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Preface

The importance of multimedia technology, services and applications for the future prosperity of our society is widely recognised. Many initiatives, both national and international, are actively promoting research activities and experiments in this field, which is progressing very fast.

ECMAST is an annual event promoted by the Commission of the European Union (DGXIII B) that aims to involve the world-wide community in presenting and discussing the state of the art in multimedia applications, services and techniques. ECMAST '98, which takes place May 26–28, 1998 in Berlin, is the third occasion on which ECMAST has been held. Forty high-level papers have been selected for this conference and are collected in these Lecture Notes. The topics covered in these papers include:

- Coded representation of images, sound and data
- Multimedia networks and protocols
- Multimedia delivery in broadcast and telecommunications networks
- Multimedia servers and storage architectures
- Advanced multimedia terminals and in-house networks
- Multimedia services
- Internet and multimedia
- Multimedia trials

To complete the technical programme, we have scheduled three invited, keynote speakers, a Poster Session, and an Exhibition with more than twenty technical demonstrations. Additionally, on the day preceding the conference, ECMAST '98 offers Tutorials on the following emerging hot topics: Universal Mobile Telecommunication System (UMTS), Real Time Communications over the Internet, the Multimedia and Hypermedia Standard MHEG-5, Intelligent Physical Agents (FIPA), MPEG-4 Technologies (Video, Audio, Systems) and MPEG-7.

For the present, on behalf of the International Steering Committee, we would like to welcome all of you to Berlin, the capital of reunited Germany, which will be the main seat of the German Government in the future. In 1999 the Parliament and the Government will move to the old capital, which is why Berlin is now Europe's largest building site. Berlin is also one of the cultural and scientific centers of Germany and has a fine tradition in pioneering developments in telecommunications. Several world-renowned research institutes and manufacturers, and three universities with about 150,000 students, have their home in Berlin. The ECMAST Conference site, the Berlin Congress Centre, is situated close to the historical centre of Berlin at "Unter den Linden" with its squares, domes and museums, and we hope that you will have the opportunity to see some of the City. We wish you a fruitful and enjoyable conference and an excellent few days in Berlin.

Finally we would like to express our sincere thanks to our sponsors, the Commission of the European Union, Deutsche Telekom Berkom, IBM Germany, and the Heinrich-Hertz-Institut, which have provided significant support for this event.

May 1998

David Hutchison and Ralf Schäfer

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Table of Contents

3D Representation of Videoconference Image Sequences Using VRML 2.0 <i>I. Kompatsiaris, M. G. Strintzis</i> <i>Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece</i>	1
An Autonomous Sensor for 3D Reconstruction <i>D. LeEVERS</i> <i>VERS Associates, UK</i> <i>P. Gil, F. M. Lopes, and J. Pereira</i> <i>Instituto de Engenharia de Sistemas e Computadores, Portugal</i> <i>J. Castro, J. Gomes-Mota, and M. I. Ribeiro</i> <i>Instituto Superior Técnico, Portugal</i> <i>J. G. M. Gonçalves, V. Sequeira, and E. Wolfart</i> <i>Joint Research Centre, Italy</i> <i>V. Dupourque</i> <i>Robosoft SA, France</i> <i>V. Santos</i> <i>University of Aveiro, Portugal</i> <i>S. Butterfield, D. Hogg, and K. Ng</i> <i>University of Leeds, UK</i>	13
Incomplete 3D for Multiview Representation and Synthesis of Video Objects <i>J.-R. Ohm and K. Müller</i> <i>Heinrich Hertz Institute, Germany</i>	26
An Execution Architecture for Synchronized Multimedia Presentations <i>F. Rousseau</i> <i>Open Group Research Institute, France</i> <i>A. Duda</i> <i>LSR-IMAG, France</i>	42
Presenting Multimedia on the Web and in TV Broadcast <i>W. ten Kate and P. Deunhouwer</i> <i>Philips Research Laboratories, The Netherlands</i> <i>D. Bulterman, L. Hardman, and L. Rutledge</i> <i>Research Institute for Mathematics and Computer Science, The Netherlands</i>	56
MHEG-5 Application Development <i>R. Stolp, A. Scheller, and A. Kraft</i> <i>GMD FOKUS, Germany</i>	70

The SICMA Multimedia Server and Virtual Museum Application <i>G. Kyriakaki, Y. Maragoudakis, Y. Mavraganis, and N. Pappas</i> <i>MUSIC/TUC, Greece</i> <i>C. Brandt, R. Lüling, and K. Meyer</i> <i>Heinz Nixdorf Institute Paderborn, Germany</i> <i>W. Lamotte</i> <i>Limburg University, Belgium</i>	83
A Parallel Continuous Media Server Complying to the RTSP Protocol <i>F. Cortés and R. Lüling</i> <i>University of Paderborn, Germany</i>	97
Media Streaming in a Multimedia Annotation Application <i>S. Bessler and M. Hager</i> <i>Kapsch AG, Austria</i>	111
A Multimedia Service and Management Architecture Using APIs over CORBA Platform <i>T. Saydam and S. Yucel</i> <i>University of Delaware, USA</i> <i>T. Kusano</i> <i>NEC Corporation, Japan</i>	121
Open Interface Support for Heterogeneous Network Services <i>C. Edwards, D. Hutchison, and D. Waddington</i> <i>Lancaster University, UK</i>	135
A CORBA-Assisted Multimedia Proxy Server <i>J. R. Fallows and I. W. Marshall</i> <i>BT Laboratories, UK</i>	149
Image Indexing by Using a Rotation and Scale Invariant Partition <i>J. M. Marie-Julie and H. Essafi</i> <i>LETI CEA-Technologies Avancées, France</i>	163
A Study on Automatic Shot Change Detection <i>Y. Yusoff, W. Christmas, and J. Kittler</i> <i>University of Surrey, UK</i>	177
A Block Based Watermarking Technique for MPEG2 Signals: Optimization and Validation on Real Digital TV Distribution Links <i>V. Darmstaedter, J.-F. Delaigle, D. Nicholson, and B. Macq</i> <i>Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium</i>	190

Scalable Security Mechanisms in Transport Systems for Enhanced Multimedia Services	207
<i>T. Kunkelmann, H. Vogler, and M.-L. Moschgath</i>	
<i>Information Technology Transfer Office, Germany</i>	
<i>L. Wolf</i>	
<i>Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany</i>	
The SECOMS Broadband Satellite Network in the Multimedia Services and Multi-environment Coverage Scenario	221
<i>G. Losquadro and M. Barbieri</i>	
<i>Alenia Aerospazio, Italy</i>	
<i>M. Luglio and F. Vatalaro</i>	
<i>University of Rome „Tor Vergata“, Italy</i>	
DIGISAT-S3M: The Interactivity for SMATV Users	233
<i>A. Molina and J. Seseña</i>	
<i>HISPASAT, Spain</i>	
MOMENTS – Multimedia Services in a Narrow-Bandwidth Cellular Environment	246
<i>M. Leisenberg</i>	
<i>TELEMEDIA GmbH, Germany</i>	
<i>T. Lindgren</i>	
<i>NOKIA Telecommunications, Finland</i>	
MUSIST Browser and Navigation Concept	260
<i>S. Antoniazzi</i>	
<i>Italtel, Italy</i>	
<i>H. Marmolin</i>	
<i>UID, Sweden</i>	
<i>G. Schapeler</i>	
<i>Alcatel, Germany</i>	
<i>B. Weickert</i>	
<i>Loewe Opta GmbH, Germany</i>	
SimDS – An Approach to Service Modelling	274
<i>P. A. Sellek and D. O. Beaumont</i>	
<i>BT Laboratories, UK</i>	
Controlling Multimedia Streams across Internet and ATM Network	288
<i>Y.M. Shin and S. Cho</i>	
<i>ETRI, Korea</i>	

Native ATM Protocol Stack for Internet Applications in Residential Broadband Networks	300
<i>T. Zahariadis, C. Georgopoulos, V. Nellas, T. Arvanitis, D. Economou, and G. Stassinopoulos</i>	
<i>National Technical University of Athens, Greece</i>	
<i>J.-A. Sanchez-P. and N. Zervos</i>	
<i>Bell Labs, Lucent Technologies, USA</i>	
Integrated QoS Architecture for IP Switching	312
<i>S. P. Romano</i>	
<i>Università di Napoli Federico II, Italy</i>	
<i>C. Deleuze, J. Rezende, and S. Fdida</i>	
<i>Université Pierre et Marie Curie, France</i>	
Design and Implementation of an ATM Based Distributed Musical Rehearsal Studio	326
<i>Y. Orlary and O. Carbonel</i>	
<i>GRAME, France</i>	
<i>S. Gibbs</i>	
<i>GMD, IMK. VMSD, Germany</i>	
<i>D. Konstantas</i>	
<i>University of Geneva, Switzerland</i>	
Automating the Multimedia Content Production Lifecycle	340
<i>P. Foster, S. Banthorpe, and R. Gepp</i>	
<i>BT Laboratories, UK</i>	
ATMAN: Trading of Digital Audio Visual Contents	352
<i>G. Caire</i>	
<i>CSELT, Italy</i>	
A Perceived Quality of Service Optimization for Video Communication in 'Best-Effort' Networks	366
<i>R. Bolla, A. Iscra, M. Marchese, and S. Zappatore</i>	
<i>University of Genoa, Italy</i>	
Performance of TCP Over Cable Modems and ADSL	380
<i>G. J. Lampard</i>	
<i>BT Laboratories, UK</i>	

A Decentralized Prefetching Protocol for VBR Video on Demand <i>M. Reisslein</i> <i>University of Pennsylvania, USA</i> <i>K. W. Ross</i> <i>Eurecom, France</i> <i>V. Verillotte</i> <i>SUN, France</i>	388
Error-Robustness of Polar Contour-Coding <i>F. H. P. Spaan, R. L. Lagendijk, and J. Biemond</i> <i>Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands</i>	402
Efficient Representation of Chrominance for Very Low Bitrate Coding <i>M. Bartkowiak and M. Domanski</i> <i>Politechnika Poznanska, Poland</i>	415
Real-Time Constraints and Prediction of Video Decoding Time for Multimedia Systems <i>M. Mattavelli and S. Brunetton</i> <i>Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland</i>	425
Video Quality and Bit Rates in Thematic Television Channels <i>M. Gunetti, P. Sunna, and M. Visca</i> <i>RAI - Radiotelevisione Italiana, Centro Ricerce, Italy</i>	439
A System Design for a Wireless Home Multi-Media LAN <i>P. Robertson</i> <i>German Aerospace Center, Germany</i> <i>H.-P. Huth</i> <i>Siemens AG, Germany</i> <i>K. Fazel</i> <i>Bosch Telecom, Germany</i> <i>O. Klank</i> <i>Deutsche Thomson Brandt GmbH, Germany</i> <i>W. Bauerschmidt</i> <i>Grundig, Germany</i>	453

On the Performance of DVB-T System in Mobile Environments <i>R. Burow and P. Pogrzeba</i> <i>Deutsche Telekom Berkom, Germany</i> <i>K. Fazel, P. Hoehner, and P. Robertson</i> <i>German Aerospace Center, Germany</i> <i>O. Klank</i> <i>Deutsche Thomson Brandt GmbH, Germany</i> <i>H. Kussmann, M. J. Ruf</i> <i>Robert Bosch GmbH, Germany</i>	467
VALIDATE – A Virtual Laboratory to Accelerate the Launch of Digital Terrestrial Television <i>A. Oliphant</i> <i>BBC Research & Development Department, UK</i>	481
MEMO: A Hybrid DAB/GSM Communication System for Mobile Interactive Multimedia Services <i>W. Klingenberg</i> <i>Robert Bosch GmbH, Germany</i> <i>A. Neutel</i> <i>Robert Bosch Multimedia-Systeme GmbH & Co. KG, Germany</i>	493
MPEG-4 Systems, Concepts and Implementation <i>F. Casalino, G. Franceschini, and M. Quaglia</i> <i>CSELT, Italy</i>	504
New Audio Applications for Multimedia and MPEG-4: Complexity and Hardware <i>G. Zoia</i> <i>Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland</i>	518
Author Index	531