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Universities to research low-power internet

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Andrew Charlesworth



Leeds and Cambridge Universities have been awarded a five-year £5.9m grant by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) to reduce the energy consumption of ICT networks without inhibiting their growth.

While technology companies are fond of trumpeting their achievements in cutting carbon emissions by, for example, replacing physical travel with videoconferencing, analyst group Gartner estimates the IT industry has a carbon footprint similar to that of aviation, accounting for about two per cent of global emissions.

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The internet, according to University of Leeds, consumes somewhere between three and five per cent of the world's electricity output.

So the grant will fund the *IN*Telligent Energy awaRE NETworks (INTERNET) project, which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of ICT networks by at least an order of magnitude along with a corresponding reduction in non-renewable energy consumption.

The predicted future growth in the number of connected devices, and of the bandwidth of the internet of an order of magnitude or two, is not practical if it leads to a corresponding growth in energy consumption, said Professor Jaafar Elmirghani, chair in communication networks and systems in the School of Electronic and Electrical Engineering at the University of Leeds.

Regulations may therefore come soon, particularly if governments worldwide enforce moves towards carbon neutrality, Professor Elmirghani added.

Professor Elmirghani, also director of the Institute of Integrated Information Systems, is the project's leader. His department's activity focuses on storage area networks, next-generation IP networks, WDM networks, ad-hoc and sensor networks, optical wireless systems (OW) and fibre-wireless systems and networks. Other academic staff from Leeds involved include Dr Li X Zhan, lecturer in communications.

The work at the University of Cambridge will focus on data-communications and RF systems, optical networks and ultrafast photonics, and be led by Professor Richard Penty and Professor Ian White from the Department of Engineering. They will be joined by Professor Jon Crowcroft, Professor Andy Hopper and Dr Andrew Moore from the Computer Laboratory and Professor David MacKay, from the Department of Physics.

The EPSRC dispenses around *£*800m a year in research and postgraduate training grants

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