EIC's Message

Pushing Forward with Interoperability

Forouzan Golshani
Wright State University

The title read, "The All-in-One Mobile Multimedia Solution,"[1] and it promised to be the exact device that would replace the laptop when traveling. The article, an announcement for the new product, listed the following capabilities for the "all-in-one" TraxData TravelStudio: a built-in memory card reader, MP3 stereo, CD recorder, photo viewer, and DVD player. The end result? "Away from home you can watch a DVD, listen to MP3 files, transfer, store, and look at photos, read different memory card formats, and burn CDs all with a single device." (Incidentally, although the new product has a CD recorder, it can't record in DVD format.)

But why?

From the standpoint of new technology, this product probably has little to brag about. It doesn't really buzz with innovative ideas. However, it clearly brings to light the sad state we are in. Why is there still a need for so many devices? Why should consumers have to purchase a different device for every type of multimedia file they want to play? As long as a processing unit has adequate memory, a reader (perhaps optical), a visual display unit, and an audio output device, shouldn't the consumer be able to enjoy a movie, listen to a song, and view pictures? When will we be freed from vendor-dependent formats and technologies?

Serious standardization initiatives began more than 15 years ago, and yet digital media consumers continue to fumble with so many incompatible devices. While we can all make compelling arguments for innovative technologies, I beg to raise the question about interchangeability in multimedia production and playback. Can there be a counterpart to the concept of PDF for multimedia files? Then the poor traveler wouldn't have to carry all the bits and pieces because any microcomputer with an input/output device could provide all the services that TravelStudio brags about.

Requesting your thoughts

Is there a similar story you have that you'd like to share, or an idea that you think the multimedia community should be pushing forward? If so, please email me at golshani@cs.wright.edu, and we can publish your thoughts in our Readers' Remarks column.

I'd also like to take this time to note that we're conducting a survey for *IEEE MultiMedia* magazine, and we'd greatly appreciate your input. The survey is only a few questions, and it's available at our Web site (http://www.computer.org/multimedia). We want to make sure that we're adequately covering and representing the community's interests, so here's your chance to let us know. If there's a particular column you prefer or would like to see come to fruition, go to our site and tell us! If you think a certain topic needs more coverage, we're here and would like to hear from you.   **MM**

Reference

1. "TraxData TravelStudio All-in-One Device," *MobileMag*; http://www.mobilemag.com/content/100/337/C3456/.

Readers may contact Editor-in-Chief Forouzan Golshani at golshani@cs.wright.edu.