

Future Home / Call for Letters of Interest

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The Media Lab, together with other departments of the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland, is developing a cross-disciplinary research initiative, "Future Home", to study life in the future information society. We will conduct this research in the context of the home, and study the future trends as they manifest themselves in the domestic environment.

We are in a preparatory stage and are sending out this "Call for Letters of Interest" to people we know about, to find out what kinds of thoughts the initiative provokes. We would like interested persons to send us a short note so that we can begin a correspondence at some point of time. We are now preparing a White Paper that will describe the initiative more thoroughly, but through this "L of I" approach we want to open the doors to new ideas, influences and projects already in the preparatory stage.

"Future Home" is interested in what life in the future information society could be like if all the necessary technology, infrastructures and services were in place. We wish to imagine and develop over time a cohesive, comprehensive and holistic view of a well designed future where products and services are meaningful and encourage good and ethical ways of living. This will support the creation of scenarios, demonstrations and prototypes of different instances of products, services or other phenomena that reside in that "ideal" future which, in turn, can give direction to current-day designs.

We want to engage more people in the discussion about the information society and encourage new groups of professionals to participate in the design process. To counterbalance current technology-led developments, the "Future Home" initiative hopes to create a user-centered R&D activity, which aims to bring together practitioners and students from many disciplines, explore existing research and design methods and try to develop more appropriate ones.

To make sense of the complex whole that includes many rapidly changing special interest areas, it will be necessary to involve a diverse professional community and apply concerted efforts to create a shareable and understandable vision. We will place special emphasis on communication and the ability and willingness to cross the boundaries of projects, expertise and time.

We will try to achieve this by developing a knowledge base containing information about source materials, projects and other parallel efforts elsewhere. We expect all projects to present their agenda and report their intermediate and final results in the knowledge base in a format and language that will be comprehensible to all other participants. In this way each new project can build on the results of others.

We will also place specific emphasis on the development of prototypes and demonstrations and support their development with appropriate state-of-the-art tools.

The activities will be managed in the form of a multi-year research framework that can contain many individual and independent projects having their own management and funding, but which contribute to common goals and benefit from specific common resources. The activity will have a permanent site in the UIAH Media Lab, but will hopefully have a strong, virtual presence on the Internet and eventually grow into a network of sites. We are also setting up various supporting measures and close cooperation with the industry, media, authorities and funding sources.

The first projects are starting in September 1995 and involve students from various MA programmes in the university, teachers and visiting experts from many disciplines. Involvement in the activity can take many different forms, from email correspondence, participation in workshops, teaching, software development to MA-level study and post-graduate research. We also hope to involve courses, degree and research programs from other universities.

Does this sound like something you would like to contribute to in some way? Could you benefit from an on-going cross-disciplinary future study process? Do you have suggestions concerning Future Home? Are you involved with or are you planning projects that should become a part of the initiative? Do you have some other persons, organizations, publications, etc., in mind that we should contact? Would you like to be on a future mailing list?

If so, we are interested in your participation, beginning with a letter of interest stating your point of view. A simple, short message that expresses your interest is all we need to establish a link.

Sincerely,

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