

Presentation

The road towards the information society: issue 15 of *Quaderns del CAC* aims to provide a contrasted balance of the opportunities that the combined technologies of the web, digitalisation and interactivity offer to the production and circulation of audiovisual and multimedia products and services. Although the observation centres on our most immediate environments, i.e., Catalonia and Spain, the articles that appear on "Multimedia Production and Digital Applications" are geared towards discovering research and development areas of general interest on the state of the issue.

In the first article, Emili Prado ("The Digital Divide, or the Danger of Exclusion from the Information Society") presents the general context of the current phase of the problematic transition towards the digital era. The recent balance of products and perspectives of the offline and online markets in Spain is the issue addressed in the article by Rosa Franquet ("Multimedia. The Light and Darkness of a Strategic Sector"). The next three articles describe and assess three cases of special importance in our most immediate environment: Martí Petit and Joan Rosés look at an important public initiative in Catalonia ("TVC Multimèdia, Innovation Centre in Audiovisual Production"), Jesús Alcover, Rosa M. Martín and Artur Serra summarise the strategic research programme on Internet2 that is led in our country by the Polytechnic University of Catalonia under the name of Internet2CAT ("Internet2 in Catalonia: the Video Internet"), and Antoni Bibiloni, Ricardo Galli and Llorenç Valverde present the research and engineering work carried out by the IT and Multimedia Technologies Laboratory at the University of the Balearic Islands ("The Evolution of Multimedia Applications at the University of the Balearic Islands"). Lluís Codina explores the new generation of image and audiovisual banks on the web ("The New Emerging Sector of Audiovisual Banks on the World Wide Web"), while Jean-Paul Lafrance closes the monographic section with a synthetic study on the first big interactive games industry ("Interactive Games: the First Mass Medium of the Electronic Era").

The *Observation* section opens with an in-depth conversation with Paolo Fabbri from the University of Bologna, internationally recognised as one of the leading figures in the semiotics of culture. He talks to Xavier Ruiz Collantes, professor and researcher in audiovisual communication at the Pompeu Fabra University. The section is completed with a report by Gemma Domènech on the new regulatory framework of electronic communications and an essay by Fèlix Riera on the transformation of television.

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