The analog in migration: when the world embraced "Multimedia"

This panel examines the migration of technologies, standards, and practices that underpinned the digital transition and the emergence of *multimedia* in the 1980s and 1990s. The term became a 1990s buzzword, referring at once to the convergence of different media formats (audio, video, text, graphics), a broad category of "new media" applications (digital encyclopedias, virtual museums, interactive games, and art installations), and a shifting set of technological affordances (Rockwell, Mactavish, 2004 ; Good, 2021).

Rather than treating multimedia as a vague cultural label, this panel approaches it as a *historical technological configuration* of the 1980 and 1990s. We are particularly interested in the multiple layers that made this configuration possible, from standards (for sound, video, memory storage) and hardware (ranging from cables and connectors to early multimedia PCs and CD-ROM drives) to services (technical support, training programs), software (such as HyperCard, QuickTime or early authoring tools) and its usages. We also seek to understand the interactions between these technologies, the hybrid ensembles they formed in the early digital era, and the challenges they presented—from compatibility issues to the need for evolving formats and user expectations.

By shifting focus from multimedia as *content* to multimedia as a *technological assemblage*, this panel seeks to reconstruct the often invisible infrastructures that shaped the analog-to-digital migration.

We invite papers addressing the following topics:

- **Multimedia as a technological assemblage**: What technologies made multimedia possible, and how did they evolve across different industries?
- **Hybrid media environments of the 1980s-90s**: How did analog and digital systems coexist and interact during this transitional period?
- **The migration of standards and formats**: How were established storage, display, and interaction formats (e.g., optical media, video codecs, and scripting environments) adapted for multimedia applications?
- **Infrastructural frictions**: What were the challenges of compatibility, interoperability, and standardization that shaped the evolution of multimedia?
- **Migrating user practices**: How did the interplay between technical affordances and user practices influence the development of multimedia?

Session Organizers: CD-HIST Project (Valérie Schafer, Fred Pailler, Alina Volynskaya), C²DH, University of Luxembourg.

Please address your proposals until March 23, 2025 (150-250 word individual abstracts + name, title, affiliation, and e-mail address) to all three of the following email addresses: Alina.Volynskaya@uni.lu, Fred.Pailler@uni.lu, Valerie.Schafer@uni.lu

References:

Good, Katie Day. "Multimedia: How Educators Made Sense of New Media Multiplicity." In *Digital Roots: Historicizing Media and Communication Concepts of the Digital Age*, edited by Gabriele Balbi, Nelson Ribeiro, Valérie Schafer, and Christian Schwarzenegger, 59–76. De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021.

Rockwell, Geoffrey, and Andrew Mactavish. "Multimedia." In *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, 108–20. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2004.