

NASA's Distributed Simulation

SOFTWARE

HELPING COMPUTERS TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER

IF WEATHER-forecasting computers around the world could compare notes as easily as people chitchat about the oppressive summer heat, meteorologists would have a much better way to forecast disasters such as hurricanes—or coming Ice Ages. But the dozens of supercomputers that simulate the earth's climate were built at different universities and government agencies, many with custom code, so it's next to impossible to get them to talk to one another.

On July 20, NASA researchers announced that they're testing a software platform designed to solve those problems. The product allows researchers to switch components in and out of different simulations and to test and create more precise global models of the weather in a snap. Researchers believe the improved collaboration will not only aid short-term forecasting but also will boost their understanding of issues such as global warming.

—Burt Helm

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