

# "Virtual archaeologist" to shed new light on 3,500 yr old Greek civilization

Washington, September 28 (ANI): Thanks to an automated system developed by a team of Princeton University computer scientists, archaeologists in Greece will now be able to virtually reconstruct wall paintings that hold valuable clues to the ancient culture of Thera, an island civilization that was buried under volcanic ash more than 3,500 years ago. According to David Dobkin, the Phillip Y. Goldman '86 Professor in Computer Science and dean of the faculty at Princeton, the new technology has the potential to change the way people do archaeology.

"This approach really brings in the computer as a research partner to archaeologists," said Dobkin, who got the inspiration for the project after a 2006 visit to the archaeological site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera, which in present-day Greece is known as Santorini.

To design their system, the Princeton team collaborated closely with the archaeologists and conservators working at Akrotiri, which flourished in the Late Bronze Age, around 1630 B.C.E.

Reconstructing an excavated fresco, mosaic or similar archaeological object is like solving a giant jigsaw puzzle, only far more difficult. The original object often has broken into thousands of tiny pieces - many of which lack any distinctive color, pattern or texture and possess edges that have eroded over the centuries. As a result, the task of reassembling artifacts often requires a lot of human effort, as archaeologists sift through fragments and use trial and error to hunt for matches.

While other researchers have endeavored to create computer systems to automate parts of this undertaking, their attempts relied on expensive, unwieldy

equipment that had to be operated by trained computer experts. The Princeton system, by contrast, uses inexpensive, off-the-shelf hardware and is designed to be operated by archaeologists and conservators rather than computer scientists.

The system employs a combination of powerful computer algorithms and a processing system that mirrors the procedures traditionally followed by archaeologists. "We mimic the archaeologists' methods as much as possible, so that they can really use our system as a tool," said Szymon Rusinkiewicz, an associate professor of computer science whose research team led the Princeton effort. "When fully developed, this system could reduce the time needed to reconstruct a wall from years to months. It could free up archaeologists for other valuable tasks such as restoration and ethnographic study," he added.

## Four killed by Evros mines

Four illegal immigrants were killed when they strayed into a minefield in Evros, northeastern Greece, as they tried to make their way into the country from Turkey. Residents of the village of Kastanea heard explosions in the early hours of the morning and when soldiers arrived at they minefield they found the four bodies. The army said that two of the men were carrying papers that suggested they were from Georgia. The nationality of the other two was not immediately known. The minefield was fenced and clearly signposted, according army officials, who said that the four migrants probably failed to notice the warnings in the dark.

According to the Geneva-based International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, at least 82 migrants have died and 71 been injured in the area since 1994. Greece has pledged to remove all the land mines in the area by 2011.

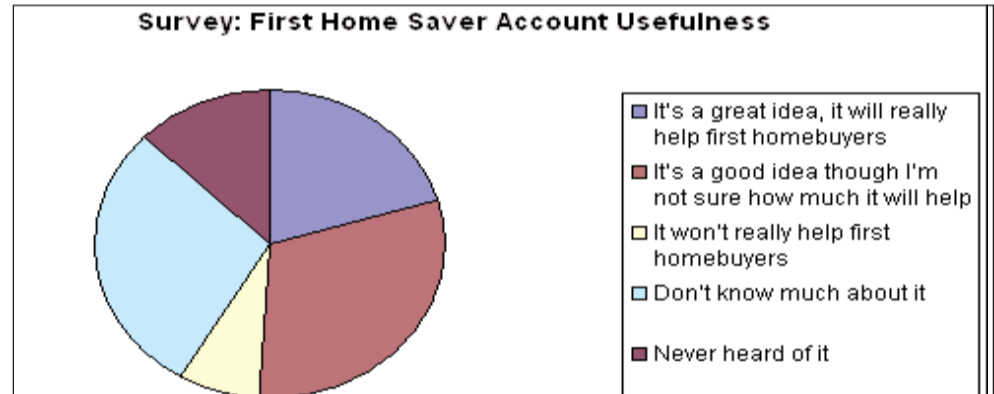
*Mortgage Choice, Best in the Mortgage and Finance Industry\*, found almost half of Australia's first homebuyers-to-be have little idea about the upcoming First Home Saver Account (FHSA) scheme, which will be launched in only one week's time.*

Over one eighth (12.8%) of respondents to the 2008 First Homebuyers Survey, an independent online survey of Australians who are planning to buy their first home in the next five years, admitted to having never heard of the scheme, while almost one third (29%) did not know much about it. Only one fifth (20.6%) of respondents thought the initiative was a great idea that would really help first time buyers. Just under one third (30.2%) thought it was a good idea but were not sure how much it would help. 7.5% felt it would not really help first homebuyers.

According to Mortgage Choice National Corporate Affairs Manager,

## Uncovered: Little First Homebuyer Knowledge About First Home Saver Accounts

Survey: First Home Saver Account Usefulness



Warren O'Rourke, "The Federal Government, accountants, mortgage brokers, financial advisors and lenders have a strong responsibility to increase the level of knowledge about the First Home Saver Account amongst Australian first homebuyers-to-be".

"With many feeling the heat of today's housing affordability challenge, it is vitally important for savers and borrowers to understand their options so they can take full advantage of them. There is little point in introducing an assistance scheme if half of those targeted know lit-

tle or nothing about it".

In a gender comparison, almost half of the female respondents (46.4%) new little or nothing about the FHSA while just over one third (35.3%) of males were in the same situation. In a state-by-state comparison, Tasmanians were least likely to have much knowledge about the scheme (52.2%) while South Australians had the most (31%). Queensland had the highest number of respondents who said it would not really help (8.1%), a sentiment shared by just 2.2% of Tasmanians. The new initiative, due to launch on 1 October, was designed to further boost savings for a first home deposit through tax concessions and Government contributions, delivering higher returns versus conventional savings accounts. There is no minimum deposit required to open a FHSA and the Government contributes 17% on the first \$5,000 of individual contributions made each year. The interest earned is taxed at 15% and the First Home Buyers Grant can be claimed in addition to the FHSA.

The saver must contribute \$1,000 minimum in at least four financial years before withdrawing the funds and they must use it to purchase or build a new home. The only alternative is to switch the entire amount into a superannuation fund. In addition, they must live in the home for at least six months within the first 12 months of purchase or completion of construction.

Visit the Mortgage Choice website at [www.mortgagechoice.com.au](http://www.mortgagechoice.com.au) or call 13 MORTGAGE.

## ASIA PACIFIC SCREEN AWARDS NOMINATIONS COUNCIL MEETS TO DETERMINE FINALISTS

The Asia Pacific Screen Awards Nominations Council met in Brisbane, Australia, to determine the finalists in the second Asia Pacific Screen Awards - the APSAs - the highest accolade for film in the region in 2008. The nominations for the APSAs will be announced on October 1, with the Awards ceremony to be held on November 11 on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia. The winners in each category will be determined by an International Jury, headed by Academy Award nominated director Bruce Beresford. The Jury meets on the Gold Coast from November 5. The Nominations Council is drawn from high profile film festivals and film organisations across Asia-Pacific. Films have been entered in the 2008 APSAs by one of 40 Official Submission Organisations across the region or by invitation by a member of the APSA Nominations Council.

The submitted films were assessed earlier this month by the Advisory Committee to the Nominations Council, headed by Hawai'i Academic Konrad Ng, in the first stage of the deliberations process. "The response to the

call for entries in 2008 was remarkable, with more than 180 films from 43 countries entered in the Awards. Our Nominations Council is a highly credentialed group, specialising in cinema from Asia-Pacific, who now have the demanding task of determining the nominees in nine APSA categories. APSA is very grateful to the members of the Nominations Council for their commitment and expertise," said APSA Chairman Des Power.

Originating countries and territories include Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Japan, Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, New Zealand, Palestine, India, Sri Lanka, Israel, Turkey, Nepal, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Thailand. In 2008, Awards will be presented for Best Feature Film, Best Animated Feature Film, Best Documentary Feature Film, Best Children's Feature Film, Achievement in Directing, Best Screenplay, Achievement in Cinematography, Best Performance by an Actress and Best Performance by an Actor.