SPH expands reach of new media

SINGAPORE: Press Holdings (SPH) is expanding its cyberspace efforts as it beefs up a recently launched search engine and advances plans to launch a Web TV service that will be the country’s first.

The media group’s unit, SPH Search, yesterday signed a deal to work with National University of Singapore (NUS) researchers to improve its Rednano Internet search service.

It also made progress on its upcoming webcast service – The Straits Times RazorTV – as it obtained a niche TV licence from the Media Development Authority and signed on local start-up Ufinity as a technology partner.

The Rednano-NUS project, to run over the next three years, seeks to provide more precise results not just for text queries, but for video and image searches as well.

“Our work aims to provide users with precise answers rather than a long list of webpages that other search engines are providing,” said NUS computing professor Chan Tat Seng, who will be leading the project.

SPH Search chief executive Paul Jansen said: “Our investment in this project, both financial and otherwise, reflects how rooted we are in this community.”

SPH also moved closer to the launch of RazorTV, set to be Singapore’s first interactive webcast service when it goes on air next month.

It was awarded a niche Internet TV licence, which carries less onerous obligations than a nationwide one. But it restricts viewership to no more than 100,000 in Singapore.

SPH Search chief executive Paul Jansen (right) and NUS computing professor Chan Tat Seng (left)

MAKING HISTORY: Webcasters in the studio of RazorTV, which is set to be Singapore’s first interactive webcast service when it goes on air next month.

SPH also sealed a deal with Ufinity, which has worked with StarHub and Singapore Exchange, to put in place the infrastructure for the service, which will be broadcast eight hours a day on weekdays.

“This is a unique convergence of Web TV with interactivity and social-networking functions. It will redefine the way news is delivered and consumed in the future,” said Mr Felix Soh, SPH’s digital media editor for the English and Malay Newspapers Division.

RazorTV has won a developer grant from the Government, which yesterday said its efforts to boost research and development in the digital media sphere are paying off.

To further success in the field, the Government is launching an initiative to match innovative digital media companies with investors.

Called iMatch, it has secured commitments from 40 investors, including SPH, ST Electronics and MediaCorp.

Senior Minister of State for Information, Communications and the Arts Lim Tuck Yew highlighted Fresbo – a locally developed application on social networking platform Friendster – as an example of the programme’s success.