

SAS buys language software company

Teragram will aid in text mining

John Murawski, Staff Writer

SAS announced Monday that it bought a language software company that helps businesses screen online forums, e-mail, surveys and other material.

Teragram, a 40-employee company headquartered in Cambridge, Mass., will operate as a division of SAS's text mining business.

The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Teragram specializes in natural language processing, or NLP, a system of deciphering key words. The technology helps put words in context and improves the utility of customer responses when businesses look for trends and consumer preferences.

Cary-based SAS provides text mining services to such companies as Hewlett-Packard Co., American Honda and Sub-Zero Freezer Co., a maker of expensive refrigerators and wine storage chillers.

"It's filtering any kind of unstructured data and gleaning information from it," SAS spokesman Dave Thomas said.

Teragram also employs filters to screen online content for vulgarities in real time. The company has developed annotated dictionaries in more than 30 languages.

Teragram's customers include CNN, The New York Times, washingtonpost.com and the World Bank.

SAS announced the Teragram acquisition in San Antonio, Texas, at the SAS Global Forum, the largest annual SAS users group conference.

"We're always on the lookout for great technology that complements our own and that helps us meet customer needs," SAS founder and CEO Jim Goodnight said in a prepared statement.

Despite ongoing consolidation in the software industry, SAS is relatively choosy in making acquisitions. Its last purchase was in 2006, when it bought Veridiem, another

small Massachusetts company that made software to help businesses analyze the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

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