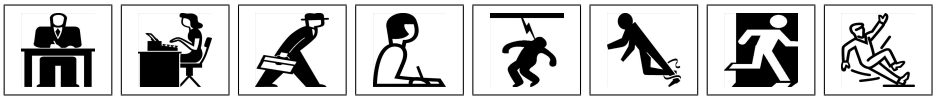
1. digital culture

life is becoming digital

learning objectives *After reading this chapter you should be able to define the notion of multimedia, recount the history of digital entertainment, explain the concept of digital convergence, discuss the future of cyberspace, and speculate about the commercial viability of mobile multimedia.*

We live in the digital era, Negroponte (1995). We are surrounding ourselves with gadgets and we are consuming immense amounts of information, that is increasingly being delivered to us via the Internet. We play games, and we still watch (too much) television. Some of us watch televion on our PCs, and may be even looking forward to watch television on their mobile phone. This is multimedia. For others, the PC is still a programmable machine. Being able to program it might earn you a living. Understanding multimedia, however, might even provide you with a better living. In this chapter, we study what trends may currently be observed in the creation and delivery of multimedia information, and we explore what impact the digital revolution may have from a commercial perspective.

1



11

questions

digital convergence

1. Sketch the developments in *multimedia*. What do you expect to be the commercial impact of multimedia in the (near) future?

concepts

2. Explain what is meant by *digital convergence*.
3. Which kinds of *(digital) convergence* do we have?
4. Discuss the relation between the *medium* and the *message*.

technology

5. Give a brief sketch of the development of *digital entertainment*.
6. Characterize: HDTV, SDTV, ITV.
7. Discuss convergence with respect to *platforms*.
8. Discuss convergence with respect to *delivery*.

projects & further reading As a project, consider the development of a Java-based mobile game using J2ME, see Morrison (2005), or a web-based game using Visual Basic .NET, see Santos Lobao and Hatton (2003).

You may further explore multiplatform game development, and find arguments to choose for either Java-based or managed code based implementations.

For further reading, I advice to have a look at the special issues of the Scientific American, American, and the CACM on the next 1000 years of computing, CACM (2001), and, for getting an idea where this all leads to, Schneidermann's *Leonardo's laptop*, Shneiderman (2003). For Second Life, see Rymaszweski et al. (2007).

the artwork

1. photographs of art works by Marina Abramovic, *Art must be beautiful*, *Blue period*, *Dissolution*, *Dozing consciousness*, *In between*, with (pending) permission from Montevideo[1]. See also section 10.2.
2. *medium*, according to the Visual Thesaurus[2].
3. fMRI Research on Virtual Reality Analgesia[3], see section 1.1.
4. *television* and *communication*, according to the Visual Thesaurus.
5. TV Today, exhibition at Montevideo, februari 2005.
6. visible world – taken from Rosenblum and Macedonia (2002), see section 1.2.
7. personal event database and personal gadgets, from Freeband[4] project.
8. *Thomas Lips 1975*, *Thomas Lips 1993*, from Marina Abramovic, with permission from Montevideo.

[1] www.montevideo/nl
[2] www.visualthesaurus.com
[3] www.hitl.washington.edu/research/magnet
[4] www.freeband.nl

9. *scanlines* from Woody Vasulka[5], 197x, with permission from the artist.
10. VU @ SecondLife, taken from Eliens et al. (2007).
11. signs – people, van Rooijen (2003), p. 254, 256.

The work of Marina Abramovic has a strong *existential* flavor. It has also served as the material for a case study in developing a digital artist dossiers, the *abramovic dossier*, discussed in section 10.2. The work of Woody Vasulka is of a more *experimental* character, and shows the joy of discovering the possibilities of the, at the time, new electronic and digital tools and materials.

[5] www.vasulka.org