



NM2 Newsletter February 2005



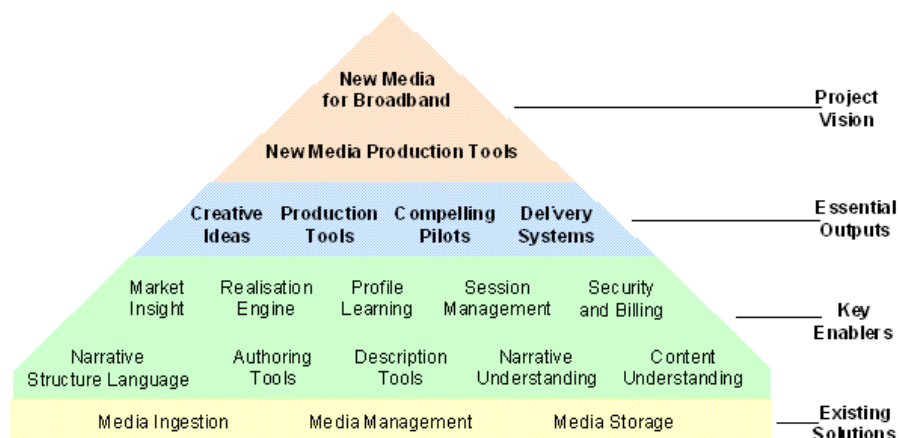
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NM2 enabling new media genres for broadband

In autumn 2004, a collaborative, EU-sponsored project NM2 (New Media for a New Millennium) was launched with the goal of developing compelling new media genres *and* the robust tools necessary for their cost-efficient production. Seven individual NM2 productions for broadband delivery, ranging across news, documentary and fiction, will demonstrate the impact of these developments.

After 6 months' work, many of the cornerstones of the project are in place. These include the establishment of a shared language, an understanding of narrative in non-linear media and improved knowledge of the market in which we operate. Clear plans for each production have been outlined and rapid progress has been made towards a software architecture. It has not always been easy, but it can be exhilarating to observe skills as diverse as screen-writing and software development working effectively together to solve shared problems.



Diagrammatic representation of the NM2 project structure



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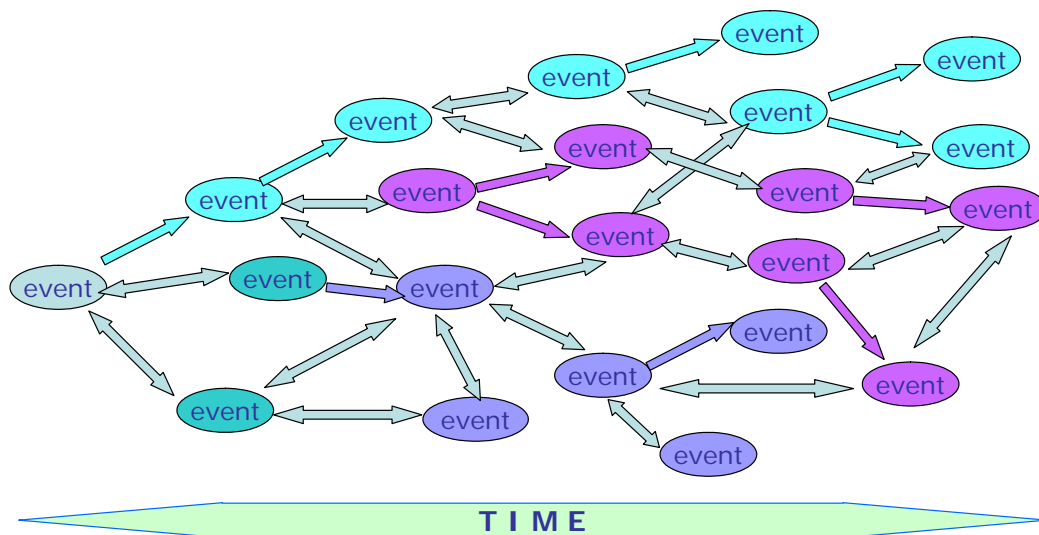


NM2 is an Integrated Project of the European Community's 6th Framework Programme, partly funded by the European Commission. It is running from September 2004 to August 2007 and has an overall budget of about 7.5 million euro. 13 partners from 8 European countries are involved in the project.

A brochure providing an easy-to-read overview of the NM2 project, its objectives, structure, architecture, methodologies, productions and partners has just become available. It can be downloaded in pdf-format from the NM2 website at <http://www.ist-nm2.org/> or ordered in printed form by sending an e-mail to info@ist-nm2.org

Narrative is crucial for interactive media

Can interactive narrative successfully engage audiences beyond the momentary thrill of novelty? Can it create popular, worthwhile and commercially viable offerings in the competitive environment of 21st century media? We are convinced that it can, but only if the productions are able to develop stories that are as engaging as those in other mainstream media like television and cinema. This is why our first deliverable focused on understanding the topic of narrativity. Written by CUMIS (Cambridge University Moving Image Studio), the report titled: "An Introduction to Narrativity in the interactive environment" looks at narrative understanding in news and in drama and highlights some of the academic analysis of narrative structure in non-linear media.



Interactive story patterns: linked and branching nodes

The report can be downloaded from the NM2 website at <http://www.ist-nm2.org/>



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The market and business situation

What is the market potential for the NM2 tools and productions, and what are the business models for making this new media a commercial success?

We know users appreciate interactivity for television programme management in the form of Personal Video Recorders and Electronic Programming Guides. Other simple forms of interactivity are also increasingly popular, such as voting or gambling by using SMS, telephony or Internet. Forms of interactivity, however, which are more intimately related to the emerging narrative on the screen have begun to be explored, and there is, as yet, only minimal evidence to help us anticipate what kinds of story-based interactivity users will enjoy.

The NM2 report "The market perspective" looks at these issues from a technological, a producer and a user perspective. It highlights what the market evidence tells us but also exposes what the market to date just does not know.

The report can be downloaded from the NM2 website at <http://www.ist-nm2.org/>

Preparations for the first NM2 productions have started

NM2 will create seven media productions. In this early stage of the project, with no new tools available for the productions teams to work with, most of the project's effort has been expended in planning each production and working with the technology teams to help them understand each production's individual requirements. Writers and producers have had to define precisely what form of non-linear narrative they wish to explore. It was essential to pin down the production journeys of each idea from script to screen. Delivery devices have had to be specified for each content form

Where necessary the rights to work with copyrighted material have been negotiated, discussions with potential broadcasters have taken place and production teams are being built to ensure the productions reach their targets.

There are no public deliverables yet from this work area, but there are many internal working documents.

First developments on the tool side

The NM2 consortium was chosen to include considerable experience in the development of tools for media handling. The first months of the project have included significant elements of knowledge sharing, where people from different organisations have come together to learn, in detail, the capabilities and approaches of the different partners. These capabilities have then been matched with the emergent requirements from the productions. From this array of inputs, together with the input from the market environments document, an architecture for the NM2 system is being developed.



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Complex and non-obvious system critical decisions, such as the type of database to use and the location of intelligence in the system, are all being considered. Through a user-centred methodology an architecture and requirements specification is nearing completion. And even before it is completed more detailed designs of script writing tools and simple logging tools are being considered. The foundations for NM2's new structures are being laid well!

Extensive media attention for NM2

NM2 carefully planned and executed its launch, and the project was rewarded with significant media attention. NM2 was featured in many print media outlets across Europe, and in online news and radio stations all around the world, including the Financial Times and BBC Online. We were also delighted to see the story covered in many publications outside the EU including Russia and Vietnam.

The press release and a selection of media coverage can be found on the NM2 website under "news" (<http://www.ist-nm2.org/>)

About NM2

NM2 is an Integrated Project of the European Community's 6th Framework Programme Thematic Priority 2 (Information Society Technologies). It was submitted to the second call of the programme and addresses the strategic objective "Cross-media content for leisure and entertainment". The project is partly funded by the European Commission.

NM2 is running from September 2004 to August 2007 and has an overall budget of about 7.5 million euro. 13 partners from 8 European countries are involved in the project.

NM2 unites leading creative and technology experts from across Europe to address a great opportunity for businesses and consumers in the near future: how to develop compelling new media genres, which take advantage of the unique characteristics of broadband networks. The project will create new production tools for the media industry that will allow the easy production of non-linear broadband media genres that can be personalised to suit the preferences of the individual user. Viewers will be able to interact directly with the medium and influence what they see and hear according to their personal tastes and wishes.

Further information is available at: <http://www.ist-nm2.org/>

The next NM2 Newsletter is scheduled for July 2005