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Multimedia Applications, Services and Techniques – ECMAST '97

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Series Editors

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Volume Editors

Serge Fdida

Laboratoire MASI/CNRS, Université Pierre et Marie Curie

4, Place Jussieu, F-75252 Paris Cedex 05, France

E-mail: serge.fdida@masi.ibp.fr

Michele Morganti

Italtel Spa

I-20019 Settimo Milanese (MI), Italy

E-mail: michele.morganti@italtel.it

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Preface

ECMAST, the European Conference on Multimedia Applications, Services and Techniques, comes to its second edition at a turning point for the future of this whole sector. Trials throughout Europe, many of them organized within the context of the ACTS Programme, are beginning to deliver valuable results in terms of viable technologies, promising applications and, most of all, user responsiveness. Standardization bodies all over the world are now in the process of finalizing their baseline documents on reference architectures, delivery platforms and key interfaces, while national regulators are actively discussing and experimenting the rules that will condition the evolution and the future asset of this whole new business sector. Established operators, service and content providers, as well as newcomers, are busy trying to identify new business opportunities and to gain new market shares, while equipment manufacturers are working hard to provide them with the necessary technical solutions.

The ECMAST '97 Technical Program very much reflects this rapidly evolving situation and the main themes of debate that accompany it: the never-ending search for killer applications; the role of broadcast services and service providers; the overwhelming presence of the Internet. The number of proposed contributions exceeded 120: once more a confirmation of the heat that today exists around these topics, but also a formidable task for the Program Committee who had to select the 48 technical papers that, arranged in 15 sessions along two parallel streams, offered to the participants an exciting 3-day journey across the many facets and the many challenges of Multimedia. A key note speech on "Nomadic Computing" by Prof. L. Kleinrock completed the program, while a choice of technical visits on the second day and a full Tutorial Day on the preceding day complemented it.

ECMAST '97 is intended as an open forum where delegates from all key players can meet and discuss recent developments and emerging trends in multimedia technologies, services, and applications with an emphasis on practical results and field trials involving real users. It is also intended as a timely milestone for a comprehensive state-of-the-art assessment of the main outcomes and achievements of the 4th EU Framework Programme in view of the definition of the content and the objectives of the 5th.

We, as the Programme Committee co-chairmen, would like to thank all the authors for their contribution in assuring an excellent technical level for the conference. We would like to thank equally all the reviewers for the hard work spent meeting the tight schedule and a number of people for their efforts and commitment to making ECMAST '97 a success: the members of the Programme Committee, the members of the Steering Committee, and the members of the Organizing Committee, amongst whom an extra special vote of thanks is due to Paola Vaccari.

Last but not least, a special thanks go to the European Commission (ACTS and COST 237), the European Broadcasting Union, and EUREL for supporting the Conference. We also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the European Commission, CSELT, Italtel, Telecom Italia, Videotime, and Sirti.

Univ. Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris

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Michele Morganti

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Serious and detailed reviews are an essential foundation for the quality of the papers selected. The reviewers for the papers presented in this book have fulfilled their role diligently. It is therefore a great pleasure to thank them as well as the authors for their efforts.

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