

Media Lab TaiK

Annual Report

2008



Annual report

"Without Media Lab I would probably have a more standard engineering job at a company like Nokia. I probably wouldn't have invented half as much stuff or founded any companies. Looking back at my idea diaries, the pre-mlab stuff is mostly crap, apparently because I was a lot more narrow minded, and either come up with derivative rather than innovative ideas or could not critique the ideas from other than engineering points of view. For example, I often thought of gadgets and software that would not probably be fun or easy to use. I'm not saying that I know that much even now, but I'm sure that if not for Media Lab, I wouldn't stand a chance in the global competition of bringing out novel entertainment software and technology products. The job requires a multidisciplinary background and the ability to work with and understand people of many professions, which is why I'm all for Aalto university and the important pilots/precursors, such as Mlab and the IDBM program."

— MA in New Media Graduate 2002

Introduction

During the last 15 years both Finnish society and the world generally – in both the developed and developing countries – have lived through a period of change in which the central factor has been digitization. The Internet, and especially the general use of the WWW since the mid-nineties, have made information and communication technologies a part of the everyday life of nearly everyone in the world. The University of Art & Design has reacted to the challenges of digitization by developing the readiness of its schools to use information and communication technologies in its research and education. The university has also attempted to investigate the possibilities brought about by digitization within the various subject areas of the industrial arts. Examples of the changes include the shift within the film and audiovisual industry sector to almost total use of digital production technologies and the changes in the work of designers in respect of use of CAD/CAM systems, network based collaborative work as well as the design of completely new synthetic products.

One of the most significant investments made by the University of Art & Design in relation to digitization was the foundation of the Media Lab. Since 1993 it has been the role of the Media Lab to research, investigate, understand and develop new digital technologies and their effect on society. The Media Lab researches and exploits the possibilities that new technologies create for communication, interaction and expression. At the same time the department evaluates, attempts to understand and to influence the challenges that digitization sets for design and creative production.

In the tradition of the University of Art & Design the Media Lab's activities, since its inception, have included active participation in the design of a changing world. In accordance with the American pioneer of learning technologies for children, Alan Kay, "the best way to predict the future is to make it yourself". With this attitude we have gained a considerable position as a university-level education and research unit, both nationally and internationally, during recent years. The employment level of graduates and foundation of new companies by them has remained strong. The department's research activities have stabilized into research work made within four thematic research groups, as well as the research projects of doctoral students.

2008 has been a year of many new challenges. The school's financial situation has been more difficult than ever before. At the same time, however, the school's activities have expanded and its influence increased. The financial squeeze has uncovered structural problems within the Media Lab's economy; insufficient funding and lack of Professors in relation to the extent and significance of education and research activity.

As part of the strong University of Art & Design (concept), the staff of the Media Lab await rapid action towards the correction of its structural problems. If the foundation of the Media Lab can be made healthy, we see great growth potential for our school: Maybe the greatest growth potential of any of TaiK's schools. Our 'brand' – The Media Lab Helsinki – is still known and appreciated nationally and, especially, internationally.

We await a great deal from 2009 and the move to become part of the Aalto University. The Media Lab is committed to making strong efforts in the building of the new community of science and art. Similarly the Media Lab trusts that the Aalto University will give birth to new possibilities to develop and further strengthen education and research operations in digital design, digital culture and the field of new media. ●

Teemu Leinonen
Dean of School

Teaching



MA graduates, fall 2008.
Photograph: Mikko Laitinen

“The Media Lab’s Master of Arts’ studies has been a significant factor in the development of my career. The Media Lab really stands its own internationally as an expert organization and vantage point on digital media. Especially the practical project work supported by theory and the multi-disciplinary and international student body provide a rich foundation for future new media experts.”

— MA graduate in New Media 2007

Quality and results of teaching

At the beginning of 2008 the Media Lab’s new media education included one MA programme as well as studies leading to the doctoral degree. In 2007 there were 22 Masters graduates and one Doctor of Arts graduate. During the Spring 2008 nine masters graduated, followed by seven in the Autumn; a total of 16. At the end of 2008 there was one Doctoral graduate and another defence is expected in early 2009.

In 2007 there were 120 applicants to the ‘MA in New Media’ degree programme (cf. 105 in 2006), of which 59 were non-Finns. 24 persons were accepted to study. In 2008 there were 89 applicants including 50 non-Finns and 20 were chosen to begin studies.

The new 2-year ‘Sound in New Media’ MA programme began in Autumn 2008. In the Spring 2008 there were 25 applicants to the programme including 7 non-Finns. 8 students were chosen for the programme. The Media Lab’s MA programmes are very international and the

school has a good reputation abroad. Of applicants approx. 50% are non-Finns and 30% of successful applicants are non-Finns. In view of these figures the Media Lab’s MA programmes are some of the most international in Finland.

During 2008 education has been provided by two professors, five lecturers, one producer, one other full-time teacher and a few visiting part-time teachers. In practice one of the professors has been working full-time as Dean of School and the other professor has had responsibility for the provision of doctoral education. Due to this the majority of MA teaching has been the responsibility of the lecturers.

Although the number of graduates for 2008 did not reach the target figure, the quality of final degree works in 2007 and 2008 has been high. The corner stones of the Media Lab’s educational quality assurance are internal evaluation of the teaching of academic staff, the systematic collection of feedback from students, the provision of continual feedback in the classroom, as well as the external evaluation of final degree projects and theses.

It is attempted to gain external evaluators for all final degree works, who provide verbal feedback in the presentation sessions and also make written statements for the department and the students in question. As an example of the feedback received by students the following comment is taken from an MA final degree work evaluation statement, made by the evaluator, a composer/lecturer/producer, from the Sibelius Academy:

"The research project, IMPROVe - Exploring modes of listening based on mobile phone technology goes much further in creative artistic practice, utilizing many recently added functions attached to newer smarter mobile phones that have intelligent OS imbed, equipped with recording / playback audio-visual function, running object oriented compact computer program for carrying on intelligent tasks and smooth communication possibility with other phones and computers (Bluetooth). Based on these technologies, Widerberg's thesis reveals a new way of creating / playing music with group of people and raises very fundamental questions in music and sound art."

— Final degree work evaluation, 2007

Content and methods of education

"New Media", the subject of the MA in New Media programme, covers many themes relating to digitization such as social media, information visualization, computer applications, auditive media, media art, interactive narrative, digital cultural heritage, the digitization of everyday life, learning environments, 3D-design, computer animation, computer games, mobile media, mobile applications and mobile services. The programme of study attempts to give basic knowledge of the challenges and possibilities of digitization but, at the same time, offers students the possibility to deepen their knowledge and skills within their own particular areas of expertise and interest.

A new 2-year MA programme was started in Autumn 2008 entitled, "Sound in New Media". This is provided in collaboration with the Music Technology department of Sibelius Academy, as well as the Media Technology department of the Helsinki University of Technology. The programme answers to the challenges of modern-day, digital sound design by combining the points of view of art, design and technology within a multidisciplinary programme in which theory and practice run side by side, from concept design through interactive art works and, from sound narratives into programming.

The basic notion in the Media Lab's teaching philosophy is "hands-on with minds-on", in which, through hands-on work, it is attempted to also combine a theoretical and meta-cognitive level as well as tacit knowledge. Within workshop periods especially students gain very personal and practical guidance for their work. Within the studies teaching takes turns between wide rang-

ing professional contents and integrated methodological studies. The development of the meta-cognitive side of teaching has been pursued for many years. For example, in the Design Thinking studies organized since 1997, designers have been made familiar with their own design methods and helped to understand their own creative processes, as well as given readiness to work in multidisciplinary design groups. A large part of this knowledge has been collected through the years from the Media Lab's own expert community.

Teaching Collaboration

2008 has been marked by even closer collaboration with the other universities of the Aalto University, especially with departments of TKK. One example of the tight educational collaboration is with the TKK Media Technology department within the Sound in New Media programme.

Another significant joint educational project with TKK Media Technology department is Game Project teaching that involves students from Media Lab, TaiK's Film and TV school and TKK. The study planning has been undertaken by the Media Lab, together with TKK's Media Technology department.

Collaboration in teaching with other TaiK Schools during 2008 was mainly realized through the students of other schools taking part in the Media Lab's courses. In addition the Media Lab's teachers and researchers have worked as visiting teachers, for example, in the Schools of Art Education and Design.

The Media Lab's minor subject studies were also extremely popular in 2008. In addition to this a few students also completed studies in the Media Lab under the JOO agreement.

The Future of New Media education

As part of the educational development work in 2008 we have mapped the professional profiles of Media Lab graduates from recent years as well as their placement in working life. As a result we received an interesting list of the professional titles of Media Lab alumni and the companies where they work. Graduates are working in the following professions and companies: Innovation Manager (Nokia Oyj), Interaction Designer (Nokia Oyj), User Interface Designer (Linja Design Oy), Entrepreneur (Guidesi Oy, Alasin Media Oy, Pixelhero Oy), Motion De-

signer (FJORD Oy), Writer, Research Specialist (hmm Oy), Producer (YLE, TKK), Designer (YLE), Concept Designer (YLE – Eurovision), Research Director (Virtual Air Guitar Company), Consultant, Interaction Design (Philips Design), Game Designer (Rovio Mobile Ltd.), Sound Designer (Midway Games Ltd), Technical Sound Guru (BugBear Entertainment Oy), Executive Producer (Remedy Entertainment), Information Architect (Tarantelli), Lecturer (Media Lab, Lapland university), Professor (Media Lab) and Post-doc researcher (TaiK/Finnish Academy).

In the New Media sector, as represented by the Media Lab, there are clear employment needs. For example, according to the report completed in 2008 by the Finnish Employment and Economic Development Centres (TE-keskukset), Finland's game industry is still growing strongly. From a few companies at the end of the 1990s the sector has grown to become a significant part of Finland's content export industry. A few Media Lab alumni and collaboration partners have been central to the birth of the Finnish game industry. In a report by *Invest in Finland* threats to the development of the games industry were identified as lack of trained workers and education in the field lagging behind the developments in the sector. Within the sector itself there is ongoing discussion as to whether Finland's education in games is up to date and whether it is capable of answering to the employment needs of the industry, especially in future.

The Media Lab hopes that the new Aalto University could quickly create a new MA programme that would include Game Design and Production education. This would better serve the growing employment needs of the games industry than the current MA programmes of the Media Lab. Within the Media Factory group we have already proposed the creation of an International Media Business Management (IMBM) programme. This would take the best practices developed in the IDBM programme within education in the field of media including, media design, technology, business and entrepreneurship and would offer the chance to specialize specifically in game design and production.

In addition to the games sector, computer animation is another area of new media that is generally seen to have significant growth potential. The Media Lab has a strong tradition of education in the field of computer animation. With this foundation it is hoped that a new MA

programme could be created which would answer to the growing employment needs of the animation sector. Animation education has already been developed for many years in collaboration with the School of Film and TV. The Media Lab sees that a joint MA programme which would focus on film animation and especially computer animation, would be wise to start as a collaboration of Media Lab with the School of Film & TV, as well as TKK's School of Information and Natural Sciences.

A third area of new media in which the Media Lab hopes to be able to invest more in future is education and research in the field of (digital) interaction design. The Media Lab has several (funded) research projects in which everyday and commonplace communication technology applications have been researched and developed – so called, ubiquitous applications and services. Additionally the current MA programmes include courses in which programmes and electronics are developed by utilizing new physical interfaces (for example, utilizing sensors and mobile phones). A course with similar contents was also started last year in the School of Design. The Media Lab's interaction design education and research should be strengthened in both current MA programmes in collaboration with the School of Design. ●



Motion tracking tests at Media Centre Lume tv-studios. Photograph: Pipsa Asiala

Research



Koray Tahiroğlu (on the right) defended his doctoral dissertation in December 2008.
Photograph: Jon Fabritius

“LeMill is the major outcome of the work in CALIBRATE WP3. The reviewers would like to reiterate the conclusion from the previous report valuing highly the outcome and initiatives related to LeMill dissemination. The reviewers see LeMill playing an important role in engaging teachers with ICT, especially in the countries where the ICT adoption has not advanced significantly yet.”

—A sample from the final evaluation report of the work package coordinated by Media Lab in a EU-IST project, 2008. LeMill is a web service developed by the Media Lab’s Learning Environments research group.

The results of research and quality assessment

Since the start of 2007 Media Lab has produced 95 separate articles. The majority of these have been presented in international, peer-reviewed conferences or as articles in journals in the field. Additionally the researchers, teachers and students of the Media Lab have organized six art exhibitions or installations, completed 21 productions, 24 presentations or performances and have won four awards, of which three were international awards.

The Media Lab produced doctoral graduates in December 2007 and 2008 and another is due in early 2009.

30 researchers, designers and artists worked, mainly

within the Media Lab’s research groups, during 2008. The Media Lab’s research operations continue to be based strongly on research projects undertaken with external funding. During 2007-8 there have been a total of 18 ongoing projects with external funding.

The quality and development of the research of doctoral students is made through continual feedback in studies, comments of peers in seminars as well as through the efforts of external research advisors.

The quality of projects undertaken with external funding is evaluated bi-annually through peer review processes. The evaluation is undertaken by experts chosen especially for this work, who also have the power to propose the closure of the project if they are of the opinion that the work completed is not according to the aims set in the original plans. In order to guarantee high quality in research, design and artistic work research groups also evaluate their own efforts, and that of others, on a constant basis.

However, the most important measure of quality is the peer review of the Media Lab and external bodies and their “acceptance”, which is seen as publications, exhibitions, productions and awards.

Fields of Research

The core areas of research in research projects have been research and design of everyday information and communication applications, design of learning environ-

ments, digital cultural heritage and visualization, as well as interactive and generative narrative. However, within the projects the research work does not concentrate solely on tools but also on innovation within practices and services.

Digitisation and Design are at the core of all research projects: How can we better and easier share experiences within a family, organization or some other community using digital audio-visual media? What sort of digital tools would assist in collaborative, problem-based learning or in the dialogue with your own town council or your urban environment? How could and how should we present content of our cultural heritage with the help of digital media? What could be the form of an audiovisual story in which the viewers can direct the tale themselves? What are the future production tools for media production?

In addition to the themes presented above other Media Lab's current research projects include research of, amongst others, intuition, in collaboration with the research development unit of the Theatre Academy, use of mobile devices in the making of art in collaboration with Oulu University, as well as innovation and design methodologies in several projects. The Media Lab's research during 2008 has been made in collaboration with some of the most significant national and international research and development organizations in the field. The lab's collaboration network includes universities, research departments and companies.

A specific characteristic of the Media Lab's research work is concept design for art, products and services as well as the production of prototypes developed from them. The making of free, experimental art is also one basis for research work. By developing new digital tools, forms and styles the researchers and teachers of the Media Lab can, for their own part, define the direction of the digital revolution. For example in the EU-IST programme funded Calibrate project, during 2004-2008, the LeGroup learning environments research group has designed and developed the LeMill environment for teachers, for the free production and distribution of learning material. At the time of writing around 3000 teachers from about 20 European countries are members of the LeMill net community.

The research group has also continued the maintenance of the environment and community after the com-

pletion of the project. During 2009, with the support of a European Social Fund grant, the research group will continue the support for take-up of the LeMill environment, especially in Finland

Doctoral education

The Media Lab has approximately 25 active doctoral students. One doctor of art graduated in 2007 and the latest doctoral defences occur at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. With these the number of doctoral degrees completed since 2005 rises to six. In addition four students are at a stage within their doctoral work that they are aiming to defend their dissertations in 2009.

Within the doctoral studies of the Media Lab the practices and theory of the three fields of media, design and art are combined. The programme offers talented artists, designers and researchers the possibility to complete a doctoral degree by undertaking study and independent research work related to digital design and art, audio-visual production, cultural heritage, education and learning as well as society. The Media Lab's research dissertations combine digitalization and the possibilities it creates, as well as the challenges it offers to designers, planners and artists.

The core of the doctoral education is the weekly seminar, running throughout the academic year, in which doctoral students present the progress of their work and discuss it. Every term, in addition to the seminar, a one-week workshop is organized with a theme that assists doctoral students with their work. Experts from the field are invited to the workshops. Through the years leaders of the doctoral workshops have included, amongst others, Klaus Krippendorff, John Carroll and Kari Kuutti. Additionally, the doctoral education is organised in collaboration with several organizations in order to also offer students possibilities to conduct their studies and research, for example, in other universities, companies, research institutes, in the public sector and public organizations in Finland and abroad.

The doctoral students plan their studies by preparing a personal study and research plan together with the professor. Studies are tracked via a study register that contains details of the completed studies from TaiK and elsewhere. Via the JOO network and other collaborative study agreements students are able to study, for exam-

ple, economics, philosophy, programming or sound design. Every doctoral student has their own advisor, who is chosen with the help of the professor. The professor also attempts to follow the functionality of the collaboration between student and advisor.

Olga Goriunova defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of Art & Design Helsinki in December 2007. Goriunova started her doctoral studies in 2002 and completed them in five years. Soon after receiving her degree she was appointed Lecturer in Interactive Media at the London University's Centre for Cultural Studies. In 2008 she was also invited to the Transmediale Festival, Berlin as a member of the jury and, in 2009, to be a member of the festival advisory committee. Transmediale is one of the world's most significant digital culture events.

Olga Goriunova's publications from 2008

- Autocreativity. The Operation of Codes of Freedom in Art and Culture. Forthcoming in /FLOSS + ART/, ed. Aymeric Mansoux, (OpenMute, London, 2008).
- Vitalist Technocultural Thinking in Revolutionary Russia. Forthcoming in Place Studies in Art, Media, Science and Technology. Historical Investigations on the Sites and the Migration of Knowledge, Eds. Andreas Broeckmann, Gunalan Nadarajan, (Verlag und Datenbank für Geisteswissenschaften, VDG, Weimar, 2008).
- Software art: an introduction. in Digital Artist Handbook project, online and print by Folly gallery, Lancaster, UK, (2008).
- Old Contexts for New Media Cultures (in Russia). Forthcoming in Third Text magazine, (2008).
- A Life Story of Runme.org, software art repository. Forthcoming in French in ART ++, Ed. David-Olivier Lartigaud, (Éditions HYG, Paris, 2008).

Research groups

Research work is made mainly in four thematic research groups. The organization into groups helps towards the completion of projects undertaken with external funding and, simultaneously, creates continuation within the school's research activity.

ARKI research group The research of the ARKI group concentrates on people driven co-evolution of digital technology and the practices of everyday life. Since, increasingly, most of the important design activity takes place where people and technology meet, the group aims to understand how the world changes as it becomes more digital, what and how to design, as well as who the designers are in these new everyday digital circumstances.

Crucible Studio researches and develops digital, non-linear and interactive media narrative. The studio attempts to grasp the forms of interactive media, its production methods and technology. The studio produces interactive media productions in multi-disciplinary teams made up of artists, designers, researchers and technology experts.

LeGroup – Learning Environments is the learning environments research group. The group undertakes design-based research, in other words, the group designs and produces experimental learning environments which are based on theories of learning and through clarification of the needs of target groups. The group has expertise in the fields of new media, psychology, pedagogy, cognitive science, design, usability and software development.

SysRep – Systems of Representation research group researches digital representation. The group's research themes are dynamic information visualization and the tools of visualization, digital cartography, ontology design and production, especially in the fields of culture and audiovisual media, as well as research and design of three-dimensional interfaces.

Research projects

The Media Lab's research operations continue to be built strongly on research projects funded by external sources. During 2007-8 there have been a total of 18 ongoing projects with external funding.

Media Lab's ongoing research projects during 2007-2008:

- **AVO – Open networks for learning:** ESF funding, 2008–2011, LeGroup, with the intention to disseminate the results of the CALIBRATE project in Finland.
- **Calibrating eLearning in Schools (CALIBRATE):** IST FP6 funding, 2005–2008, LeGroup, workpackage coordinator developing toolkits for teachers to collaboratively produce open teaching material.
- **Enabling Community Communication – Platforms and Applications (Encompas):** Tekes funding, 2004–2008, ARKI, to research and develop multi-device applications for small groups and families for media distribution.
- **The secret life of objects:** in collaboration with Design Museum Helsinki, 2007–2008, Systems of Representation and ARKI, development of participatory museum experiences.
- **Finlab TAIK:** Tekes funding, 2008–2010, ARKI, research and development of new media practices with user groups.
- **HandsOn – Genuine three-dimensional interfaces in product modeling and animation:** Tekes funding, 2006–2007, SysRep, developing interactive methods for the needs of design and animating in virtual reality.
- **Helsinki Living Lab (HLL):** Tekes funding, 2007–2008, ARKI, Living Lab – points of view experiment in innovation and design.
- **Intuition in creative processes:** 2008–2010, artistic methods, design and decision making in modern dance and the field of new media.
- **Luksu 2:** Pending application, to develop a computer-aided evaluation method for the diagnosis of dyslexia.
- **Mobile Support for e-Maintenance (eMari):** Tekes funding, 2007–2009, SysRep, support of maintenance services utilizing mobile devices.
- **MobilED:** 2007–2007, LeGroup, the planning of a learning environment featuring mobile technology and services
- **Peer-to-peer Fusion (P2P-FUSION):** IST FP6 funding, 2006–2009, ARKI, the creation of audiovisual works, their reuse and distribution legally and easily.
- **Semantic Audiovisual Entertainment Reusable Objects (SALERO):** IST FP6 funding, 2006–2009, Crucible, to develop environment-aware intelligent media objects.
- **Innovative Cities for the Next Generation (ICING):** IST FP6 funding, 2006–2008, ARKI, digital technology improving the interaction of citizens and city officials.
- **UbiLife:** Tekes funding, 2007–2009, SysRep, the representation of art in ubiquitous computing.
- **New formats and services for the remixing of social media (Ufo-Rex):** Pending application, audiovisual media formats and services based on remixing.
- **Visual Innovations for Inclusive Projects with Diverse Participants (VIPP):** Finnish Academy funding, 2008–2010, application of Design for All (DfA) methods in project management through visual innovations.
- **User Driven Open Innovation Booster (UDOI):** Pending application, Tekes ICT Shock, ARKI.

The most important research funders are EU Framework, especially IST and ICT programmes, TEKES and the Finnish Academy. The Media Lab's researchers work together with national and international partners in the research projects. During the last academic year the Media Lab has been involved in four EU-IST projects and five TEKES projects. ●

International operations

Compared to the rest of the Finnish university world the Media Lab's day to day life is exceptionally international. The students, who themselves represent many fields and cultures of education and know-how, are forced into coming face to face with the school's multidisciplinary and multicultural reality right at the beginning of their studies. The survival of students in the Media Lab also guarantees success in international expert positions within digital culture, media and design. Multidisciplinary and multi-culturalism are learnt every day within the Media Lab.

Although students do not particularly need to head out into the world, because the world has come to the Media Lab, every year a few MA students leave for student exchange within an Erasmus programme partner institution abroad. During 2008 the Media Lab was also an extremely popular place for study exchange.

During 2008 one third of Media Lab's MA students were non-Finns. The main teaching language in both MA programmes is English. Students may write their final degree thesis in Finnish, English or Swedish. Within teaching situations the general language of instruction is English due to the international nature of the student body. Use of both English and Finnish in staff meetings works smoothly. In practice the whole staff, including those working in administration and support services, have ability to speak English well enough in order to lecture, teach, advise and serve students and collaboration partners.

During 2008 eight of the Media Lab's researchers, designers and artists were non-Finns or have non-Finnish backgrounds. Working in international networks is everyday for all researchers. Within research nearly all research projects, with the exception of TEKES funded projects, are international projects with partners from Europe and elsewhere in the world.

During 2008 two Media Lab researchers spent six months as Visiting Fellow researchers at Stanford University and within the SRI International research unit, Palo Alto, California. Additionally Media Lab's researchers and teachers made several short research and teaching visits in European countries and Japan, as well as presenting their research in tens of international conferences. ●



Student organisation MeLa having a picnic at Suomenlinna. Photograph: Diana de Sousa

Interaction with society

For the Media Lab, as for universities in general, the most important means of influencing society is the education of skilled masters and doctors capable of civilized, independent thought. Graduates of the Media Lab have influence in industry, companies, the art world, the public sector, within organizations and in other universities. The core of the Media Lab's interaction with society is in the good employability of its graduates and the creation of companies.

Several of the Media Lab's teaching and research projects, also in 2009, are related directly or indirectly to societal responsibility, community, democracy and openness. It is expected that these values are also adopted by our students and carried on by them into their future roles.

During 2007 and 2008 collaboration was made in Finland with, amongst others, Kiasma, The Ateneum, Design Museum, Helinä Rautavaara museum, City of Helsinki and Amnesty International. Internationally collaboration was made with, amongst others, UNESCO, UNICEF, Wikimedia Foundation, FINNOD, Calif., USA (Finpro, Sitra, Finnish Academy, TEKES and VTT) as well as the Finnish Embassy in South Africa.

The bi-annual 'Media Lab Demo Day' is also a significant event for interaction with the outside world. In the Demo Day events the work of students, teachers and researchers is presented to a wider audience. The Spring 2008 Demo Day was brought nearer to the centre of the city, held in the Gloria Culture Centre.

'A different journey', shown in the Spring Demo Day is a good example of an ambitious project that also had an accessible societal dimension. Students produced a teaching package for the parents of prematurely born babies as part of a study project. The DVD produced is now used within the instruction of parents of premature babies at the Helsinki University Hospital.

The staff of the Media Lab work broadly in expert and representative positions in, for example, working groups of the Ministry of Education, in AVEK, TAITE ry, m-cult ry, the Finnish Information Processing Association, in advisory groups of the ESF, in the Wikipedia Foundation, UNESCO, Creative Commons Finland, the Espoo Film Festival, in numerous organizations dealing with accessibility, in international networks (like ENERCI, Year of Intercultural Dialogue), in conferences (for ex. COST-SID,

ITK, Pixelache), as well as in museums (Design Museum, Ateneum, Kiasma, Helinä Rautavaara Museum).

Within the Helsinki Living Lab programme the ARKI group has taken part in the development of the Arabianranta-Kumpula area. ●



Spring 2008 Demo Day was held in the Gloria Culture Centre. Photograph: Jon Fabritius

Staff development



Staff meeting, fall 2008.
Photograph: Anna Arsniva

During 2008 several new measures have been taken to improve the job satisfaction of staff. The definition of work and tasks has been developed, transfer of information improved and the general, day-to-day administrative processes streamlined. Through the clarification of roles and responsibilities we have noticed new enthusiasm and commitment. Towards improvement in communication we have continued to develop the lab's Intranet and its use, as well as new ways of organizing it. For the development of day-to-day administration we have produced better, and totally accessible, guidelines as well as general internal information. The staff feels it is now more capable of influencing the department's issues through the improvements in communications and the new transparent processes and guidelines.

During 2008 the amount of absence through sickness increased considerably compared to earlier years and burn out has been a general subject of discussion between Media Lab staff. The causes of this have been sought with the occupational health service. Through discussions it was revealed that one possible cause of the increase in absence through sickness is the large amounts of administrative tasks related to teaching and research. Additionally, especially in the case of large externally funded projects, there is an unreasonably large administrative responsibility. We believe that a quick solution can be found to these challenges, when there is progress in the University's administrative development work.

As part of staff development activity in 2008 we have started a 'lunch lecture' series in which our high-ranking collaborators, our guests and other friends of the Media Lab lecture on topical new media themes. For example lecturers from Autumn 2008 included: Jan Chipchase, Alex Nieminen, Olli-Pekka Heinonen, Hanna Haaslahhti and Kent Larson. The lectures are also open to students. In addition to the internal skills development work the Media Lab's staff has taken part in several courses organized by the university.

As the Media Lab has grown its Intranet solution has been developed through the years as a solution to the challenges of communication. It consists of wikis (a collection of guides and instructions) as well as discussion areas. The expertise accumulated through the years has been further developed in 2008 as part of the development of TaiK's common Onni portal, based on the experience of the Media Lab. The central challenges in Onni's design have been to avoid the typical problems of company intranets, like the difficulties of information retrieval or unpleasant user experience. Onni has awoken interest in the Aalto partnership members and it could possibly be developed further to become the Intranet solution for the whole Aalto university. ●

Structural development

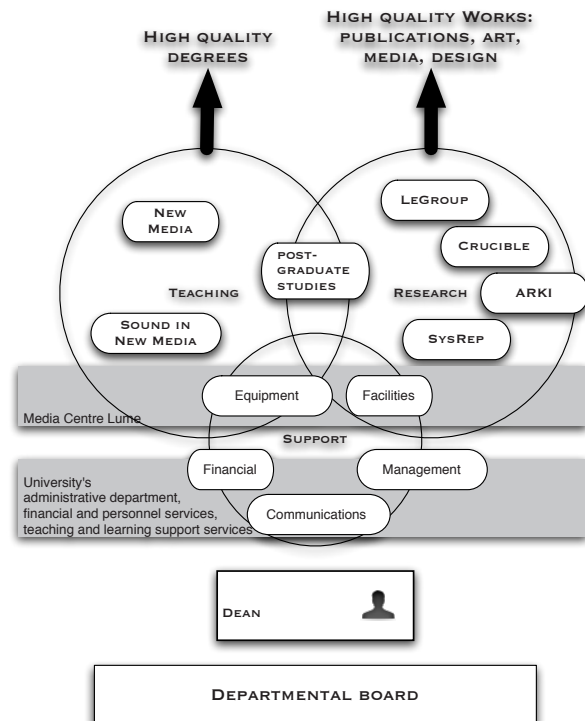
During 2008 work to develop the Media Lab's structure was started by clarifying the organization of the school, the roles and responsibilities of staff, as well as promoting good, transparent administration and internal communication. The attached diagram shows how the Media Lab's staff are positioned within education and research groups and their relationship to the lab's support group.

As can be seen from the diagram the teaching group takes care of the two MA programmes. For its part the research group is split into four thematic research groups. The function of the support group is to offer an education and research environment in which quality degrees (teaching) and high quality productions (research) can be produced. The support group's main collaborators are Media Centre LUME and the university administration.

The school's activity is led by the Dean together with the vice-Dean, the professor with responsibility for research and departmental secretary (amanuensis) with responsibility for support operations. Both Dean and Vice-Dean have the confidence of the departmental board.

The role and tasks of the departmental board have also been refined through the new structure. The department board also wishes to be actively involved in the development of the school.

The school's communication plan was finalized in Autumn 2008. The creation of the communication plan was part of the aims of the university's communication strategy. Plans made according to the same format have also been prepared, or are being prepared, in the other schools. ●



The new structure of Media Lab