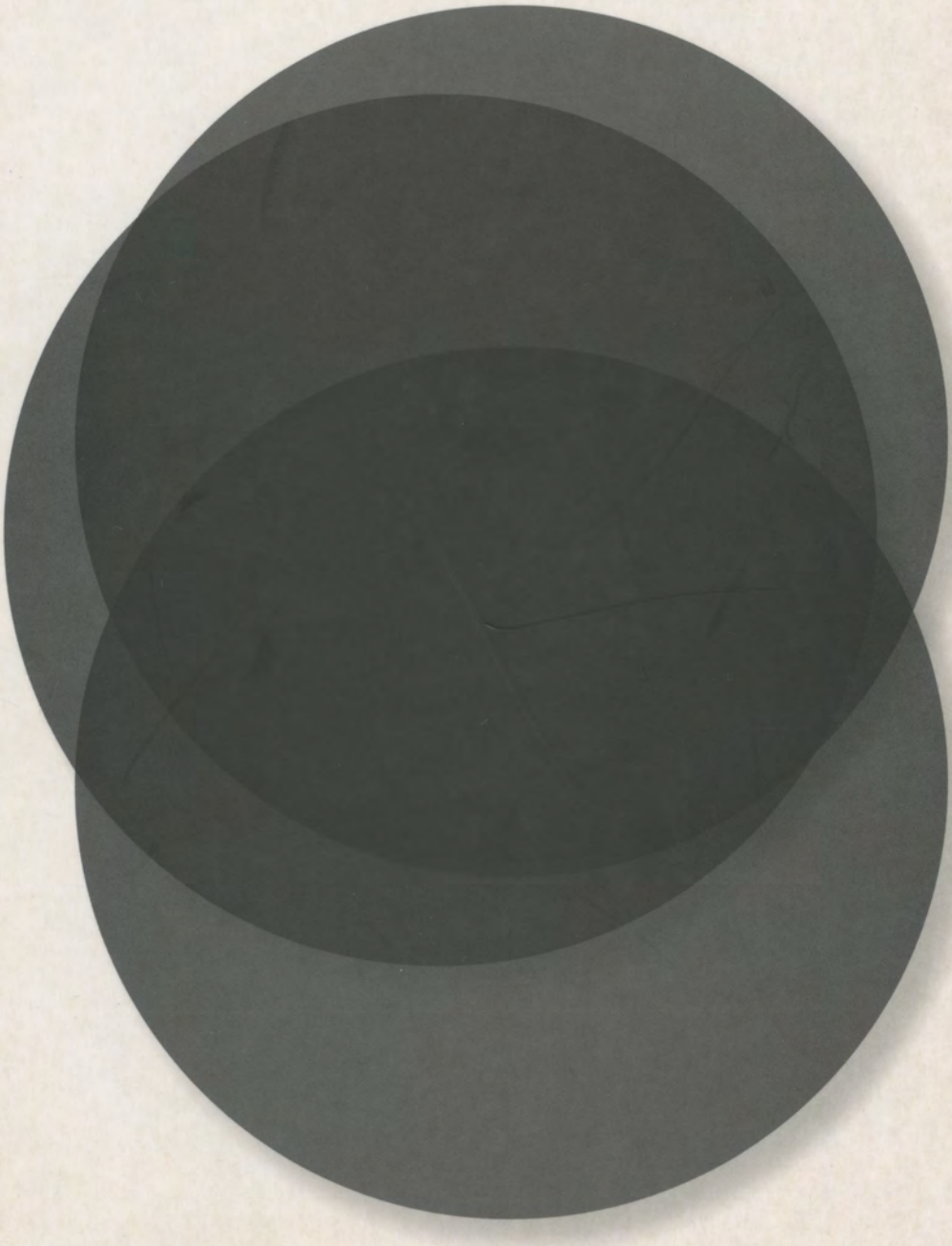
New Realities:
Being Syncretic

Book of Abstracts



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CULTURAL COMPUTING
ART AND TECHNOLOGY
ETHNOLOGY
ANALOGY
ABDUCTION

ZENetic Computer (Detail)

Cultural Computing – Zenetic Computer

By integrating various media technologies into our everyday lives, we have created a communication sphere on a global scale. On the other hand, however, we are beginning to sense a danger that the more we rely on technology, the shallower our one-on-one communication becomes. In this situation, a new communications medium that will convey depth of personal feeling is rapidly becoming necessary. Human communication is fostered in environments of regional communities and cultures and in different languages. Cultures are rooted in their unique histories. Communication media such as writing, music and film have developed to circulate these cultural characteristics [1]. Now, as the computing society spreads across the planet, computers must enable local and global cultures to communicate clearly and accurately. To that end, it is also necessary for those involved in computer technology to bring to life within the medium of computers local cultural ways of thinking.

In the research in intercultural communication from the perspective of engineering, there has been only one experiment in intercultural collaboration via machine translation. This experiment found machine translation to be effective in cross-cultural collaborative research and development. Also, research into system design using an agent for intercultural communication in cyberspace has produced a very interesting finding: that users level of intimacy rises and communication becomes smoother if the agent breaks cultural taboos. For example, if you say a slang word, user communicate you with some human emotion.

The above research is practical as a means of identifying characteristics latent in intercultural communication. However, in the extraction of these universal aspects, local communication aspects must be ignored in the process. Deep communication may actually be included in local cultural memories and symbols, but technological research into its expression and communication methods has yet to be pursued. For intercultural communication research, in order to pursue local ethnic methods of expression and communication, and with backgrounds in editorial engineering :[The method of improving various processes by editing. First it finds on from the process of book editing the representative forms of editing called editorial forms. Then it edits various types of our daily activities such as jobs, plays and adventures by applying the editorial forms.] and art and technology as a foundation, we researched methods for integrating nonverbal information such as feelings, symbols and allegories with verbal information. In addition, because it is necessary to guide the user through a story-based narrative interaction, we decided to pursue the possibilities of digital storytelling. In the traditional relationship between culture and computers, advances have been made in the recording of decaying traditional cultures in digital archives, restoration of artifacts and computer graphics simulations re-creating lost ruins. In order to create a system that can reproduce the cultural stories that lie within us, we decided to research a method for interactively expressing the previously unquantifiable essential characteristics of culture within people---for example, subjectivity, feeling, emotion and cultural personality---by integrating nonverbal and verbal information. Furthermore, we produced a storytelling method reflecting differences of emotion, consciousness and memory indispensable in the future communication abilities of computers.

As intercultural communication is a very broad field, in order to produce a specific example, one must pick up a single historic and cultural image and use that as a basis for building a real system. In this case, we chose Zen, one of the paths of Buddhism, and developed ZENetic Computer as a system in which people can virtually experience Zen culture.

About Consciousness Reframed

Consciousness Reframed is the Planetary Collegium's annual international research conference, first convened in 1997. It is a forum for transdisciplinary inquiry into art, science, technology and consciousness, drawing upon the expertise and insights of artists, architects, performers, musicians, writers, scientists, and scholars, usually from at least 20 countries. Recent past conferences were hosted by universities in Beijing and Perth Western Australia. This year, the conference will be held on the main campus of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Austria. The conference will include researchers associated with the Planetary Collegium, which has its CAiiA- hub at Plymouth and nodes at the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milan, and the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, Zürich.

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