

REGARD: COLLABORATIVE AUTHORING FOR AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVES

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Regard is a project sponsored by the Dipartimento di Musica e Spettacolo of Bologna University and coordinated by Prof. Guglielmo Pescatore. It responds to the necessity to develop a set of instruments that aims to empower the research and educational activities of all academic departments and educational institutions which play a significant role in the audiovisual studies field.

Regard is a composite technological framework consisting of two different, but strongly integrated, segments: it is a venue for the distribution of video contents over the Web, as well as a new way to handle databases and to use audiovisual contents for didactic and research purposes. In fact, it offers a simple and versatile up-dating database through which tabulation setting can be re-designed at any time, assuring a flexible cataloguing framework capable of undertaking new-fangled and unforeseen types of contents and supplementary implementations.

Furthermore, the framework has been planned to be reused as a collaborative source for research teams and faculty members. Indeed, throughout a Wiki-way mark-up system, users will have at their disposal a set of tools for audiovisual editing and collaborative annotation over the Web. For example, the technological framework depicted before enables researchers to cut up movies, edit them and create new videos with sequences coming from audiovisual contents stored in the database. Professors will be in the position to set up detailed lectures focused on a specific topic. A particular sequence of a movie, as well as a whole film, would be integrated with a set of comments and explanations directly noted down on the audiovisual text. Researchers, as well as teachers, will have the possibility to enclose their lessons or annotations related to an analysis path and to share them with all the teaching fellows involved in a project.

On the other hand, students will access an audiovisual text which has been improved with a set of additional information and meta-texts that will enhance the study of a subject. Therefore, they could generate their own hyper-media path as a backup for term theses and essays. Moreover, the system administrator will be able to set up and coordinate a hierarchy of authorized contributors in relation to a specific context of annotations, while determining in each case the level of participation of other researchers and re-distribution restrictions of the produced contents. In fact, users will achieve the database through a log-in system and will receive video streaming on their own machine. Indeed, *Regard* aims at catering to the needs of students and faculty members who are required to handle and use audiovisual contents at any time in any way (for instance, different classrooms furnished with different machines, conference speeches and the like). In order to face the vast range of different devices which are widely used, *Regard* is completely developed with open source and free software. In fact, open standards will grant a long-lasting life and a powerful integration with the educational tools which are already available to all those educational institutions that want to adopt *Regard*. The application is outwardly developed by Studio Baretta and will be released under a GPL license.

It is clear that *Regard* is strongly related to the highly innovative ways of approaching cultural and audiovisual products which are currently emerging and becoming more and more accessible through an increasingly wider range of different devices. One of the aims of the project is to face the challenges offered by new methods of audiovisual fruition, as well as by industry production and distribution settings, both characterized by de-localization, multi-channel distribution and demand of scalability. In fact, *Regard* will be a perfect tool for the study of the new media arrangement in which emerging forms of distribution are re-shaping the audiovisual scenery. In addition to the development of powerful tool for didactic and research, this project would thus also highlight some guidelines linked to two different ways of remediation: the first form of exchange between old and new media is strongly related to the preservation, availability and re-use of existing audiovisual heritage for new forms of distribution and fruition. Conversely, the second research guideline is related to possible ways of creating new contents and new narrative formats able to handle emerging needs of accessibility and scalability. The re-use of the audiovisual objects enlightens the necessity to rethink the idea of audiovisual museums and archives. Museums and archives are closed forms of preservation that must be rethought in the digital age, where contents can move away without a physical support and can be handled and remixed in very easy ways. In this context, how can the canonical way of shaping a museum or an archive be reconfigured? Which is the role of the final user? How the user become a pivotal element of new forms of entertainment related to the reuse of an audiovisual heritage? The emergence of re-mixed contents is both related to cultural heritage preservation and to possibilities of reworking offered by new technologies and digital media. The current innovation rate has put wide access and device capabilities in the hands of the final consumer of audiovisual contents. Media companies are becoming more aware of this transformation from a centralized and hierarchic system of production and distribution to one which takes cross communication and bottom-up way of production and diffusion into account. The development of a technological framework will be a necessary support to the study and the testing of new narrative structures and solutions that are shaping the outlook of the media industry.

In the ICT context “scalability” refers to the ability to expand a computing solution to support larger numbers of users without impacting performance. This term can be useful to describe the contemporary media landscape characterized by digital convergence/divergence and multiplatform and multi-channel communication. In this landscape contents are able to flow through television sets, PCs, portable devices such as music players and handheld game consoles, PDA, set-top boxes: devices able to grant an increased interaction and personalization of entertainment schedules. The power of serialization works as a link between devices. But how could a movie migrate from one device to another? Is it just a technological matter or are narrative structures also involved in this process of migration? Do specific narrative forms exist in relation to a peculiar device? Which are the key points in cross-media narrative? And which are the ones which should be preserved in order to grant continuity over platforms?

In this perspective the process of continuous and enduring remediation must be rethought in order to take into consideration the transformation of business, consumption and fruition models, which are highly linked to the outstanding roles played by consumers in determining the media scenery. Thus, the creation of a technological framework which will make the cataloguing of a wide range of media contents possible – thereby allowing to share information and to boost collaborative forms of research – will be the basis of the study of emerging forms of distribution over the Web that are deeply changing the economic model of international audiovisual industries, the entertainment structure, as well as cultural and consumption behaviours.

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