Report on FIAM 3rd Internet and Multimedia Summit (Montreux, Oct. 8-11, 2002)

FIAM 3rd Summit on Internet and multimedia (Montreux, October 8-1, 2002) sought to draw from the varying experiences of multimedia associations worldwide and show how regional and national multimedia industries are tackling the issue of the digital divide and what efforts they are making to address inequalities of access to and use of digital technologies and content.

Montreux 2002 involved multimedia associations toward building strong consensus around industry priorities and projects designed to bridge the digital divide and to identify the private and public sector actors with whom our Federation and its members can act jointly. It was also an important opportunity for FIAM, on behalf of the Associations and their members, to intervene and represent the interests and intentions of the multimedia industry in the decision-making process leading to the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, December 2003) where important decisions will be taken affecting national and regional information technology and multimedia policies, structures and investment programs.

We sought to address these objectives by looking at several areas of industry activity:
1) affordable multimedia tools and applications produced nowadays that allow greater use and enjoyment of interactive digital content; **2)** national and international technology and know-how transfer mechanisms that help the development of local multimedia industries; **3)** global, national and local initiatives allowing for the development of original, localized and diverse interactive digital content; **4)** and finally, legal and regulatory frameworks that facilitate the multimedia industry's production and distribution of digital content nationally and internationally.

The Summit lent itself easily to this task and close to 200 participants discussed and argued a multitude of Industry issues. This report will focus on five major themes for which we have asked the speakers to pay close attention to. **You can find the texts of most conference speakers in the following link**.

A) Software and the Digital Divide

Seven speakers participated in this session and presented three perspectives : software development and software export in developing countries, free software and open software development in developing countries and 'Open Developing countries'. All discussed many examples attesting to the efforts by many developing countries in using ICT but also active in developing new software and multimedia tools. The large diversity of experiences attested also for the diversity of cultures and needs.

Two main issues stood out:**1)** how can developing countries export and establish strong commercial links with the rest of the world, in other world what type of software and tolls can they export readily? Main problems include the establishment of trademarks, brands but also distribution systems for their often intangible products. Another important issue is providing follow-up services to accompany the sale of software. These problems demand knowledge of foreign markets, expertise in software placement and skill. **2)** Local development : speakers dwelled here on the need to further education, training and skills development at the local level (e-community) and by ensuring that local talent remains in developing countries. Important was also the need for local industries to adopt and adapt technologies and software according to their needs and integration speeds.

Speakers agreed on the importance of sharing information and knowledge between developing and developed countries, with FIAM being a starting point with regards to software development. The Federation will very soon be creating a Technical Action Group (TAG) fully devoted to the issue of software development in both rich and poor countries.

B) Digital Content and the Law

Six speakers participated in this session and their interventions raised crucial issues regarding the applicability of current Intellectual Property laws in developing versus developed countries. For **Chatillon**, Chair of the session, the need to re-evaluate intellectual property law with regards to Internet is crucial and Internet law is efficient in so far as it answers real societal needs. The relationship between price and digital products is also important as the creation of demand for digital products has to be accompanied by a rethinking pricing methods and digital product valuation. On the other hand, says Chatillon, developing countries have to guarantee that preferential prices for digital products and software need better intellectual property protection within their national boundaries. Using as example the music industry, **Bruninx** argues for digital management rights systems that are transparent at the level of the collecting societies. He adds that five elements ought to be considered when protecting intellectual property: watermarks; technical protection systems; cultural aspects; accessibility issues and appropriate legislation. **Hall** presents the Australian case and argues that with regards to Internet and P2P, traditional media has been slow and defensive, often aiming only at maintaining their market power & highly costly distribution networks. Furthermore traditional media has used aggressive litigation against small companies in addition to lobbying their governments for additional protective legislation. The solution therefore is for new business models and not more legislation. **Muls** argues that piracy has become a socially accepted conduct and calls for the need to develop better business models (see www.sciencedirect.com). He worries that technical protection systems will eliminate faire use. **Jakimo** states for the need to agree, at the national and international level, for political and economic philosophies underpinning any intellectual property system. Otherwise, legislating internationally any form of copyright will be difficult . **Kaushik** poses the following challenges : is a full-proof digital content protection system technologically feasible? Assuming that it is, who should implement it? He worries, like most speakers, that bad legislation will 'sabotage' the information age. Singh calls for pricing models that are adapted to the situation of developing countries because where they reflect people's ability to pay, piracy has decreased. He presents the experience of Malaysia where government played an important role in providing incentives toward acquiring less expensive software (open source or otherwise) for the enterprise environment or for individuals.

The issue of intellectual property is important to FIAM and its associations. A Technical Action Group (TAG) is being set up to reflect on the intrinsic issues related to IP at the international level but also to provide for a common FIAM position regarding copyright, patents and piracy.

C) Digital Content Production

This session started with Chair René Bouchard pointing out four main topics crucial to bridging the digital divide: 1) Connectivity & Accessibility, 2) Funding & Sustainability, which slides into the synergy model combining state and private initiatives and support, 3) Technology & Regulatory environment, 4) Human resources (skills, knowledge, capacity).

Vickery's presentation shows that a strong digital divide exists between developed and developing countries but also within developed countries themselves. Such divide exists with OECD member states as well (South vs. North, East vs. West, males vs. females, old vs. young, urban vs. rural areas, rich vs. poor. It is estimated that 10% of the world population is on-line. Salient to the discussions is Internet and multimedia usage in the delivery of public services to the general population (healthcare, online media, information technology solutions). Due to inadequate telecom infrastructure in most developing countries, off-line work should be considered for knowledge exchange standards, P2P work, basic information and appropriate licences.

An important constraint in bridging the digital divide is language. Greater effort should focus on multilingual systems and translations. With more Internet content, accessibility is increased and less expensive. The role of government in financing the production of new digital content is fundamental. Switzerland is an interesting case in government approaching the digital media content support. Chappelet demonstrated the efficiency of Swiss content delivery programs such as the Swiss Virtual Campus programme, the Swiss Education Centre programme, Schools On the Net (e-schools) programme and Swiss One Stop Portal in 5 languages, not to forget the New Media Arts programme, which is mostly cultural and coordinated with the e-Europe programme.

Another major issue is that of diversity in the production of digital content. To ensure that Internet content be more localized and of better quality, content providers have to be made aware of the issue of value added content and of the different platforms on which to deliver such content. The e-Europe programme is attempting to fill specific content gaps. The task is not easy as the EU has to respond to a very diverse linguistic and cultural clientele. The main effort is being done on the public sector, linguistic and cultural localization and service sustainability, support for industry and resources and the production of content for mobile platforms.

D) Technology and Know-How Transfer

The issue of technology transfer was high on the participant's agenda. Seven speakers presented speeches Both a plenary conference and a roundtable were allotted to this theme. Keynote speaker **Sibisi** stressed the importance of moving from passive knowledge transfer to participative knowledge sharing. This means focusing on people (access and mastery of ICT tools as well education and business empowerment), development of appropriate national regulatory environments and choosing promising scientific and technological fields or niche areas. Starting from the provocative premise that there is no digital divide between rich and poor countries, **Da Costa** argues that ICT and multimedia tools are like bridges for delivering better education, greater economic activity and culture. **Scharffenberger**'s NGO experience in technology transfer taught him the following conclusions: to base partnerships on real complementarities, to get anything in writing, to be patient, to always stay in communication and ready for the inevitable crises and to understand each other's businesses, risks and opportunities. He believes that NGOs and multimedia companies can work together to make a tangible difference to the present and future of remote and underserved areas of the world. **Tjia** notes that with regards to ICT in developing countries, skills are plenty but local markets are small and jobs too few. Outsourcing (export of IT services) has been quite good for countries like India but also for countries with high cost structures and labour shortage. Two notable areas of outsourcing development are software (websites and e-commerce) and multimedia (animation, games, 3D). Constraints however exist and include cross-cultural management, language and business coordination. Overall, greater NGO and government involvement is beneficial to such international cooperation. **Stienen**'s experience is that of a full-fledge development agency with multi-country aid programs. Technology transfer starts by a belief in long-term development, followed by a close relationship with the educational sector of a given country. Notable ICT projects include interactive radio programs in Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Mali and Uganda. **Mora**'s presentation focused on the Costa Rican experience in the field of technology transfer. The government showed leadership by creating the right environment for enticing foreign investments. It also promoted the production of local digital content, reduced infrastructure costs, worked toward greater public-private sector cooperation and pushed for greater software exports. Quite important was also the rise of the small and medium enterprise in the composition of the Costa Rican Internet and multimedia industry.

E) Human Resource Development

Six speakers participated at this session. **Campbell's** overview stresses that greater transparency and lower costs in electronic markets create lower «transaction costs» and that higher efficiency and higher productivity in the field of IT favour employment growth. For developing countries, higher ICT integration means global market access, technological leapfrogging and greater outsourcing contracts. Furthermore, ICT's effect on work has been a break-up of hierarchy, changes in work organization and higher networking.

There are issues related to quality of work that still demand study. **Rohde** analyses the current economic state of the multimedia industry and concludes that it has been detrimental to the multimedia 'worker' (contraction and lay-offs), in particular the young cohorts. He calls for the multimedia sector to take up a strategic process of professionalization, meaning a system of vocational and university curricula, with inbuilt bridges between the different levels to facilitate upward mobility. He believes in Europe's social partnership model which should work for the benefit of the hi-tech worker. **Li Jian Ping's** Chinese experience speaks of his country's rise in the field of IT in general and multimedia in particular (Shanghai alone is home to 2000 multimedia companies) and of the challenges ahead. The demand for qualified resource is enormous: over the next three years, the region of Shanghai will see the need for 300,000 IT trained technicians and engineers, 100,000 just in the multimedia sector. **Brenes'** intervention looked at the important issue of hi-tech brain-drain affecting developing countries. It is difficult to retain highly-qualified individuals in their own countries mostly because salaries are higher is developed countries, research and development funds and facilities are few in developing countries, personal commitment is not there and political or business leadership to retain qualified individuals is lacking. Close attention, therefore, has to be paid to leadership issues, labour climate, culture and values, management systems, organizational structure and of course compensation systems. It is important to increase the participation of women in technology-related fields as they are underrepresented in the hi-tech industry but often represent 1/3 of computer science departments in various developed and developing countries.

FIAM is setting up a Technical Action Group (TAG) to look into the issue of human resource development in the field of Internet and multimedia and is looking for close cooperation between the associations and appropriate national and international organizations (ILO, employment institutes, etc.)

F) E-Learning

Starting from a broad definition of e-learning, the **seven speakers** of this field-specific session decided to focus on the use of technology to facilitate learning. Various technologies and platforms were discussed among which content delivered by video or administered with databases, as well as electronic courses delivered through standalone applications or any network (LAN, WAN or Internet). The speakers looked also at e-learning in the school environment (k-12 and university) as well as corporate training and professional development. Several issues were discussed : the need to consider multiple means of delivery for e-learning for accessibility, the need to use low and high technology options (possibility of migration from low to high), broadband limitations (lack of proper infrastructure) that can be addressed by stand-alone applications.

E-learning is evolving from technology development and services to content delivery. Unique to e-learning companies (in comparison with other multimedia enterprises) is that they have to provide for technology and delivery of multimedia but also with the instructional design and pedagogy. Multimedia associations with a high e-learning component need to respond to the particular needs of this sector. An area where multimedia associations can do a lot is establishing e-learning quality standards that address all aspects of e-learning: from technology and delivery to content quality and testing. Finally, the fundamental issue of training and human resource development was raised by all speakers: e-learning companies need access to education professionals that are not only able to design and implement truly localized and student-controlled projects, but also professionals who are able to participate in e-learning courses as mentors and guides to the students. The success of e-learning projects, and of the industry as a whole, depends on the ability to find or develop human resources capable of taking e-learning beyond the traditional educational paradigms. e-learning needs a new student-centered individualized approach, with greater student control and localization.

G) FIAM and the World Summit on the Information Society

During the closing conference of Montreux 2002. Mr. Pierre GAGNÉ, Executive Director of the World Summit on the Information Society, invited FIAM and its associations to participate in the work of WSIS and present the Multimedia industry role and initiatives in fostering and

promoting greater access and use of localized and culturally relevant digital content. This issue is of major importance to the overall premise of WSIS which will look at ICTs revolutionizing effects on society at large and on how to ensure that information technology is used to the benefit of all. FIAM is setting up a working committee for the purpose of preparing a position paper to be presented in Geneva in December 2003). This position paper will also spell out current and future initiatives the Associations worldwide are or will be involved in, particularly with regards to economic growth and new partnerships, technology transfer, awareness of new technologies and local content development and skilled employment opportunities. FIAM calls upon all member associations to get involved in this exercise and help spell out the Industry's role and potential regarding this important matter (inputs, cooperation, funding and support, operational proposals, meetings, training sessions, network). You will be receiving very shortly a call for participation and relevant information about this specific working committee's mandate and objectives.