Society for Art and Technology
Summary of the strategic three-year plan
2000-2003

TOWARDS A DIGITAL CULTURE PRODUCTION AND RESEARCH CENTRE

The advent of the digital computer in the 20th century has fundamentally altered our relation to the world — the impact of digital technology on our social life is considerable, it has transformed our modes of communication, thinking and creation. Multimedia, the Internet and new media have become indispensable tools offering an infinity of possibilities for artists.

Artists who use computers have given birth to digital culture and the technological arts. This new field is situated at the crossroads of three distinct sectors: computer sciences, communications and culture. The *Society for Art and Technology* supports the development of this art form by fostering the creation of innovative content arising from the application of digital research and production projects. Hailing from a variety of different artistic disciplines, its members are the first link in the multimedia production stages as understood in the Quebecois context: the creation and conceptual stage, and the multimedia application development stage (CD-ROM, Internet, DVD and digital video). Their creativity is the raw material of this rapidly growing industry.

Artists and researchers, who creatively explore new technologies by bypassing their original function, are like treasure hunters who return with surprising bounty. Furthermore, the interactivity made possible by digital technologies provides a means of communication that establishes a direct interrelation with users and audiences.

It is no longer possible to ignore the role of technological arts as an important sector of culture, for they are present in almost every artistic discipline and are at the heart of contemporary cultural developments. It is equally impossible to not recognize the contribution of young and highly educated researchers. It is for this reason that we wish to provide them with a stimulating 'extramural' research context.

The *Society for Art and Technology (**SA**T)* is a transdisciplinary production and research centre founded in 1996 by the organisers of the 1995 ISEA event, an international symposium on the electronic arts which was very successfully held in Montreal in September 1995. The SAT was created by a small group of artists and scientific researchers who shared the desire to put new digital production tools at the service of artistic expression. By providing a means for them to exchange their knowledge, their research and their experiences the SAT became a central node from which to develop new ways of doing and thinking that are more in tune with the challenges and promises of the digital age.

In the year 2000 interest in digital culture, particularly regarding creators of content and the ultra rapid evolution of this sector, coincides with the ***SAT***'s current effort to restructure its organization to better respond to the needs of the community.

Since 1996, by providing a stimulating research and production context the ***SAT*** has actively contributed to the emergence of a digital culture in Quebec.

Its role can be summed up as follows:

- ° Support members in the production of innovative projects;

- ° Foster exchange and collaborations between artistic and scientific disciplines;

- ° Promote its members and their work;

- ° Provide its members with access to technological resources;

- ° Encourage debates and theoretical reflection about the application of new technologies in the arts

With its research, production, publishing and public events programmes the *SAT* supports artistic creation, the advancement of science, and knowledge transfer. Since 1996 the organization has developed strategic alliances with partners in the cultural milieu; it now seeks to extent these alliances to the private sector in order to encourage associations between content creators, who master digital production techniques, and researchers working in related industry sectors.

The *SAT* also participates in national and international electronic art events to promote the activities of the organization and its members. Over the last few years the *SAT* has built an exceptional network of international contacts, most notably in the Americas, Europe and Asia. These contacts open the door to promising markets both for exporting Quebecois productions and to develop projects on a multi-partnership basis.

Over the next three years the *SAT* seeks to consolidate its privileged position in the digital culture market. It is with this aim in mind that it has set down (6) guiding goals for its current restructuring plan.

- ° Push for the recognition of artists/researchers as primordial players in the field of digital technologies;

- ° Provide Montreal with a transdisciplinary digital culture research and production centre;

- ° Play the role of go-between for the cultural, scientific and industry sectors;

- ° Facilitate knowledge and know-how transfer;

- ° Create a public technological showcase window;

- ° Reserve a privileged place for the new generation;

<u>SUMMARY OF PROJECTED RESULTS</u>

In affirming its role as a transdisciplinary digital culture research and production centre, the **SAT** will extend its activities considerably:

- ° It will offer a broader and more varied range of activities;
- ° It will increase its membership level;
- ° The SAT-club will open its doors to new technology and telecommunication companies.
- ° It will move into a new space, which is better equipped, more accessible and five times as large as its actual space.
- ° It will triple its operating budget and funding needs.

As a result it will reach a larger audience and be better placed to demonstrate its vitality and usefulness.

<u>It will offer a broader and more varied range of activities</u>:
Its current activities:
- ° Production support
- ° Workshops and conferences
- ° Collaboration with universities and cultural organizations
- ° Web-site
    - ß Electronic journal
    - ß Discussion forum
    - ß Media arts index
    - ß Host site for member projects

Will be supplemented by:
- ° A national and international research and residency programme.
- ° An art and industry residency programme.
- ° An internship programme for graduate students.
- ° A print and electronic publishing programme.

<u>It will increase its membership level</u>

The **SAT** membership is open to artists in any discipline related to a professional practice that incorporates digital technologies. Since 1998, the membership of the **SAT** increased from 100 regular members to 200. The **SAT** hopes to reach the 300-member level over the next three years. It is also looking at creating new categories, which could raise the membership level to 1350. These categories will be as follows:
- ° The SAT-club +: regular members, artists/researchers;
- ° The SAT-club inc.: companies active in the domain;
- ° The SAT-club benefactors: individuals or companies that contribute to the SAT;
- ° The SAT-club subscribers: individuals or companies who
    want to stay abreast of the latest developments in digital culture.

The SAT-club will open its doors to new technology and telecommunication companies:
The **SAT** has established an Art and Industry liaison office whose goal is to encourage the industry sector to benefit from the creative potential of **SAT** members and to invite them to explore new development avenues. The Art and Industry programme has been developed along the lines of American and European models.

It will move into a new space that is better equipped, more accessible and five times as large as its actual space:

The **SAT** currently occupies a space measuring 230 square meters on the 6th floor of 307, rue Ste-Catherine West in the heart of Montreal's cultural centre. It envisions moving to the ground floor of the same building. This space measures 1 300 square meters on two floors and has 20 meters of storefront window space facing ST-Catherine. This window will take the form of a public *technological showcase window.*