

Gopher takes the grunt out of microcontroller picks



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Boston — GruntWare has developed a Web-based search tool that enables designers to select a proper microcontroller for embedded applications.

Instead of making designers look up individual specifications of microcontrollers from vendors' Web sites, Rick Hully, GruntWare's president has standardized major microcontroller manufacturers' specifications into a database, which enables searches in an uncomplicated and consistent manner.

"It all started when I was looking for a microcontroller for my design and I was not able to easily navigate to the proper one on the Web," explained Hully. "I wanted to take the grunt work out of that search process for my fellow designers."

Hully was demonstrating Gopher at the Embedded Systems Conference here this week, where the official unveiling took place. The user specifies parameters for the design and iteratively eliminates unneeded parameters from sequential search results until a satisfactorily limited list of microcontrollers are found, from which the most appropriate device can be picked.

The tool incorporates proprietary features including "pin sharing information" where search results are screened to eliminate parts that may meet functional requirements, but do not have the physical number of pins to support necessary functions simultaneously and individually.

Gopher typically has more than two to ten times the searchable parametric data than is available from vendor-supplied search tools, claimed Hully. It can search parametric data not only from a single vendor but from any combination or number of selected vendors simultaneously.

"Users enter their requirements into the Gopher program and then use the returned search results to pick a part that best fits their requirements without having to look at a datasheet," said Hully.

Currently users can search microcontrollers from the following major vendors: Atmel, Cypress Semiconductor, Freescale Semiconductor, Microchip Technology, NEC, NXP Semiconductors, Renesas Technology, ST Microelectronics, Texas Instruments, Toshiba and Zilog. Hully is working to include another 15 vendors' datasheets in the database. Gopher also supports major distributors' lines of microcontrollers.

Gopher can be downloaded for \$299 at www.GruntWareInc.com.