EAI Announces STARLIGHT System

If you walked through Product Engineering last month, you may have noticed the walls covered with graffiti. No, we haven’t been invaded by vandals from the New York subway--those scribblings were the result of a serious effort to come up with a name for EAI’s newest simulation computer. After all entries were in, Product Engineering’s vice president, Jack Budelman, chose the winner.

"Naming a new product is harder than it looks," said Vito Bagdonavicis, product manager for the STARLIGHT system. "Just when you think you have the right name, it turns out to mean something unpleasant in another language or some other company is already using it." In the end, "STARLIGHT" got the nod for several reasons, including the fact that it doesn’t conflict with the name of any other companies existing product. It also builds on the SIMSTAR name, an EAI-registered trademark. STARLIGHT runs many of the same applications as SIMSTAR, at a fraction of the cost.

This month marks an end and a beginning. The Company is just finishing a study contract with NASA to "prove the concept" by building a hardware prototype and running several benchmark applications. When the prototype is shipped to NASA next week, it marks the end of a three-man team consisting of Warren Hendricks, John Douceur and George Hannauer. The next phase, developing the system into a commercial product, has already begun.

The STARLIGHT is designed to simulate aerospace vehicles, automobiles, power plants, control systems and anything else that can be modeled mathematically. With a fast simulator, you can find and fix design flaws that would otherwise require expensive and risky experiments. You can stress the design to its limits and beyond. You can "crash" a vehicle many times without damage to life or property.

The main advantages of STARLIGHT over existing simulation systems are speed, low cost and small size. STARLIGHT is about seven times faster than the runner-up CRAY machine. Furthermore, the second-place CRAY is seven feet high, occupies 98 square feet of floor space and costs about $15 - $20 million. The STARLIGHT is smaller than a two-drawer file cabinet and sells for about $150,000.