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Astronaut and Hall-of-Fame Game Designer, Richard Garriott, Returns To Gaming With New Social Media Company: Portalarium

First product already in public beta

AUSTIN, Texas, Feb. 17, 2010 – After a two-year hiatus to travel to the International Space Station, work on a film documentary, ignite a personal rapid transit initiative, and wrap up post-flight experiments and speaking engagements, veteran game designer, Richard Garriott, is returning to the video game industry where he has been a fixture for more than 30 years – this time with a broad-based new social media company called [Portalarium](#)[™]. Garriott is best known for his award-winning *Ultima Series* (ORIGIN/Electronic Arts) of fantasy role playing games and *Ultima Online*, the first commercially successful massively multiplayer online game released in 1997 and still operating today.

Garriott's new venture, based once again in Austin, is debuting with product offerings in the online game apps category to start. But Portalarium has a broad-based, open-social mission that will also see it expanding into content that includes open learning, open health, open science/environment, open government and much more, all wrapped in a connective virtual world in the online social networking space. Joining him at the company are co-founders Dallas Snell (chairman and development director) and Fred Schmidt (CEO and publishing director), both of whom previously worked together with Garriott as executives at ORIGIN Systems, Electronic Arts and, most recently, NCsoft. Rounding out the management team as VP and technical director is Stephen Nichols, who spent his entire 17-year gaming career in online games, most recently as producer and lead programmer of NCsoft's *Dungeon Runners*. Garriott has the role of VP and creative director at the company.

Portalarium's first product is an innovative new cross-platform web browser plug-in that permits games developed on a wide variety of game engines and technologies – not just the pervasive Adobe Flash platform – to run seamlessly inside of the major popular social networks. Dubbed The Portalarium Player[™], it is currently in limited beta testing as a Windows PC app on Facebook® and is running Portalarium's first published title, a Texas hold 'em card game called [Sweet @\\$! Poker](#)[™]. It already supports all major Internet browsers and is also in development to run within MySpace and other social networks, as well as on Macintosh and on mobile devices such as iPhone and Android.

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Portalarium is being announced this week in Las Vegas in conjunction with D.I.C.E. Summit 2010 where Garriott will be speaking in a televised panel and presenting an award at the 13th Annual Interactive Achievement Awards, a program of the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences where Garriott is himself a 2006 Hall of Fame inductee.

The inspiration for Portalarium comes from all four co-founders' wide ranging personal and professional interests in entertainment, technology, learning, science, sociology, politics and community activism. As such, the company has been created on a core set of human principles and values that will not only make it a magnet for top talent to join in the fun, but also will see Portalarium building in a very purposeful social consciousness orientation to help reduce global suffering and make a difference in the world. Together with its player community, the company will be raising money and promoting real-world activities in support of enlightened social causes. More on that to come later in the year when details on its virtual world are released.

“The Portalarium mission is exactly what I want to be doing next in games,” says an invigorated and engaged Garriott. “This really takes me back to my roots in the game business – small development teams, low barriers to entry, affordable budgets for quality projects, and unlimited new interactive frontiers to explore together with our customers.”

More information about Portalarium can be found at <http://www.portalarium.com>.

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http://apps.facebook.com/sweet_poker

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