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FIU Unveils Bold New Web Application, ‘TerraFly;’ Could Have Annual Market Value of \$1 Billion

*Cutting-Edge Software Developed with Nearly \$30 Million
in Support from IBM, USGS, NASA and NSF*

MIAMI, Fla. (Oct. 26, 2001) – TerraFly, a new Internet-based software that makes it possible for users to “fly over” vast land areas using only a ordinary web browser, was unveiled today by researchers at Florida International University.

With potential markets ranging from the travel and real estate industries to state and local governments, TerraFly has a potential annual market of \$1 billion, financial analysts working with the project say. IBM and the U.S. Geological Survey recently contributed nearly \$10 million worth of computer hardware and data in the development of TerraFly, raising total support for the groundbreaking project to nearly \$30 million.

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“With the generous support of our industry partners, TerraFly is now one of the largest, if not the largest, publicly accessible databases on the web,” said Naphtali Rishe, Ph.D., principal investigator on TerraFly and the director of FIU’s High-Performance Database Research Center. “TerraFly now includes imagery for the entire United States, and we’re excited about incorporating additional areas around the world. The possible uses for this technology are endless.”

TerraFly uses high-resolution imagery collected by the U.S. Geological Survey. Unlike other computer systems over which such imagery may be viewed, however, TerraFly interfaces with such web browsers as Internet Explorer and Netscape, allowing virtually any user to “fly” over imagery in whatever direction and at whatever speed the user chooses.

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What may be TerraFly's most attractive feature for commercial use, however, is that it allows for graphic overlays, making it customizable for individual markets. Real estate firms, for instance, might develop overlays that show potential customers listed homes; the overlays could be further customized to include asking price, tax information, interior photographs of the home and other key details. Customers could have a much stronger idea of what properties interest them before driving to visit them, cutting down shopping time.

Those customizable elements make TerraFly an attractive technology to license for market development, say financial experts working with TerraFly who have estimated its annual worth to be as much as \$1 billion.

In addition to the \$6.7 million in computer hardware and more than \$3 million in data recently donated by IBM and the USGS, respectively, TerraFly has generated major support from both NASA and the National Science Foundation.

"We are proud to participate in this technology project through a cooperative research and development agreement," said USGS Deputy Director Kathryn Clement "We think this technology has tremendous potential."

"TerraFly is a wonderful example of the possibilities inherent in our High Performance Database Research Center and of the cutting-edge research being done at our university," said FIU President Modesto A. Maidique. "As FIU continues to mature into its role as a national research university, TerraFly will be joined by more and more inventions from our laboratories and researchers. This is a proud day for this university."

Founded in 1965, Florida International University is now one of America's leading public research universities. It is Florida's only public, urban university to hold both the Carnegie Foundation's top rating for research universities and a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. FIU conducted more than \$61 million in sponsored studies in 2000-01.