i3net 1998-1999
Brief report of activities

i3net was launched in September 1996 to support future research programmes in intelligent information interfaces and build a new community among research workers concerned with novel approaches to design, technology and user involvement for future interfaces to information and communication for ordinary users. The first i3 research programme of thirteen projects in inhabited information spaces and connected community was launched from July 1997 onwards.

This report covers i3net's third year, 1998-1999. This year's main event no doubt has been the expansion of the i3 community to include the participants in the experimental school environments research programme which consists of twelve projects on future learning environments for 4-8 year old kids. As a result, the i3 community now includes +300 research workers from more than 100 companies, research organisations and design institutes from all over Europe. In connection with welcoming the experimental school environments colleagues, i3net concluded a new contract with Esprit Long-Term Research (now FET – Future and Emerging Technologies) towards the end of 1998, effectively extending the network to September 2001. The contract included a revised work programme for i3net as well as the principle that the i3net Coordinating Group (CG) will henceforth be elected for one year at the Annual Conference General Assembly.

Another major event in the past year was the first i3 Spring Days in Sitges, Spain, in March 1999. During some amazingly packed three days, around 200 participants from all over the world joined 14 workshops, the experimental school environments day, the schools exhibition, and multiple adjacent meetings. And, above all, the i3 community came together in lovely surroundings. Let's make an even bigger success of next year's i3 Spring Days 2000 in Athens 1-3 March 2000.

i3net works through coordinator activities at the Natural Interactive Systems Lab in Odense, Denmark, the i3net coordinating group which decides on strategy, establishes task groups and monitors everything, and the task groups which lead strategy implementation. It was not always like that. But after i3net's second year which was characterised by a "pure (ad hoc) action approach", the current approach is characterised by a drive towards increased professionalisation of all activities. Thus, i3net now (since April 1999) has two full-time coordination staff in Odense working to support the CG and the task groups, as well as to develop novel approaches to technology transfer and business relations; a professional i3magazine editor (in Edinburgh, since January 1999); a professional external communications task group leader (in Brussels, since July 1999); and outsourcing of major tasks is being widely used for, e.g., video production, interactive web site creation and maintenance, consultancy, and visual identity work. As a result, the i3 community is now effectively being run by the community for the community. Everyone with the drive and motivation it takes is more than welcome to join the numerous initiatives that are being implemented or propose new ones waiting to be done.

The following is an overview of the people who are, or were, involved in i3 community building during 1998-1999. Warm thanks to all of you for the ideas, thoughts and efforts you are devoting to the creation of a truly unique community!

Coordinating Group 1998-1999 (CG)

The CG has had seven one-day meetings since the i3AC'98 in Nyborg: 4.9.1998, 29.10.1998, 18.1.1999, 19.3.1999, 28.5.1999, 23.8.1999, 19.10.1999. The CG members are:

David Benyon, Niels Ole Bernsen (chair), Niels Björkbom (replaced by Lars Heide, April 1999), Grazia Filippi, Kay Hofmeester, Ulrich Hoppe, Manolis Koutlis, Richard Millwood, Francoise Néel, Patrick Purcell, Thomas Rist, Duncan Smith, Manfred Tscheligi, John Wyver, Ingrid van der Zon (replaced by Irene McWilliam, July 1999), Jakub Wejchert (EC/FET observer).

Task Groups (TGs) 1998-1999

Annual Conference '99 TG

The people: David Benyon, Napier University, Edinburgh (UK), programme chair, Alberto Bianchi, Giuliano Benelli, Patrizia Marti, Università degli Studi di Siena (I), local organisers, Lars Heide, Odense University (DK), leader, Raghu Kolli, Meru Research (NL), design, Richard Millwood, Ultralab, Essex (UK), Marilyn Panayi, Odense University (DK), Thomas Rist, DFKI, Saarbrücken (D), Duncan Smith, Crystal Presentations Ltd, Birmingham (UK), Manfred Tscheligi, CURE, Vienna (A), Jakub Wejchert (EC liaison).

The achievements: this conference!

Annual Conference 2000 TG

The people: Bo Gustafsson, Jönköping University (S), local organiser, Lars Heide, Odense University (DK), others to be determined.

The plans: organise a successful i3AC2000 in Jönköping 13-15 September 2000.

Entrepreneurial TG

The people: Robert Whelan, Brussels (B), leader, Patrick Purcell, Imperial College London (UK), Jens Kristian Damsgaard, Odense University (DK).

The achievements: technology transfer workshop at i3 Spring Days 1999, gathering of emerging i3 exploitation plans, exploitation contact needs, and IPRs issues.

External communication TG

The people: Mimo Caenepeel, University of Edinburgh (UK), i3magazine editor, Jens Kr. Damsgaard, Odense University (DK), Rossella Magli, Starlab, Brussels (B), leader, Richard Millwood, Anglia Polytechnic University (UK), internal communication TG leader.

The plans: established in August 1999, the ECTG aims to initiate and coordinate high-quality, high-volume i3 communication to the world.

i3magazine

The people: Niels Ole Bernsen, Odense University (DK), Mimo Caenepeel, University of Edinburgh (UK), editor.

The plans: make i3magazine compulsory reading for investigators and users of intelligent information interfaces world-wide.

Internal communication technology TG

The people: Niels Ole Bernsen, Odense University (DK), C. Bouras, Computer Technology Institute, Patras (G), Laila Dybkjær, Odense University (DK), V. Kapoulas, Computer Technology Institute, Patras (G), Manolis Koutlis, Computer Technology Institute, Patras (G),

Giorgio de Michelis, University of Milano (I), Richard Millwood, Anglia Polytechnic University (UK), leader, Patrick Purcell, Imperial College London (UK), Javier Segovia, Universidad Politecnica de Madrid (E), Duncan Smith, Crystal Presentations Ltd, Birmingham (UK).

The achievements: internal communications web site, spun off the Schools web site TG in April 1999.

The plans: to connect the i3 community by increasingly powerful electronic infrastructure.

IST '99 TG

The people: Jens Kristian Damsgaard, Odense University (DK).

The plan: establish and support common i3 stand at IST'99 in Helsinki among COMRIS, PERSONA, MAYPOLE, STORIES, CAB, CARESS and i3net.

Negotiation with potential industrial sponsors TG

The people: Niels Ole Bernsen, Odense University (DK), Tom Rodden, Lancaster University (UK), leader, Marco Susani, Domus Academy, Milano (I), John Thackara, Netherlands Design Institute, Amsterdam (NL).

The plan: carry out negotiations with potential industrial sponsors of the i3 community.

The TG was terminated in August 1999.

Schools web site TG

The people: Duncan Smith, Crystal Presentations Ltd, Birmingham (UK).

The achievements: establishment of the Schools web site.

The plan: to make the web site the central vehicle for acquaintance, exchange of experience and discussion among the i3 schools user community.

Workshops TG

The people: Alan Munro, Napier University, Edinburgh (UK), Thomas Rist, DFKI, Saarbrücken (D), leader.

The achievements: organisation of i3 Spring Days 1999 with Josep Blat, University of Barcelona (E) as local organiser, handling of members' proposals for i3 workshops.

The plan: organisation of successful i3 Spring Days 2000 with Manolis Koutlis, Computer Technology Institute, Patras (G), as local organiser, handling of members' proposals for i3net supported workshops at any time.

Coordinating Group 1999-2000

The following 12 candidates have been proposed for the i3net CG 1999-2000:

Riccardo Antonini, Roma Ricerche (I), Alberto Bianchi, University of Siena (I), Ulrich Hoppe, University of Duisburg (D), Giorgio De Michelis, University of Milano (I), Richard Millwood, Anglia Polytechnic University (UK), Alan Munro, Napier University, Edinburgh (UK), Richard Noss, University of London (UK), Patrick Purcell, Imperial College of Science & Technology, London (UK), Thomas Rist, DFKI, Saarbrücken (D), Duncan Smith, Crystals Presentations (UK), Marco Susani, Domus Academy Research Center, Milano (I), Manfred Tscheligi, University of Vienna (A).

i3net's election laws require balance between CI and ESE projects and 12-14 CG members. Jointly, the candidates satisfy these two criteria.

The future

Important parts of the future have been presented already through the future plans part of the TGs above. We want i3 to have a powerful exhibition presence at IST'99 in Helsinki; we look forward to the Spring Days 2000 in Athens 1-3 March 2000, to the i3AC2000 in Jönköping 13-15 September 2000, and to proposals for i3 workshops to take place adjacent to major international conferences in our field. We believe that i3magazine will continue its impressive expansion of its readership. We look forward to the full i3 visibility blast of the planned efforts in the external communications TG, and to the infrastructure efforts of the internal communications TG and the Schools web site TG.

The people doing all these activities not only strive for your satisfaction with what they accomplish. They rely on you throughout their preparations: to give information updates, feedback on plans, critique of their web sites, proposals for workshops, contributions to publications, unsolicited event and success information to be communicated to the world, and, above all, new ideas for things to do whether or not these ideas fit existing TGs or procedures. The i3 community not only aims to do innovation in research, it has also demonstrated that it cannot help inventiveness to pervade whatever else it does. So, never hesitate to contact the people named in this report to explain what's on your mind.

Concrete next steps not addressed above include:

- the future probes just launched. Ask the CG to support your first explorations into i3 futures! All you have to do is explain the question you have in mind;
- the global announcement of open i3 membership to happen right after i3AC'99;
- acquisition of sponsorships for the i3 community by companies world-wide (negotiations ongoing);
- possibly an i3 book series (to be decided in Siena);
- contacts with similar organisations world-wide, such as NSF, EC/IST, Telecities, User Interfaces for All, other European networks of excellence, such as ELSNET and AgentLinkNet (early contacts made in those cases) etc. Contacts from organisations to mutual benefit are very welcome indeed.
- launching of a physicality and tangibility TG right after i3AC'99;
- support for the new proactive FET disappearing computer initiative.

Initiatives to be prepared include:

- training and education;
- political impact building;
- Central and Eastern Europe;
- anything YOU can convince the CG to initiate.

On behalf of everyone mentioned above

Niels Ole Bernsen

i3net coordinator