INFORMATION SOCIETY TECHNOLOGIES PROGRAMME

• Final Report (public)

- *Creativity and Innovation: Ways forward for the European Union in Cross-Sector and Interdisciplinary International Partnerships.*

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Creativity and Innovation: Ways forward for the European Union in Cross-Sector and Interdisciplinary International Partnerships

By Lizbeth Goodman with Sally Jane Norman

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Overview:

The RADICAL Project ran for 24 months, from the initial start-up phase and launch in December 2000 to the project's final review in February 2003.

The full results of the project included three major international events in AMSTERDAM (THWE NETHERLANDS), ANGOUELEME (FRANCE) and LONDON (UK), along with many interim reports and publications, prototype tools development, and creation and support of an EC 'digital seedbed' of artists and technologists working together.

The full set of reports and the book arising from the project are also available online, along with media clips from the practical work that informed the project.

This report simply summarises the actions and deliverables of the project, the issues arising, and the project's aims and ends.

- *Chronology of events*

Dec 00- Jan 01

The project was kicked off with a full partner meeting in Paris where the project was discussed in great details in particular with regards to Key events and budget allocation. It was decided to swap Key Event 1 and Key Event 3. Mediateque was felt to be too early in the programme. The event would be better suited to take place subsequent to the Key Event 1 and the Comixlam to more effectively capitalise on information gathered and maximise potential for dissemination and collaboration.

Preparatory work was started both on the framework of the Mediateque as well as on the website.

February- March 01

The official kick-off meeting took place in Guildford at the University of Surrey with all partners and Ec co-ordinators attending. The focus of the meeting was co-ordination and planning. It was also an opportunity for the partners to get to know each other better and to clarify contractual matters with the Ec co-ordinator.

Preparation work started on the CODE dissemination event in Cambridge including producing flyers and preparing topics for discussion.

April-May 01

In this period, we :
- worked through several iterations of our Surveys of the core RADICAL network sectors and are well into the process of collecting data and beginning to map a structured analysis (see 6 month progress report for details).
- begun to implement our Dissemination Plan (previously circulated and appended below for reference), and are on target with all our stated aims and objectives.
- welcomed Katherine Milton to the RADICAL team as our Co-ordinator for Good Practice Guidelines in progress.
- participated in the Bridges event (our 'North American Scientific Visit') with funding from USC.
- confirmed and agreed EC Membership of the RADICAL project with member roles clarified.
- refined and extended the RADICAL web site (www.get-radical.net)
- represented the Project at two key IST events in Florence and in Vienna, as well as at numerous smaller but strategically chosen European conferences and colloquia.
- Prepared for the Key Event in Amsterdam

June - July 01
This period has been one of the busiest and most productive of the RADICAL Project's life to date.

We organised the first major lab event throughout the period of June, building on feedback from our CODE gathering and from our refining and beta-testing of the RADICAL SURVEY in May and June.

Work on refining of the Survey Instrument and on creation of a dynamic database for analysis of the responses and for linking to the good practice pages in development carried on throughout the month of June, while we also prepared our third Management report and Cost Statement, began planning for the first major Plenary, met to further refine the three linked lab agendas, and prepared a fulsome document for submission as our first Six Monthly Report on Project Progress to date. The Survey (both versions) and interim feedback/analysis were included in our Six Monthly Report (submitted in June).

The Key Event was held in Amsterdam in July, with many EC participants including partners, members and representatives from SMEs and from larger media labs, educational institutions and from the industry sector. A report on the Key Event is attached for information.

All partners and a wide range of selected member companies took part in the Key Event itself, and also contributed to the documentation of the event, which was posted in real time to the RADICAL web site and then modified and extended as follow-up reports incorporated into project deliverables as appropriate.

The Key Event lab was concluded with a one day partner's forum, when we evaluated the first lab and refined our plans for future labs and plenaries accordingly.

This period also saw several partners travelling to speak about RADICAL at other IST events and internationally. The network is growing, and there is demonstrable interest arising in publication of a series of 'scientific articles' about RADICAL as a project in process (see list of talks and other dissemination events in the first issue of our NEWSLETTER, also produced in this period).

We were also glad to report that the live events are taking the critical role they should do at the centre of the project's 'mission'. This is a project that relies upon the unique benefits of person-to-person exchange and group, collaborative making of work and testing/development of ideas in shared spaces, both online and live. The success of the Key Event in solidifying this core aim and showing it to be operable is something we are particularly proud to have achieved. We look forward to sharing some of the essence of this 'live' exchange at the review meeting as well.

August- September 01

The project was transferred in September to the Smartlab at Central Saint Martins, London Institute as the project Director moved there.

The first Review took place in September at Central Saint Martins and was very successful with a very encouraging message from the reviewers.

Surveys were sent out and the work on the development of companies' database was continued.

Preparation and planning work on Plenary 1 was started.

October- November 01

The plenary protocol was finalised. Work continued on the dissemination of survey and on research into effective results compilation.

Smartlab representatives attended Digital Content in Liverpool to inform participants about forthcoming RADICAL plenary and to disseminate about the project in general.

December 01- January 02

This was an intense period for project activity, with a big burst of work to do in preparation for the first annual plenary, coupled with a sudden withdrawal by one of the partners responsible for this and linked deliverables. We were most pleased to produce a valuable plenary event nonetheless and to make good progress on the second creative lab, a round of dissemination and fundraising ventures, and overall contributions towards the project's print and online publications as well.

This period covered the first full plenary event, which took a great deal of time to organise, and which was uniformly welcomed as a productive and useful gathering.

February- March 02

This period saw a big burst of 'catching up' activity as partners pulled together to cover work inherited from Audiorom's withdrawal, and produced a full pack of paper and online deliverables as well as a project report and successful Major Review following on from the second (very successful) creative lab, the ComiXlam.

This period also included the project's promotion at MILIA, when international partners came to assist the core EC team, and where the new WAAG-hosted website was unveiled.

It was also a period of intense activity for ESI around the second creative lab, the ComiXlam, which was very well received by the participants, IST community and reviewers alike.

We produced the first full working plans for the third creative lab, following on from comments and feedback at the second review meeting in Angouleme.

The Good Practice Guides were signed up for book and online publication in this period as well, and it was further agreed at the review meeting that the Project should publish some of its findings regarding SMEs and their role in the creative IST programmes as a pamphlet.

April – May 02

This was a period of steady development for the project, following on from the restructuring of the early months of the year and building on the new web site and future strategy implementation through publications and Mediatheque planning.

The bulk of the work in this period fell, as predicted in the project planning, with the SMARTlab, as other partners were busily writing up reports on previous phases of work and the SMARTlab was preparing for the next major event while making the new character-driven web site and attending key events to plan future development and shore up partnerships to assist with finances and planning for the project team.

June – July 02

This covered the run-up to and delivery of the third and largest major event/deliverable of the project, the Mediatheque, and the associated launch of the new character-driven web site and collection/dissemination of major video and text documentation and publications, including the first full draft of the good practice book.

August – September 02

This was a relatively quiet period following on from the massive burst of effort expended by all in June-July for the third lab event. The SMARTlab team had all worked significant overtime hours in the summer, and that time was made up in this period while Dr Goodman worked on updating all the files, reports and the website and worked with Ms Katherine Milton on completion and posting of the first full draft of the Good Practice Book (now online for group comment/revision prior to print publication).

Ms Mo-Ling Chui and Ms Taeyoung Kim worked in this period on editing, formatting and posting of a full archive of video and flash clips to the new web sites and on web integration of the full project's productions to date.

Also in this period, Dr Goodman and the SMARTlab technical manager Ms Jo Gell (replacing Mr Tarik Thami on the project) with colleague Ms Cat Harding, attended the ITV event in Amsterdam, where the project was featured at the EC IST stall as part of the 'good practice' selection of the ADOPT-IT project.

With regret,. Sheila Ghelani left the project and the SMARTlab core team at the end of August to pursue her own research and performance work. She remains an active researcher for the SMARTlab but will no longer be involved in administrative or project management work.

Likewise, we must report that Mr Tarik Thami's work on the project had to cease after the July event. Ms Jo Gell has replaced Mr Thami on technical management from London for the duration of the project, and Ms Joy Barrett with Ms Barbara Touati have taken over the work previously done by Ms Ghelani until project's end (after the final review meeting, now scheduled for Feb. 2003).

October-November 02
This was a productive period of dissemination for the project, both in terms of the volume of public presentations and linked publications produced, and in terms of the high profile given to the project at the IST conference and second plenary event in Copenhagen.

The SMARTlab team worked to bring all the project results to completion in terms of budgets, partner agreements, partner future collaboration plans and publication, as well as delivering on project dissemination objectives. We were helped immensely in this period by the dedication of Joy Barrett (replacing Sheila Ghelani), Jo Gell (replacing Tarik Thami) and by the continued

tenacity of Barbara Touati, whose efforts on the financial side finally brought in responses from distant member organisation and brought the project to a pleasing close.

The high volume of work and presentations inevitably put additional pressure on the small project team, which has focussed primarily on the print publications including the full length book (now online and soon to be released in print).

International partners (official and unofficial) helped to make the project a public and policy success by contributing matching finance to support key presentations in North America and Asia, setting the scene for representation of the RADICAl agenda as a major force in the international 'artsci' and future technologies scenes.

2 – Results
An overview by Lizbeth Goodman for the team

RADICAL was very successful as a network of excellence as it encouraged discussion and exchange between organisations and people who would not normally have met. This was especially seen during the Key events with people from extremely varied background and organisations attending. As such RADICAL was an extremely useful springboard for research into multi media tool-development.

SEE the Project's full Website – now hosted by the SMARTlab
& see the Guide to Good Practice Arising from this Project

3- ESI's point of view

For the Ecole supérieure de l'image, involvement in the RADICAL project was particularly enriching through the creative laboratories, notably the ComiXlam event organised in Angoulême in February 2002.

As stated in the initial project mandate, RADICAL's originality and strengths reside in its ability, as a consortium, to generate new approaches to creative media grounded in grass-roots, hands-on creative experimentation. ESI's status as an art school combining practical and theoretical work in digital media, from undergraduate to doctoral level, makes it a highly motivated, well suited structure for engaging in fruitful experimentation with new creative authoring tools.

Modifications to the original project schedule, making the De Waag « KeyEvent » RADICAL's kick-off laboratory, proved profitable for subsequent activities. A committed group of ESI creatives – representatives of media artist/ teacher, student, and programmer- engineer contingents – attended the full duration of the Amsterdam event, acquiring a taste for the Keystroke platform developed at De Waag and, at the same time, gleaning ideas for organisation and logistics of the subsequent Angoulême laboratory.

Amongst other very positive lessons, the KeyEvent acquainted us with the immense potential of the Keystroke platform as a central element for ESI's ComiXlam, with its accent on new narrative forms arising from multi-author improvisation using multiple media. Intensive exchange with our Dutch partners allowed the ComiXlam to be implemented under the best conditions, with expert guidance upstream, during, and downstream of the actual French laboratory, by the Keystroke development team and associated Waag staff (administrative staff at De Waag, but also at the European Commission, helped secure and optimise this cross-partner collaboration). Presence during RADICAL's French laboratory of one of the Waag team's web designers, responsible for the freshly revamped RADICAL website, also enhanced success of this second RADICAL event, characterised by lively, steadily updated, media-rich evidence of ongoing creative experimentation. Website sections devoted to the Dutch and French laboratories, featuring unique audiovisual and textual materials, have been vigorously consulted since its early February launch.

Subsequent presentation and follow-up of work initiated during the ComiXlam has generated interest in many sectors and countries. The ComiXlam workshop was the subject of a two-page illustrated feature in the July edition of the prestigious « Etapes Graphiques » monthly magazine, and the Copenhagen IST presentation of the ComiXlam triggered enthusiastic, immediate and ongoing feedback .

Documentation generated for and during the Angoulême seminar has recently been translated and is currently undergoing revision for integration into a bilingual electronic document containing a full set of texts, still and moving image and sound materials derived from the ComiXlam event (publication planned by autumn 2003). This document is heavily demanded by French and European arts and media training structures, industrial and individual developers concerned with emerging trends in creative experimentation, French cultural ministerial representatives, and regional politicians responsible for IST developments. It will foreseeably play an important dissemination role, bearing witness to new arenas of creative experimentation supported by the European Commission.

ESI considers that the FP5 offered valuable opportunities to open up European IST research to a novel category of actors whose role in new media R&D is unique and determinant. A number of new avenues with clear interest for industrial developers were traced by our Angoulême Creative Arts Lab, which provoked rare and necessary debate between artist-oriented development teams like those behind Keystroke, and commercially-focussed majors like Macromedia.

Maintaining a strong population of active, hands-on creatives committed to IST research is an imperative for original, sustainable development of the EU's new media base. Such involvement appears all the more important in that growing numbers of EU consortia are taking on board creative and artistic terminology in the formulation of their projects and objectives. While this confirms recognition of the unique role played by creative researchers, the risk of recognition remaining symbolic is real if the creative community is not present to actively illustrate the huge gap between opportunistic lip service to the creativity bandwagon, and productive, hands-on involvement in the arts and new media environment.

Indeed, certain EU IST projects encountered recently by RADICAL members in the course of their dissemination activities contain disturbingly glib references to creative experimentation, and ostensibly seek to cash in on open source software and « alternative » tool development and/ or artistic circuits to boost flimsy ethics and documentation. Substantial research budgets

may be allocated to projects claiming to « federate » and « make available to the industrial community » information about the European creative underground, without any concern for financial returns reaching the artists doing the groundwork. RADICAL considers that only active artistic presence within the EU project framework can provide the necessary counterweight, whether this presence be anchored in creative SME's or in the various kinds of cultural organisations and training structures RADICAL represents.

Finally, a question which remains crucial from the RADICAL standpoint, and which is obviously and salutarily acquiring growing importance at EU level, concerns involvement of Central and East European partners in European R&D consortia. Artistic energies from greater Europe are impacting international cultural development in determinant new ways, and stronger integration of partners from future EU members, and future EU candidate countries, remains a priority for the RADICAL consortium. It should not be forgotten that the initial « Creative Work Groups » project RADICAL ultimately emerged from, included several cultural organisations from such countries which were finally dropped from the more tightly structured, validated consortium. While the administrative reasons for this restructuring were clear, we have nevertheless maintained strong cultural and ethical links with these organisations, in the hope of embarking on joint European R&D activities in creative media in the not-too-distant future.

Overall, ESI seeks and would welcome EU labelled opportunities to continue to contribute to the public arena its particular field of know-how and skill, to dynamise and inflect media tool development in Greater Europe, through stronger recognition and anticipation of next generation artistic practice.

4- Recommendations for future research, by Lizbeth Goodman

The area of multi media is such a new but also extremely dense and exploding sector that it is very difficult to rationalise it. As such, research into that area is vitally necessary. After two years of intensive work on the RADICAL project, there is still a great deal to be done. RADICAL has succeeded in laying the digital seedbed it promised, but now is the time to sow those seeds and to encourage them to grow in new climates.

The RADICAL consortium will continue to work, together and in new groupings, to extend the network and help those seeds to grow in Europe and internationally.

The SMARTlab team will take responsibility for maintaining key documents and connections from the RAIDICAL project and for encouraging new growth in new projects and events in future.

We anticipate proposal of a new inter-diciplinary focus on interface development in future, and also a renewed focus on the role of play and games, live interaction and entertainment, at he heart of human lives and therefore at the heart of 'human computer interaction' as well.

See also the RADICAL Project Book:

And the Report by international collaborator Mixchael Naimark, who ran a similar research project in the USA for the Rockefeller Foundation, which paralleled the RADICAL project's growth in Europe. (   )