Tombstones with Messages

Robert Barrows, an American, has come up with the idea of tombstones fitted with video screens to relay messages from beyond the grave. According to New scientist, the computerised headstones would contain flat screens on which video recordings from departed loved-ones could be played. Barrows has filed a patent application for the idea, which would allow the deceased to tell their life stories or confess guilty secrets. He also said that a parting video could be made at the same time as a will and left with a lawyer. The tombstones would draw electricity from a cemetery lighting system and visitors can listen to the voices of their departed dear ones through wireless headphones to avoid a grave soundtrack clash with its neighbour. Besides, a range of tombstones would also be available and the standard stone could be graced with a small LCD TV, while a more expensive tombstone might be equipped with a high-definition plasma screen.

A non-violent Computer

A new research conducted by researchers from the University of Southampton suggests that autonomous intelligent software called 'agents' interact in a variety of ways to deal with complex computing problems. According to ABC Online, Nishan Karunatillake and Professor Nicholas Jennings will present their findings at the ArgMAS 2004 international computing workshop in New York. 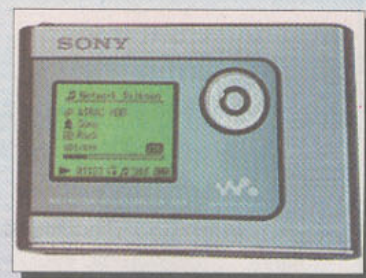Autonomous agents were used in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, where they controlled the behaviour of computer generated characters deciding whether they would fight or abandon the battle. When agents communicate with other agents, they sometimes disagree or argue. They can also use more complex arguments based on evaluating what their opponent agents are 'thinking'. According to the researchers, agents may be better off changing their strategy to avoid an argument, which would also save computing time and costs. They tested a multi-agent system using either a conflict-avoiding or argument-based approach. It was found that arguments were less effective than conflict resolution techniques but arguing was still a better way to get things done when the agents' resources were scarce.

Latest on Sony Walkman

On, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first Walkman, Sony announced a new 20GB hard drive-based "MP3" player, called the Network Walkman NW-HD1. Sony continues to show off its sharp design chops, evidenced by the ultra-compact size and touch-sensitive directional control; but like every other MP3 player to come out of the company's consumer electronics division, this model doesn't actually play MP3s. Instead, MP3s, WAVs, and WMAs must be transcoded to Sony's proprietary ATRAC3 format, which slows file transfers. This is a must for gadget-lovers who don't mind the format constriction.