

**MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release**

**2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2007**

**Vive La Resistance! -**

**Animated superheroes teach Irish kids science**

**Flagship education project wins top E-learning award**

A new breed of animation superheroes created to make science a lot more exciting for Irish schoolchildren took the top prize for Best e-learning product and nomination for Best Animation at the Digital Media Awards in Dublin last night .

*The Resistors!* uses a blend of a prime-time children's television series and interactive games and experiments on the web to reinvigorate science education in Irish schools and was developed by one of the Science Foundation Ireland initiative's flagship projects, The Centre for Telecommunications Value-Chain Research (CTVR) as an outreach programme for Irish schoolchildren.

Speaking at the award ceremony last night, CTVR Director, Professor Donal O'Mahony, said how delighted he was that the jury had selected the Resistors, especially considering the strong field of companies selected as finalists for the Best E-Learning product 2007 award.

This novel approach is a response to the challenge to many Irish Science teachers - how make science cool and attractive to a generation of kids who maybe glued to a Playstation but don't necessarily know how it works. With a national commitment to the establishment of a knowledge economy in the next decade today's schoolchildren will be the engineers and scientists of tomorrow so it is becoming more pressing to encourage them to take science subjects in the Junior and Leaving Certificate cycles."

CTVR's Director, Professor Donal O'Mahony, explains the rationale behind the award winning programme - " Only this week it has been reported that over 14,000 computer jobs remain unfilled in Ireland because of an ICT skills shortage. The future PhD's of 2013 are taking their Leaving Certificate this year. If students don't take higher maths in the Junior Cert, they have already ruled themselves out of a high level career in the science that CTVR is concerned with. If we can encourage just one extra student in every Junior Cert class to stick with science and maths all the way to third level we can assure the viability of the Irish hi-tech sector and the knowledge economy in the future. . We decided that television and the internet were the best way to get directly to the children, parents and teachers." says O'Mahony.

But in order to secure the support of commercial broadcasters they had to develop a TV series that could stand out in the highly slot of primetime children's television. "With such appealing and successful shows as the Simpsons and Spongebob Squarepants grabbing the kids' attention, we had to come up with a format that was as visually exciting and that could stand up in its own right while somehow working the science in," Professor O'Mahony says.

The result was "The Resistors", a stunning CGI-generated cartoon set in Cybernia, a post apocalyptic Ireland of the future. In each 30-minute episode the four young superheroes use their scientific knowledge to defeat evil hackers who have taken over their city.

The main characters correspond to the main areas of the primary science curriculum: Luc (Light), Sonia (sound) Amber (electromagnetism) and Dig (ICT). At the end of each programme the audience are encouraged to go to a specially designed website [www.theresistors.com](http://www.theresistors.com) where the respective animated characters explain the science in the programme by a mix of animation, interactive games and fun learning. There is a large emphasis on discovery learning, and users can also download experiments in handy comic style pages to read later.

The organisers hope that the strong role models of the female characters will particularly encourage young girls to consider science as a subject option. "Because the website will offer many of the mandatory experiments on the junior cycle, we hope that teachers will also find this a great way of helping their pupils to learn and understand some of the more tricky science," Professor O'Mahony says. "In addition, we have web pages devoted to Irish scientists, not only historically, but also highlighting groundbreaking research going on in centres throughout the country today."

The experiments and teaching materials were developed with secondary science teachers as part of the SFI STAR teacher placement programme.

CTVR chose TG4 to broadcast the show because besides a primetime slot the station is making its content available as a webcast, which means schoolchildren can view the episodes at any time, either at home or in the classroom. The series will be rebroadcast in the final school term but is available for free download on the website.

"We are also making the episodes freely available in PS2, Gameboy and 3G Mobile phone formats to get as much playground take up and exposure as possible," Professor O'Mahony says.

The series was developed by leading educational media company Metadigita Limited and Irish animators Rumble Studios, using an advanced production model for 3D animation and incorporates many models of Dublin landmarks developed at the Interaction, Simulation and Graphics Lab at Trinity College Dublin.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Centre for Telecommunications Value-Chain Research ([www.ctvr.ie](http://www.ctvr.ie)) is a joint venture of Irish universities and Bell Labs with the support of the SFI and IDA and is headquartered at Trinity College Dublin.

CTVR brings together a multi-disciplinary group of researchers drawn from many Irish Universities together with a carefully chosen set of industrial partners to work on those engineering and scientific challenges that will make the most difference to the telecommunications networks of the future. The centre and is directed by Professor Donal O'Mahony.

Press ready pictures are available for download from [www.theresistors.com/press.htm](http://www.theresistors.com/press.htm)

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The first ever Digital Media Awards was launched in Dublin in January 2003. The objective of the event was to raise awareness of the emerging digital media sector in Ireland and more importantly to act as a showcase for the many pieces of dynamic work being created by companies and third level institutions across a broad spectrum of categories. The first event attracted 220 entries across 20 categories, with 500 people attending the event. The main sponsors for the inaugural event were O2, Nokia, The Irish Film Board and the Department of Communications.

Since then the event has grown both in terms of entries and attendees, culminating last year to an entry level of 350 and an attendance level of 650.

The Digital Media Awards continuously seek to recognise and reward excellence in the digital media sector by introducing new categories, involving more companies and generating more press interest with each event.

This years award ceremony was hosted by RTE personality Dave Fanning and prizes awarded by Minister Noel Dempsey.

For more information go to <http://www.digitalmedia.ie/>

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