

AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION NETWORK FOR ENCHANCING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN: THE NEW MEDIA

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Introduction

"The Global Information Society" demands full acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills from each of its individual members, not only for their individual survival but also for the effective functioning and development of its new global program. Those who fall distant to the opportunities and the amenities provided by the latest developments in information technologies seem to be heading towards estrangement from the social flux as well as face possible difficulties to continue professional business life.

The task of educating individuals who can effectively take part in "the Global Knowledge Society" is the responsibility of educational institutions among which universities come forth with their leading role in the process. The mission and curriculum of our Department of Visual Communication Design is basically designed to meet this demand. We adapt a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective, integrating an all-encompassing syllabus that suits the latest visual forms and communicative technologies of media incorporating elements from social sciences, behavioral sciences, engineering,

physical sciences and cultural research. While carrying out this syllabus, we try to create a context for the students to soundly comprehend the swerving nature of the creative applications in these fields as well as gaining them a sense of how the future of arts and technology might be shaped. It is for this reason that the Department has more advantages than the conventional, established departments with the same or similar academic focus.

In order to discuss and develop our experimental focus through international dialogues, last year we have started to organize the Annual International Symposium of Interactive Media Design. The international attendance we witness seems promising for such an event at its infancy, but our goal is to reach the status of a major event with a leading role in Interactive Media Design and related fields. To this end, our Department of Visual Communication Design prepares to launch an extensive program of periodical publications both on-line and in the conventional printed format. These publications will also provide a platform for exhibiting and discussing recent work by Interactive Media designers and artists from different countries within the context of an International Award Program.

The Internet Challenging the Center-Periphery Paradigm

Before the advent of the Internet most international channels for the collection and dissemination of knowledge were exclusively controlled by already established Western nodes. The international distribution of printed publications is still under the monopoly of a few developed countries. Not only at the global scale, but also within the developed countries, we can speak of the reign of the center-periphery paradigm in conventional media, and the academic world is not exempt from this socio-economic phenomenon (Block, 2001: 10-11).

An academic journal published by a university in a developing country might hardly expect to attain international recognition under these circumstances, but a publication program coupled with an effective presence in the Internet can overcome any disadvantages of its geographical location. The

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revolutionary advantages of publishing in and communicating over the internet are manifold: production and distribution costs are principally eliminated, copies may be infinite as far as there is demand, the available space for additional content is almost unlimited, all contributions might be included, and the involvement of reader/visitors may be encouraged through interactive devices. The "New Media" actually presents a territory still waiting to be explored, but the prerequisite for really creative adventures is that we overcome our habitual outlook shaped by conventional practices of publishing.

Once we admit the primacy of English in international communication, the Internet provides space for a virtual presence above all boundaries and borders of the physical and political geography. This implies that every address in the web may define a new center for its specific activity if it represents a form and content inventive enough to draw transnational attention. And the most firmly established institutions might become peripheral due to their intellectual conservatism or inertia.

Since national identities loose their referential relevance in the web, an Internet community of "free-floating" intellectuals should be called transnational rather than international. But an academically oriented research and education program such as ours involves national institutions from many different countries and is hence international. These two contexts reflect the multifaceted, or even hybrid, character of the "New Media" and we consider their contradictory aspects as complementary within our agenda.

An Open-Ended Agenda for the Visual Communication Design Department

Our new online initiative and publication program is intended as an extension of this symposium. This agenda will be articulated in the following interconnected activities:

- The NewMedia Web Portal
- The Interactive Media Design Online Awards Program
- The Online Monthly Journal of NewMedia

- The monthly printed announcement leaflet of the NewMedia Web Portal
- The quarterly printed Academic Journal of Interactive Media Design
- The quarterly printed NewMedia Digest
- The Annual Awards Ceremony
- The Annual International Symposium of Interactive Media Design
- The annually printed Proceedings of the Symposium

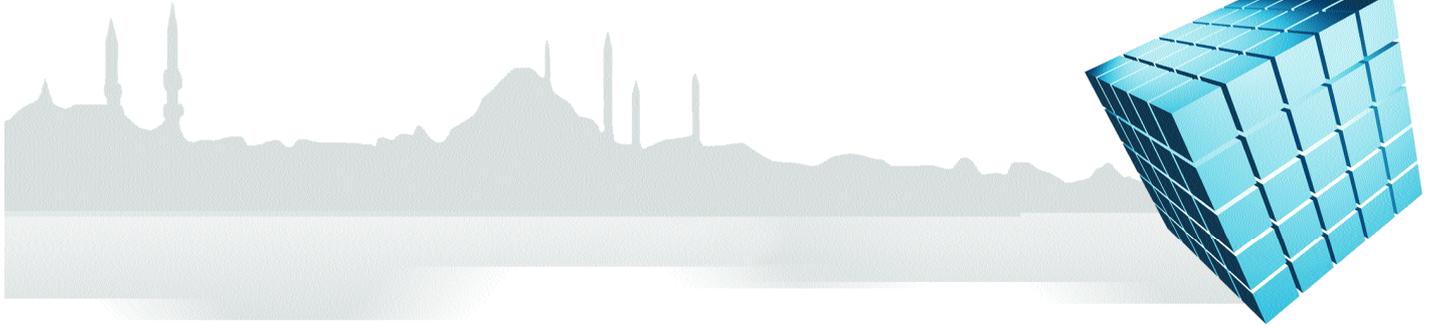
All content of the International Interactive Media Design Symposium, the Online Awards Program and the related online and printed publications are expected to be innovative and relevant to the advancement of interactive media design. Contributions in the following areas are encouraged but not limited to them:

- Web Site Planning and Design
- Interactive Books
- Interactive Storytelling
- Interactive Design Tools
- Interactive Artwork
- Interactive TV and Video
- Interactive Computer Graphics
- Mobile Contents
- Video & Electronic Culture
- Design Problems in Interactivity
- Interactive Content Management
- Content Tools and Interface Design
- Visual Communication Design Education
- Social and Economic Implications of the New Media
- Women in Design

The Idea of Online Awards

The Interactive Media Design Online Awards Program is a global initiative aiming to promote creative designs from all around the world. Scholars from all countries are invited to nominate new media designs on a regular basis to be presented in our NewMedia website for online evaluation. The public jury comprises all the visitors who register at the Portal.

Each month's results of this cumulative voting and eliminating process are announced in the Online Monthly Journal and in the related mailing to the members list. Each year's Most Outstanding Designs



are selected by a final international jury and become a permanent feature at the NewMedia Portal.

Celebrating Young Masters, a special category of the Awards Program, is devoted to the recognition and promotion of talented students whose submissions are primarily coordinated by member universities and other educational institutions in different countries.

The Annual Awards Ceremony for both the Most Outstanding Designs and for Celebrating Young Masters is organized in conjunction with the International Interactive Media Design Symposium.

The New Media Portal and Online Journal

The Online Monthly Journal at our NewMedia website publishes selected contributions in the form of academic papers, popular articles, international news and announcements relevant to the mission of our academic research program.

Each year's Most Outstanding Designs and Celebrated Young Masters become a permanent feature of the NewMedia website.

The critical section of the NewMedia website is the Directory of Related Web Links and the mailing list consisting of their contact addresses, which has to be developed and regularly updated through the collective labor of the members.

Journal of Interactive Media Design

A selection of articles with more academically and scientifically oriented content are published in the printed quarterly periodical, the Journal of Interactive Media Design, the official international research publication of the Visual Communication Design Department of the Faculty of Communication at the Yeditepe University. All texts accumulate in the archive of the website as a database of Online Resources.

Journal of Interactive Media Design is an academically refereed research publication the content of which is decided by an international jury. This quarterly journal is distributed to all contributors of the Symposium and the jurors and nominees of the Awards Program free of charge.

The quarterly printed Journal of Interactive Media Design is accompanied with a more glossy and fanciful insert, namely the NewMedia Digest which reflects the popular and ephemeral dimension of the website and the Online Monthly Journal.

Coupling the Online- with the Printed-Medium

An important potential of the Internet may be sought in its transformation to a "public sphere," i.e. the democratic civic forum Habermas had tried to theorize as a model of idealized democratic debate. (Baoill, 2000) If cleverly programmed, the "public sphere" in the virtual space can become much more effective. The context of Online Awards may fulfill these conditions and trigger the initiation of a lively Forum-On-Line. Here, we may always expect the emergence of revolutionary conjectures.

Printed periodical publications coupled with a website, on the other hand, can selectively document in a more permanent and carefully edited format the essence of all the various contributions. Those who refrain from becoming too much engaged with the excessive information and prefer to remain detached at a critical distance to the controversial climate of an interactive website will probably always be in majority. But contrary to all the reactionary complaints by the good old bibliophiles against the adverse effects of the Internet, true academic research finds in it a very effective medium at last for the dissemination and discussion of new ideas and research results.

Print eventually turns out to be a very expensive and irrational medium except for commercial purposes. It may, for example, become quite meaningless to print and distribute in large numbers some long academic texts that would interest only a few people. POD (Print-On-Demand) books have been suggested as a serious solution to this problem (Poe, 2001). We suggest printing and distributing only the summaries and abstracts in a conventional format in the form of a "Digest" and the interested reader may download the full text from the website. On the other hand, the visual quality of images is the most important privilege of the printed medium. Publishing on the web might be much more successful, if selected high

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quality images are published in a printed periodical complementing the website. The NewMedia Digest is intended to match these diverse tasks.

The question whether the internet will replace the book shows a most ignorant injustice that is presently done to this new medium, when we think of its future potential which will be beyond all our predictions (Lovink and Schneider, 2002). Internet is still at its infancy, and we are still bounded by the book or article format of the printed medium. To disseminate and to download all these texts for free is a fantastic development, but it is also true that this is only the beginning: we should expect much more radical changes not only in our conception of the written text or its presentation and reception, but in the very framework through which we conceive communicative action.

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