be customized to meet any need – from educating the community to enhancing the gaming experience," said Cybernet Systems CEO Chuck Jacobus, Ph.D. "We hope to use this deployment at Zoo Atlanta as a model for future educational projects with zoos and museums worldwide."

Originally developed by researchers at Georgia Tech University, the Virtual Gorilla exhibit and coordinated instruction demonstrates why Zoo Atlanta is at the vanguard of educational programming. Its goal is to enrich the students' understanding of the gorilla and strengthen their skills of deductive reasoning. Before entering the exhibit in the zoo's Conservation Action Resource Center, students learn about the social structure of the gorilla and develop a hypothesis on how different gorillas will react to certain behavior. Upon entering the virtual environment as a gorilla, students then test their hypotheses by interacting with three simulated gorillas – a silverback male and two adult female gorillas. Through different vocalizations and gestures that gorillas use to communicate, including screams, grunts and chest beating, students can gauge the gorillas' reactions and change their own behavior accordingly.

The Virtual Gorilla program is currently part of Dr. Hay's Virtual Gorilla Modeling Project. The project combines the use of a virtual environment, a set of modeling tools and video-streaming experiences with on-site observations. Students use gorilla observations to develop virtual reality biomechanical models of gorilla movement, and then produce an interactive model using a rule-building system. This inquiry-based approach fosters an understanding of animal behavior that includes biomechanics and individual gorilla interactions.

Zoo Atlanta estimates that nearly 300 students will visit the Virtual Gorilla exhibit during the remaining school year. Further information on the exhibit is available at <http://www.openskies.net/gorilla/>.

About Cybernet Systems

Cybernet Systems Corp. is a profitable, rapidly growing technology-based company focused on developing products that combine software and Internet intelligence with human-machine interaction. Cybernet has successfully leveraged its wealth of intellectual property to bring force feedback technology to market in the form of game controllers and joysticks, introduced a line of Linux-based Internet appliance software, and launched a PC game enhancement software product. The company continues to innovate in the areas of Internet medical systems, large-scale distributed network training and gaming and gesture control interface technology. Additional information on Cybernet Systems is available on the web at www.cybernet.com.

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