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INTERACTIVE
MULTIMODAL
INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT

The (IM)2 Newsletter

Every month the (IM)2 Newsletter brings you the latest and hottest
scientific and administrative news about the (IM)2 NCCR and related topics

A new agreement between IDIAP and EPFL

On June 2nd, 2003, IDIAP and EPFL signed a new agreement to further strengthen the relationship between the two institutions.

Prof. Michel Declercq, Dean of the STI School at EPFL, Prof. Stefan Catsicas, EPFL Vice President for Research, Pierre Crittin, President of the IDIAP Foundation, Prof. Hervé Bourlard, Director of IDIAP and (IM)2.

The new agreement will further facilitate collaboration at all levels in both academic and research aspects. In particular, the involvement of EPFL in the (IM)2 NCCR and the academic activities of IDIAP senior staff members now have solid foundations.

Resignation of Prof. Murat Kunt, (IM)2 Deputy Director

Prof. Murat Kunt, Head of the Signal Processing Institute (ITS) at EPFL, has announced his resignation from his involvement in (IM)2 as Deputy Director and head of (IM)2.SA. Murat Kunt was one of the core (IM)2 members during the preparation and the early days of the NCCR. Earlier this year, he had accepted to coordinate and strengthen the actions of (IM)2 in education.

The (IM)2 management acknowledges this decision but regrets the loss of a valuable partner. It should be noted that the resignation of Prof. Kunt does not impact on the participation of other members of the ITS or EPFL. As per the new agreement between IDIAP and EPFL (see above), a new Deputy Director and a new leader for (IM)2.SA will be chosen in the near future.

On behalf of everyone in (IM)2, we take this opportunity to thank Murat for his involvement in the NCCR and wish him all the best for the future.

IDIAP hires two new world-renowned researchers

IDIAP will reinforce the quality of its research staff this summer with the arrival of two world-renowned researchers, Hynek Hermansky and Mike Flynn.

Originally from the Czech Republic, Hynek Hermansky obtained a Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) at the University of Tokyo before holding a diverse range of posts in the academic world, including at ICSI. He has also worked extensively within the private sector in the US. His latest position was Director of the Centre for Information Technologies in the Oregon Graduate Institute of Science and Technology, in Portland. Author of more than 120 publications and holder of 5 patents, his research relates to the integration of characteristics resulting from the human auditive process in automatic speech processing systems. The reunion of Prof. Bourlard and Prof. Hermansky at IDIAP, who have known each other for many years, reinforces the position of the Martigny-based institute on the world scene of research in speech processing.

Hynek Hermansky

Mike Flynn

Mike Flynn started his career as a software programmer within the Logica group before taking part, and directing several projects in the research center of the same group. In 1991, he joined Xerox EuroPARC where he worked, amongst other things, on the precursors of the now very popular personal assistant devices (PDA). Mike Flynn's most recent role was in Advanced Data Architect Services at Symbian Ltd where he worked on operating systems for the latest generation of mobile telephones. Author of many publications and holder of ten patents, Mike Flynn will reinforce the R&D group at IDIAP in the area of multimodal integration and interfaces to multimedia sources. This work strongly aligns with the central objectives of (IM)2.

First round of FP6 projects

One of the strategic objectives (SO) within the Information Society Technologies (IST) prority of the EC's 6th framework program (FP6) is "Multimodal Interfaces". The call for proposals for this SO is now over and the evaluation results show massive successes for Swiss researchers in the area, all of them part of (IM)2, and in particular for IDIAP, the (IM)2 Leading House. While the EC has yet to take formal decisions to fund the projects, it should be noted that for the two major instruments of FP6, projects proposed by or including Swiss partners were ranked first:

- **AMI** (Augmented Multiparti Interaction), an Integrated Project (IP) submitted and coordinated by IDIAP and with Swiss industrial partners Fastcom and Spiderphone, ranked first among 20 proposals.
- **SIMILAR**, a Network of Excellence (NoE) with Swiss partners EPFL and the University of Geneva, ranked first among 10 proposals.

In addition, **EURON**, a NoE proposal in the "Beyond Robotics" SO with IDIAP as partner is also in a good position.

(IM)2 is thus about to play a major role in the European Research Area (ERA) in the domain of Multimodal Interfaces, clearly establishing Switzerland as one of the leading countries in the field. In particular, the leadership role of IDIAP is now extended beyond the actual Swiss partners.

We will of course come back with more coverage of the new FP6 projects related to (IM)2.

(Issues 7 and 10 of the (IM)2 Newsletter feature the current FP5 projects in which (IM)2 teams are taking part.)

Events

Eurospeech 2003   1–4.09.03

Organised by IDIAP, EPFL and the University of Geneva, Eurospeech 2003, the premiere conference on speech and language technology, will attract more than 1000 scientists in Geneva this fall. Details at www.eurospeech2003.org.

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CIMTEC: (IM)2's privileged partner for technology transfer activities

Based in Sion, with offices in Ecublens (PSE - EPFL Scientific Park) and in Sierre (Technopôle), CIMTEC is above all a team of engineers and economists - 12 employees - in direct contact with the needs of innovative enterprises.

CIM for Coaching, Innovation and Management

CIMTEC focuses on technological innovation in existing companies as well as in the field of start-ups. Its mission is to provide SMC's (small and medium sized companies) with concrete and pragmatic support in their search for competitiveness, and to offer professional support in the start up of new innovative companies. CIMTEC's main activities are:

- **Strategic positioning** - audits of companies, assistance in the definition of the product/market strategy
- **Product innovation** - support to speed up the marketing of technological and innovative products perfectly adapted to the target audience
- **Start-up** - support technological projects to become the basis of a company and offer a professional support in the start-up of new innovative companies.
- **Technology Transfer and Valorization** - identify promising research projects carried out by universities, schools or research institutes and transforming them into business cases.

Active scanning and the control of specific tools, confirmed industrial experience, and very open readiness for innovation, allow CIMTEC's staff to respond to queries of entrepreneurs concerned with the smooth running of their business. Since its creation in 1991, more than 500 companies have benefited from the support of CIMTEC. Last year, CIMTEC supported 118 companies (among which 49 are in Valais).

Essentially active in western Switzerland CIMTEC collaborates closely with a number of partners, both in Switzerland and abroad. Among them we can name: the headquarters of the network CIM Centre of Western Switzerland (CCSO), universities and technical colleges, the Swiss and foreign research centres, universities of applied science (HES), and the Federal Commission for technology and innovation (CTI Bern). CIMTEC-Valais also participates actively in European research programs.

Business Innovation Center

CIMTEC has received the BIC (Business Innovation Center) label awarded by the European Community. With this label, CIMTEC has become a member of the network EBN which counts more than 150 members (BIC) in 20 countries and benefits from new contact points and partners at the international level.

The Ark

Together with the State of Valais (Développement Economique du Valais), CIMTEC has launched a major project of economic development to make the canton of Valais a true technology park with promise for the future and recognized as such in Switzerland and around the world. It combines several technology sites into one entity. The Ark aims to nurture research and to foster the capacity for innovation amongst existing businesses. Finally, The Ark facilitates the creation of new businesses and the relocation of others to Valais. The Ark covers the three fields of activity which have been, and will continue to be, a showcase for Valais: life sciences, information technology and communication, and services, tourism and environment.

The Ark invites companies and research centers, start-ups and R&D divisions to operate in a unique environment in which they develop their ideas and activities

Activities within (IM)2

The main objective of the collaboration between CIMTEC and (IM)2 is to identify promising technologies resulting from research carried out within the NCCR and to transfer them to existing companies or give rise to new spin-offs.

After the first year of activity, this collaboration has already produced concrete results:

- Creation of Spiderphone SA, a subsidiary of the US company, to address the needs of the Swiss and European market for web-enhanced audio conferences and to provide a showcase for further developments in speech processing;
- A CTI project involving IDIAP and ETHZ with Komodo Entertainment Software, to develop low bit-rate speech coding and transmission based on speech synthesis for online multiplayer games;
- Contacts with Logitech for potential projects in multimodal user authentication and cursive handwriting recognition;

These successes are in part based on know how and results prior to (IM)2. CIMTEC's activities will continue in the future, with more and more emphasis on the exploitation of the results of (IM)2.

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CIMTEC

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