Mike Nelson – SV article

VMware Labs Isn't Just About Flings Anymore
If you haven't visited the VMware Labs website in a while, it has gotten a more VMware-corporate style facelift, but that is just the tip of the virtual iceberg. With all new and reorganized content, and of course, more of those great little application tidbits called Flings, you have to make sure to put this site on your "must visit often" list.

When the VMware Labs website debuted a few years ago, it was pretty basic in style and had almost no real content to it except for the Flings file postings that a handful of VMware developers had put out there for the public to finally see outside the walls of VMware. If you don't know, "Flings" as they are called by VMware, are small free applications written by VMware developers to "play with and explore", and they have graciously offered them up to the general public for our use too (not too many software companies do that these days, now do they?).

On top of the list for Flings is a recent offering of vBenchmark, which proved very exciting to VMware administrators as a really good tool that evaluates your datacenter's VMware environment key metrics, like QOS and efficiencies, and provides reports on them. It also allows for saving those reports for later comparisons and capacity planning. Now, there are other tools out there that could provide this same information at a much more detailed and granular level, but this is a Fling, which by definition isn't meant to be that elaborate, it isn't meant to be extensive, it isn't meant to be a permanent addition to your enterprise, and it's free.

Most of the other Flings available haven't been updated in a while, and that should be expected since they are not really "products" from VMware, but rather the by-products of the developer's imaginations. Even if asked for an update, while some developers will extend some time into it, most have already moved on to the next coolest thing. The Auto-Deploy GUI Fling was the latest updated in 2012, and that it was due to the new auto-deploy options available in ESXi 5.

The other portions of the Labs website that really sparked my interest was the new Publications and Academic areas. The Publications section has a whole slew of technical articles and research papers that have been developed by VMware engineers and staff over the years, some as far back as 1996! Some of this content has been available on various VMware websites, but they now have it all consolidated into the Labs website. There are some very interesting articles and papers I found there, including some of interest not because they highlight VMware technologies, but just because they peak curiosity. Some examples that I think are worth noting as interesting are:

- Comprehensive User Experience Monitoring
- Online Cache Modeling for Commodity Multicore Processors
- A Virtual Machine Introspection Based Architecture for Intrusion Detection

There are many more there, and I would invite you to take a glance at them, especially the early papers, and see what those folks were envisioning for the future and what is practiced today.

On the [Academic](#) side, this website has plenty of free courseware, videos, and conference material for anyone who is interested in learning and possibly teaching about virtualization technologies. For anyone that is new to the concepts of virtualization, I would recommend going through the provided courseware including the [Introduction, Basic, and Intermediate courses](#), and then moving on to the more advanced topics provided. All of the slidedecks, lab instructions, and student material is provided. The courseware area is also a great resource for any material that you may need for creating your own classroom material or presentation on the virtualization (please read and agree to the [Labs Terms of Use](#) before using any material).

Also new in Academic is the VMware Technical Journal, which made its debut this year as a collection of technical articles, focused on VMware's Research and Development activities. [You can download your copy or request a hard copy or USB drive with the journal on it from here](#).

Overall I am very impressed with the new Labs offerings and I think much of the credit should go out to [Steve Herrod](#), the CTO of VMware and mastermind behind the Labs, and the great engineers and developers who work at VMware. They are providing the virtualization community with a wealth of information and some really neat code, all for free, that enhances knowledge, remembers history, and puts a little Fling in your life!