

## **Media Research and Instructional Design At Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck (Introductory Note)**

**Tilman Märk**

University of Innsbruck (Austria)  
Vice-Rector for Research

Having been asked by the organizers of this conference it is with great pleasure that we provide this foreword for the Proceedings of the International Conference "Microlearning2005. Learning & Working In New Media Environments". Our special thanks go to Prof. Peter Bruck, the head of the ARC Research Studios Austria, and Prof. Theo Hug, Associate Professor of Educational Sciences at Leopold Franzens University Innsbruck (LFUI) ARC Research Studio "eLearning Environments", for bringing this important international conference to Innsbruck. We take this as a very positive sign for the work performed at the LFUI the past years.

The conference was organized in cooperation with our Institute of Educational Sciences. This is only one example of the collaboration between the Austrian Research Studios and the Leopold Franzens University of Innsbruck (LFUI), which has already generated innovative and competitive research results, which have had an impact on the national and international scientific community. The main goal of this collaboration is a close relationship between academic research and R&D that will lead to the development of products and services in the field of e-technologies, smart contents and new media.

The ARC Research Studio "eLearning Environments", co-funded by the Tyrolean Future Foundation, is an important research unit for the LFUI in terms of generating new knowledge in the field of microlearning. This studio is part of a broader interdisciplinary research effort within a network to be founded called "Innsbruck Media Studies (IMS)". Prof. Theo Hug was essential in initiating and coordinating this LFUI based network. This future center of excellence has the aim to increase competences in the field of new media at all levels at the LFUI, including our research and teaching activities.

We believe that excellent education needs to be based on excellent research, thus one of our goals is to promote excellent research at our university. Universities worldwide have a leading role in new research fields, and one of it is definitely in the field of eLearning and eScience. As the Vice Rector for Research I want to highlight some of the developments which are presently taking place at the LFUI in this field of eLearning and eScience.

In the last few years, at the LFUIs a number of media related research projects have been carried out. The research subjects covered include various aspects of

- media communication,
- media aesthetics,
- media critics,
- research methods which are supported by IT,
- questions of knowledge generation,
- new learning methods in the field of information and communication technologies as well as the design of geographical information systems,
- semantic web topics and
- quality engineering processes.

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Moreover, it is interesting to note, that in summer 2004 the first ever “media day” took place at the LFUI summarizing and presenting all of those activities taking place in the media-related research fields. The significance and potential of the field of media research became apparent during this meeting. A decision was made to establish an integrated research field including a number of faculties. This new interdisciplinary research field called “Innsbruck Media Studies (IMS)” consists of partners from 11 different faculties with numerous research projects. This new interdisciplinary research field “Innsbruck Media Studies” can be divided into three main fields, that is,

- media and culture (e.g. literature and media, chat-communication, media and violence, learning cultures)
- media and society (e.g. political communication, e-tourism and e-commerce)
- media and technology (e.g. semantic web, tools for content analysis)

In addition to that, several projects in the field of media didactics and higher education are carried out (e.g. civil.law.online and civil.law.onlearn, “Basic Support for Educational Studies and Research” (BASES)) and you can find quite a few professional LFUI based archives online (e.g. Innsbruck Newspaper Archive, Documentation of Integration of Disabled, a huge database of historical pictures).

The IMS is focusing on the already existing strengths in the various fields, partial integration as well as theme- and problem-oriented cooperation. The heterogeneity of the different approaches is providing good opportunities for future oriented research performances. A few of the goals of the Innsbruck Media Studies are the following:

- internal and external networking of media related research
- development and promotion of promising cooperations
- positioning of the LFUI in the media- and knowledge based society
- testing of new media related applications
- acquisition of third party funds
- support of media-related developments in the teaching field (eLearning, eTeaching) – design of new curricula, programs, degrees and didactics (and therefore improving the occupational outlook for graduates)

To reach these goals the staff members of this network are collaborating with colleagues from all over the world. Among the partners and networks there are MediaWatch – Institute for Media analysis (Innsbruck); Digital Enterprise Research Institute (DERI) and it’s partners: W3C, BIT, National University of Galway, FFG, Information Society Technologies, Tyrolean Future foundation; eTourism Competence Center Austria (ECCA) ; EC3 – E-Commerce Competence Center, Wien; Global Media Research Network (GMRN) ; Europaen Fund for regional development: INTERREG IIIA Austria – Italien; International Research group “Film and Theology”; Webplattform math online: Franz Embacher, Petra Oberhuemer (Vienna); And last but not least the Research Studios Austria (RSA) of the ARC - Seibersdorf research GmbH, Research Studio eLearning Environments (in cooperation with the transIT and Tyrolean Future Foundation).

So far I have mentioned our activities in terms of research. In concluding I would like to mention that also accomplishments in the field of “teaching” are already existing at the LFUI, as well as future plans have been established. A proposal for the development of new e-learning/e-teaching strategies at the University of Innsbruck has been submitted to the ministry of education, science and culture and has been recently approved. The use and integration of an e-learning system in the lectures and programs at the LFUI are of major importance. They will be integrated in the target agreements between the faculties and the rector and will be also incorporated in the development plan with the ministry.

The e-blackboard system (eCampus) is already used by all faculties at our university. At some faculties (biology, chemistry/pharmacy, engineering, faculty of education) over 60% of the

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lecture courses and seminars are supported by the blackboard system eCampus, and this number is still rising. Production of high quality e-learning materials is also an issue. Several study programs have decided to teach certain courses as distance courses or blended learning courses. A time schedule has been worked out to disseminate the use of learning technologies as well as improve e-learning strategies at the university. The reason for the intensified implementation is to generate qualitative and didactical improvements for the future student generation.

Thus, the LFUI is giving a high priority not only to the field of ICT, but also on new concepts of technology-enhanced education and research on new media in general. In concluding, the Proceedings of the International Microlearning 2005 Conference impressively show that in the future unique and inspiring perspectives and ideas will come from activities bridging the borders between academia, technology and economy.

Tilman Märk, Vicerector for Fesearch, LFUI  
Gerlinde Braumiller, Assistant to Vicerector for Research, LFUI

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