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## Reliving personal memories in a digital age

19 Aug 2013



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[/article/feature/bvof\\_2013-07-02\\_signing\\_tueuts\\_02.jpg](#) Professor Aarnout Brombacher, Associate Professor Elise van den Hoven, Professor Lawrence Wallen and Professor Attila Brungs

### In summary:

- A new collaboration between UTS and the Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands will study how the digital age has changed how people use personal images
- The project *Materialising Memories* includes a joint PhD program and will be used to devise better ways of reliving personal memories

Digital media, especially digital photography, have created endless opportunities to record our lives in ways never possible with a simple Box Brownie and a photo album. But are we taking so many digital photos that we can't or don't bother to flick through our holiday snaps anymore?

A new collaboration between UTS and the Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e) in the Netherlands will explore this 21st century dilemma by studying how people use personal images recorded by digital cameras and phones and whether those images act as cues to help them remember the past. The research results will be used to devise better ways of reliving personal memories.

The project, *Materialising Memories*, which includes a joint PhD program, was formalised last month in Eindhoven with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the two universities.

Associate Professor of the UTS School of Design Elise van den Hoven will lead the project. Professor van den Hoven also works as a part-time associate professor in the User-Centered Engineering group, headed by Professor Berry Eggen, in the Industrial Design department at TU/e.

Professor Eggen will become adjunct professor at UTS to further support the new partnership. Each university will be home to two of the four PhD candidates attached to the project.

Professor van den Hoven said the increasingly ubiquitous nature of media-creation devices, such as camera phones, meant creating personal media was no longer the problem.

“But curation and retrieval are a problem,” she said. “For example, people take so many photos they have stopped organising them and that makes it difficult to find the photos you want. Most media are created to help us remember people we have known or places we have been to. They can act as cues to remember those things.

“However, with more of us failing to retrieve the media, digital photos aren’t supporting human memory the way they were intended to and the way physical photos do,” she said.

Professor van den Hoven’s research aims to combine the advantages of the physical and the digital, to give the digital media a physical shape.

She has been researching memory and the process of remembering since 1999, with an aim of designing interactive products that can help spark memories.

For more information about the project visit [www.materialisingmemories.com](http://www.materialisingmemories.com) (<http://www.materialisingmemories.com>).

*Photo caption:* (l to r) Professor Aarnout Brombacher, Vice-Rector International Relations, Eindhoven University of Technology; Associate Professor Elise van den Hoven (project leader); Professor Lawrence Wallen, Head of the School of Design, Faculty of Design, Architecture & Building, UTS; and Professor Attila Brungs, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Research), UTS.

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