



Bachelorarbeit im Studiengang Audiovisuelle Medien

“Concept of an Open Online Production Community-Studio”

vorgelegt von Santiago Montesdeoca

Matrikelnummer: 20189

Email: santymontesdeoca@gmail.com

an der Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart

am 14.08.2012

Erstprüfer: Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Uwe Schulz

Zweitprüfer: Dipl.-Ing. Jochen Bomm

„Hiermit versichere ich, Santiago Montesdeoca, an Eides statt, dass ich die vorliegende Bachelorarbeit mit dem Titel: „Concept of an Open Online Production Community-Studio“ selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Die Stellen der Arbeit, die dem Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach anderen Werken entnommen wurden, sind in jedem Fall unter Angabe der Quelle kenntlich gemacht. Die Arbeit ist noch nicht veröffentlicht oder in anderer Form als Prüfungsleistung vorgelegt worden.

Ich habe die Bedeutung der eidesstattlichen Versicherung und die prüfungsrechtlichen Folgen (§26 Abs. 2 Bachelor-SPO (6 Semester), § 23 Abs. 2 Bachelor-SPO (7 Semester) bzw. § 19 Abs. 2 Master-SPO der HdM) sowie die strafrechtlichen Folgen (gem. § 156 StGB) einer unrichtigen oder unvollständigen eidesstattlichen Versicherung zur Kenntnis genommen.“¹

¹ Festgestellte Plagiate führen gemäß § 26 Abs. 2 der SPO der 6-semesterigen bzw. §23 Abs. 2 der 7-semesterigen grundständigen Studiengänge bzw. § 19 Abs.1 Satz 3 der SPO der Masterstudiengänge zum Verlust des Prüfungsanspruches und damit zur Exmatrikulation.

To a beautiful industry...

MADDING CROWD

...for an open world



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0
Unported License.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

Kurzfassung

Die vorliegende Bachelorarbeit beinhaltet das Konzept eines öffentlichen Online-Netzwerk-Produktionsstudios. Das Madding Crowd genannte Studio wurde als eine gemeinnützige Organisation mit dem Ziel konzipiert, unabhängige Filmprojekte durch Schwarmzusammenarbeit mit Hilfe eines virtuellen Studios, das für alle Interessenten offen steht, zum Leben zu erwecken.

Zur Gestaltung dieses virtuellen Studios wurden existierende normale Produktionsstudios und Netzwerke analysiert und deren Funktionen in eine auf den neuesten Stand der Technik gebrachte öffentliche Onlineanlage integriert, auf die von jedem, überall und jederzeit zugegriffen werden kann.

Abstract

This Bachelor Thesis presents the concept of an Open Online Production Community-Studio. The Community-Studio, called Madding Crowd, is conceived as a non-profit organisation, dedicated to bring independent film projects to life through crowd collaboration in a virtual studio open to anyone interested.

For the creation of this virtual studio, the way existing normal production studios and online communities work is analysed and these features are then transferred and adapted to fit a state of the art open online facility which can be accessed by anyone, everywhere, anytime.

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Before we start.....	2
1.2	How it all began	3
1.3	Madding Crowd is born.....	4
2	Studio	6
2.1	Pipeline	8
2.1.1	Pre-Production	9
2.1.2	Production	10
2.1.3	Post-Production	11
2.2	Features	11
3	Virtual Community	13
3.1	Social Communities.....	13
3.2	Art Communities.....	14
3.3	Project Communities	15
4	Madding Crowd	18
4.1	Public Image	18
4.2	The Registration Process	19
4.2.1	Member Filtering Process.....	19
4.2.2	Terms of Agreement	20
4.3	Main Site	22
4.3.1	Sitemap.....	25
4.4	Project Lounge	26
4.5	Resource Lounge.....	26
4.6	Community	27
4.6.1	Members	27
4.6.2	Groups	28

4.6.3 Events	29
4.6.4 Profiles' layout.....	29
4.6.5 Chat	31
4.6.6 Emails	32
4.7 Studio.....	32
4.7.1 Pre-Production Lounge	33
4.7.2 Production Lounge.....	35
4.7.3 Post-Production Lounge.....	37
4.7.4 Private Lounges.....	38
4.7.5 Pipeline and Technology.....	40
5 Future Projection.....	48
5.1 Reaching for the stars	49
5.2 Studios around the world.....	50
5.3 Opening the World.....	51

1 Introduction

The world is constantly changing and we see this happening on a daily basis. It is impossible to stop. Change is a chain event, meaning that change will always open room for further change. And as new ideas arise, other ideas get inspired by those complementing them or giving us a completely new perspective around them. The world is on a never-ending rush of change and it is hard to keep up with it.

It may seem overwhelming, but most of us usually adapt to it. We use computers, cell phones and the internet on a daily basis, without really noticing how they completely changed our way of living. But they did not come out of nowhere. They are a mixture of a huge amount of collaborative ideas thrown in together, which complement each other to the point of creating something new. A new way of doing things, which creates an incredible change once again.

Change is something not all people like. There are people against change, usually from older generations, who are fine with how the world was and are taken out of their comfort zone by seeing it altered. Most persons are passive about it, accepting and getting used to change to the point of being comfortable or even like it. But there are a few individuals who are actively trying to drive change in the world in the way they would like to see it. And although not all of them succeed in doing so, at least they may have left some ideas behind that might create a change later on.

Being at university is the perfect opportunity for these individuals to explore and to go "crazy" without any real boundaries or compromises. So I'm taking this opportunity to gather and explore a lot of ideas, I have accumulated throughout my studies and my work experience, with the goal of changing an existing industry, projecting it to the future to create something new.

The title of my Thesis is *"Concept of an Open Online Production Community-Studio"*. In the next pages you will find what I like to call a journey of thoughts and ideas inspired and influenced from different people and events, in order to create a whole new way of moviemaking. Driven by change and driving change, hopefully we can create a whole new revolution.

1.1 Before we start

This paper will not go on about the “*how to do*” of things, but focus on the “*what to do*,” so that the idea I am about to expose will work as a whole. There are already a lot of existing popular technologies, features and procedures, which would be redundant to explain in detail. Information about them can be largely found throughout the web simply by searching for them. We will therefore focus more on new ideas and complementation.

Although a lot can be found on the internet, there is nothing like the reader’s own experience in the field we are dealing about. Therefore, it is highly recommended to have some experience in the following fields.

- **Virtual Community**

The reader must know how a social community, like *Facebook* or *Google+*, works and must have used one before. Experience with art communities and professional networking platforms would be a plus, as well.

- **Production**

The reader must have worked or have a strong knowledge on how an Animation or VFX (visual effects) film gets done nowadays. From pre-production to post-production through the whole pipeline, this paper will gather all elements forming part of the pipeline and implement them in a new virtual way.

The target readers are industry professionals, moviemakers or potential investors with some production knowledge and the willingness to transform the existing computer graphics industry.

1.2 How it all began

This paper was supposed to be something completely different at the beginning. I was planning on doing a graduation short film as a co-production with a close friend of mine, Daniel Lee, who lives in Singapore. We got along very well and we both were very enthusiastic about the idea of collaborating, bringing a story to life.

This thesis would then have comprised our inter-university, inter-continental and inter-cultural experience. We were on a good track developing our own pipeline and had our whole production running already in the cloud. Everything was working fine, yet one big and common problem arose. Our story, as we wanted to tell it, was far too big for only two artists available for only a very limited period of time.

We already had experience from working on previous short films and knew what we were doing, so everything became clear while we were finishing the animatic. The short film we envisioned and wanted to do was far too broad. We thought about shortening it, but it would have lost the feeling we wanted to transmit to the viewer. We also tried a lot of different ways to simplify it, but were not satisfied with how it would alter the visual quality of the story we wanted to tell.

So we came to the conclusion that the story we had developed together, the way we wanted to tell it, could not be done with the manpower and time we had. That drove us to the sad decision to put our short film on halt. Daniel went on with a very short and stylized version of it, done purely with motion graphics, the field he specializes in. And as for me, the idea for this paper started to take form.

What, if we could create a kind of portal, where we could expose our idea for a short film and gather a lot of people willing to bring it to life together? They could be from anywhere around the globe, since we would be working directly in the cloud, and they would be able to work under our pipeline.

What, if we went even further and enabled that portal to all artists around the world, so that they could also expose their short film ideas and visions and bring them to life, as well? If the idea was great and the community really liked it, the work could be split up among all the artists willing to help. Assigning little fractions of work to different collaborators within a large community could make projects, which previously were impossible due to the huge workload, graspable for more than only big Studios.

Great short films wouldn't be constrained by manpower or money anymore!

The more I started to think about it and the more research I did on what already existed (pretty much nothing), the more I got excited about this idea!

1.3 Madding Crowd is born

The idea evolved from a simple portal, where we could expose our short film and gather help around the world to produce it, to a fully developed concept of an open non-profit Community-Studio called Madding Crowd.

Its basic concept is quite simple: A number of smaller tasks can replace one big workload.

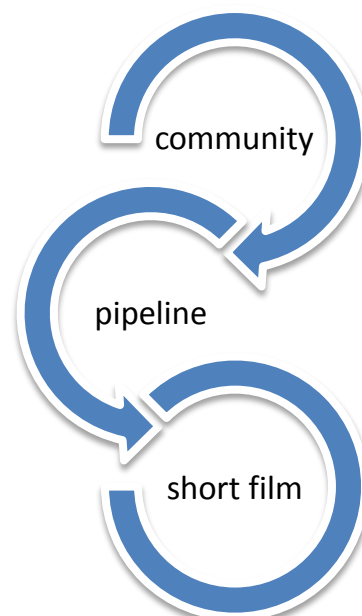


The idea itself is simple, but in order to be effective the contributions must be coordinated and channelled correctly and as smoothly as possible. And that is where Madding Crowd comes into play, with lots of extra benefits for its members.

The four Cores of Madding Crowd



Basic Development Process



Before we begin analysing and developing this concept, you may wonder why I picked that name? Well, it just happens to be the name of my favourite album of the band *Nine Days*.² But there is more to that, Madding Crowd is conceptualized as an open non-profit organization based on volunteer contributions from its Community. So if the short film makes some profit, the artists involved can decide what to do with it. Give it to charity, save it for more ambitious projects, which may require outsourced services, or share it proportionally to each member's workload.

So this organisation is basically just a "crowd" of artists eager and passionate about bringing their ideas and stories to life, and also to help others accomplishing their ideas and stories, through numerous little collaborations without any promises of financial profit. Members have to be a little bit "mad" in order to do that, but I do believe this can work! A Madding Crowd...

There is something that has fascinated me about this industry, the quality of human beings working in it. They are the kind of people who choose their career because of what they enjoy to do the most. They live having fun and love what they do. Full of dreams, they want to make the world a better place and are eager to do that by telling stories, which hopefully will influence and leave a mark on a global audience, as it has done with most of us.

Madding Crowd would be the perfect platform to make such dreams come true. It doesn't exist as of now, but this paper contains everything it would need.

For its creation we will first have to analyse how a normal studio works throughout all of its production stages, in order to determine the features which an online studio, with the same purposes, would need to have. We will then try to enhance those features by connecting the online Studio to a virtual Community. We will therefore examine different types of virtual communities, selecting and gathering the most useful features from each type. Once we have collected all the useful features to be found, we will begin creating Madding Crowd and project it to the future.

² *Nine Days* is one of my favourite rock bands which became popular in the early 00's but has sadly become inactive nowadays. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Days) (8/2012)

2 Studio

There are many big studios capable of bringing any imaginable story to life. But they are business organizations, whose main goal is to gain money for their shareholders. Of course, they would also prefer to tell good stories, but if there is the slightest risk, not to be marketable and not to get the biggest revenue possible, they may not even consider producing it, no matter how good the story.

That leaves a lot of incredible, unique and perhaps even life changing stories excluded - to the point of losing them completely. The studios' main goal is to entertain the broadest audience possible, in order to receive the biggest revenue out of their investment. And this is alright, feature animated movies cost a lot and the stories they manage to bring to the big screen are still very good, with a few exceptions of course.

Most studios invest a lot of money developing stories. They are, in fact, so concerned about the quality of a story and on making the most they can out of their huge future investment, that story development can take up to a few years. In animation everything is possible, yet nothing physically exists. Literally everything, ranging from big things like locations to the smallest little detail, like the scar on the cheek of a character, has to be imagined and planned in advance.

Because of all these years of development by a small team of dedicated and talented story artists, animation is perceived differently, it has become much more complex and nowadays it is considered as a high quality storytelling device. This becomes evident, when even older audiences, who are not the usual target audience, are nowadays getting fascinated by this genre and animated films are becoming more and more popular.

Studios keep pushing the boundaries of what is achievable in order to compete with their rivals and in order to be the first in presenting something never seen or told before, dragging the whole industry forward. They usually manage to make a lot of revenue. Thanks to their enormous profits we have a job in this industry, which enables us not only to work on creative and fascinating projects, but to make a decent living and have fun at the same time.

Feature length animated movies are sometimes very profitable, and recently new studios and investors have started producing them more frequently. Yet, not all of them succeed. Many times new investors and producers lack the experience and start off only focusing on

getting profits as fast as possible. This way, the stories tend to be clichés and the visual quality is noticeably weaker than those of well-established studios. Therefore, these kind of movies become less attractive to the audience and since creating an animated movie is so costly, they might hit the floor very badly - without any second chance.

In the case of short films, most of them are simply not lucrative. And this is quite sad because by being so short, they carry the essence of storytelling.

Short stories can be, in my opinion, much more influential than feature length stories. Most life changing events tend to happen in just a matter of seconds, so why make it longer? I find the power of a good short film completely amazing. Short films have the privilege of only showing just the absolutely necessary in order to communicate their message. If done right, they manage to be the most effective medium of storytelling. Unfortunately, people aren't willing to pay for watching or buying a short film. And one has to be realistic - they never will. Nevertheless, these short stories still involve a lot of work and, by not making much revenue, it is impossible for a studio to support a policy exclusively based on short films.

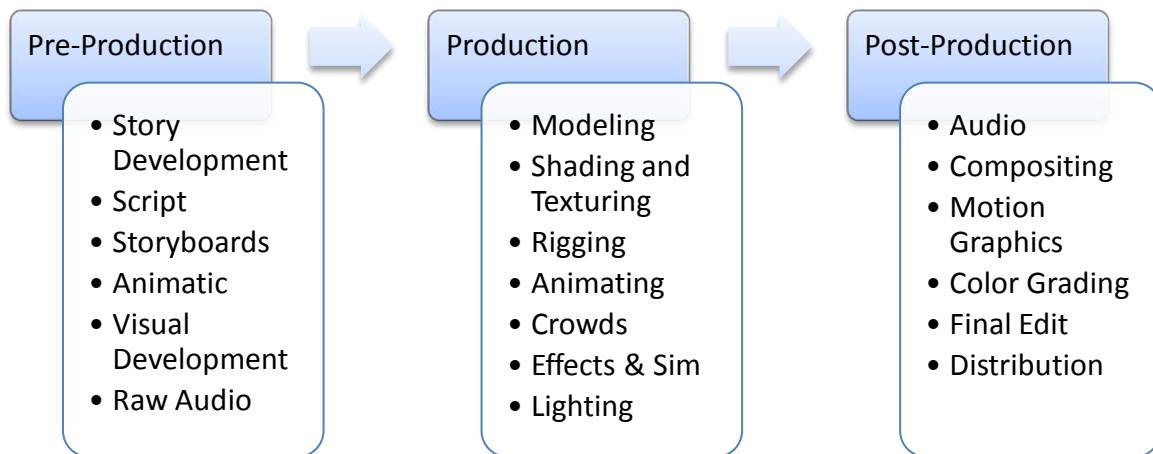
Madding Crowd is not conceived as a business studio. It shall be an open virtual Studio dedicated to bring stories worthwhile telling to life, without thinking about the profit they might make. Short films finally become something really feasible and, in the future, feature animated films could become reachable, as well.

The coolest part of this idea is that anyone can be part of the creation process! As an open Studio we wouldn't be in desperate need for investors and everyone is encouraged to develop and share his/her own story! If it is good enough, and if there are enough volunteers wanting to participate, it may be brought to production with a bunch of motivated professional artists from the Community. Stories wouldn't be developed only by a small closed team at a studio, with time pressures and a fixed budget. But most important of all, artists can accomplish their visions freely without having investors influencing them. It is therefore allowing for complete creative freedom, eliminating the problem of great ideas being excluded from production for one reason or another. It gives us the power to bring all kinds of artistic ideas to existence.

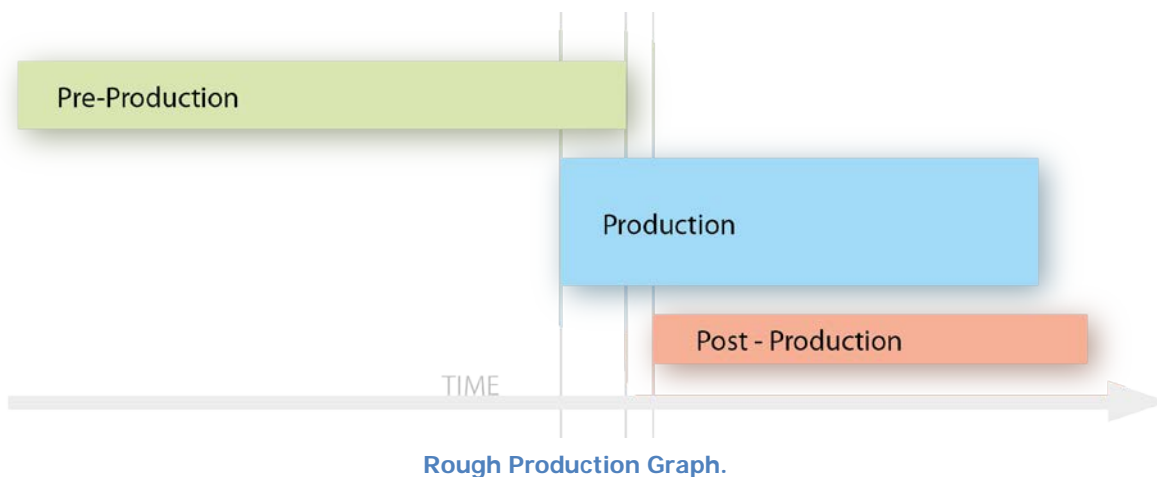
Madding Crowd has inherent many features of a normal studio, which we have to adapt to the online based Studio and connect to our virtual Community.

2.1 Pipeline

A pipeline is the path or channel a process has to follow when creating something, in this case an animated movie. There are many studios worldwide and the pipeline may vary rapidly from place to place. Nevertheless, the creation of a movie is always divided into three big groups:



These groups, as their name reveals, don't necessarily happen at the same time, but each one is essential and they are dependent on each other.



The production graph shows each pipeline stage over time. Yet, it will vary depending on the studio and the project that is being worked on.

Team size also varies a lot and the groups don't necessarily have to be from the same studio or place, but it is the case at most well-established animation studios. This way they can guarantee quality and forge a name for themselves.

2.1.1 Pre-Production

Pre-Production, the first stage in the production pipeline, involves the planning and conceptualization done before the actual production of a movie. It encompasses many things, from the initial “what if”, where a story gains the first ray of light, to the final animatic with the raw audio. Here a list of the main components of Pre-Production.

- Brainstorming
- Mood Boards
- Key Scenes
- Script
- Storyboard
- Animatic with Raw Audio
- Visual and Look Development

Pre-Production at the studios is conducted by a specialized team of creative people working very closely with the director. Their collaborative working and sharing of ideas is the key for its success, so it is extremely important to be able to work at a personal level. That way, creative interaction becomes easier and one is able to get the most out of each of the Pre-Production tasks.

The more creative minds, the more creative ideas will spring up. Nevertheless, it is important that the teams are not too big, either. There has to be a balance, otherwise it will be much harder to make final creative decisions. The teams usually include lead positions from different production stages for a better synchronization with the production team later on and for getting a taste of how the production will look like. That is the reason why some studios already invest in production without even having a final story, just to see some early results and boost every artist’s drive.

Pre-Production is the most important stage. I remember *Hans Bacher*³ telling our class:

*“Once the Pre-Production of the film has been done, the movie is done.
The only thing left is the execution.”*

³ *Hans Bacher* has worked as a Production Designer in the animation film industry for over 40 Years. Founder of the blog, *Animation Treasures*, he is currently Professor at the *Nanyang Technological University* in Singapore. (8/2012)

At the end of this stage, it has to be perfectly clear how the movie is going to look like and how the story will be told. One could actually screen the movie at this point and get the story across.

2.1.2 Production

Once the story development is established, Production begins! Everything developed in Pre-Production comes to life at this point of the pipeline. Characters and sets start to get built, shots get assigned and worked on and the first glances at finished scenes are shown. The main components of this phase are the following:

- Production Coordination
- Modelling
- Shading and Texturing
- Rigging
- Animating
- Crowds
- Effects & Simulation
- Lighting
- Matte Painting

This team is the largest along the production pipeline, working under the supervision of the director and the supervisors for each component. They usually work under one roof, but this is not necessarily a requirement. Nevertheless, artists on the same location should manage to interact more easily with each other and they should manage to form a very collaborative family. At this stage, they have to start working under a set deadline, so production coordination becomes a very important part of the project since all the production components are interdependent. If something goes wrong at any point here, the rest of the tasks along the pipeline will get affected by it.

The tasks sometimes even get done simultaneously, so if there were any content changes from Pre-Production, even more valuable time would be compromised. That's why they make every effort for Pre-Production to be completely finished before beginning with the Production stage.

At this point, time becomes "The Enemy" and, as talented as the team might be, complications will arise. This slows down production and if the production coordination team

has not calculated a time buffer for contingencies beforehand, the so called “crunch time” begins.

Crunch time is the term for a time interval before a deadline, where it becomes clear that the desired goal will not be achievable. Artists enter in “crunch mode” and have to work overtime in order to deliver the movie. In worst case scenarios some of the work even gets outsourced to other Production Studios, involving a huge change in the planned budget.

2.1.3 Post-Production

Post-Production begins a little bit later than Production, but continues side by side until the delivery. Here, all the work done in Production is being put together and the final shots and scenes begin to form. Things in the animatic start getting replaced by final sequences and the film slowly comes to life. This stage comprises the following components.

- Audio
- Compositing and Colour Grading
- Motion Graphics
- Final Editing
- Distribution

This team is the smallest one of all production stages and some tasks normally get outsourced to more specialized companies, as in the case of Audio, Motion Graphics and Distribution.

By being such a small group, artist interaction with the Director comes in easy and with justified reasons. At this point, the Director has to achieve his final vision of the movie. If something doesn't match the final image he/she has in mind, it has to go back to the Production stage to be fixed. Here it's all about matching the Director's vision and giving the final touches.

2.2 Features

By having all their artists under one roof, a normal studio has a lot of advantages over a virtual Studio.

- Artistic Interaction in every way is easily achieved physically
- Easy social interaction inside and outside of work

- Personal support from an IT department
- Standardized work stations and local server access

An virtual Studio, although lacking the physicality of a normal studio, features advantages, as well.

- On the spot expansion without flying people over or work permit issues
- 24h workflow
- Home office for people with family or traveling around

Now, what if we could gather these advantages and blend them together?

3 Virtual Community

The Virtual Community can be the bridge between a regular and a virtual Studio. It won't replace the physicality of a normal animation studio, but it will enable personal and artistic interaction. This is the key of Madding Crowd. Existing virtual communities are an interesting field to gather references and features in order to implement them in the most useful way at Madding Crowd.

There are a lot of different virtual community types, each one aiming for different member targets, ranging from school kids in their puberty years to elderly people living alone and searching for companionship. Sometimes, really bizarre virtual communities exist, like the "zombie preparedness initiative" or "beauty implantations community".

Communities exist by the thousands and for all kinds of different types of members imaginable. But I will only take into account the ones having an impact on Madding Crowd.

3.1 Social Communities

Social Communities are nowadays the most used virtual communities worldwide, with the biggest one having over 950 million active members per month⁴. Their target members usually come from a very broad area, their main goal being to socialize and keep in touch.

Human beings have always felt the need to communicate and to keep in contact with their beloved ones. In a world that is becoming more and more globalized, contacts tend to spread out in the world. Online social communities are a great way to keep in touch with as many people as desired, without having to be physically present.

But what makes a good social community stand out? Many companies have tried creating new social communities, but it is difficult to compete with the huge existing ones. A community exists because of its members, and emerging social communities tend to fail since they don't achieve to engage a solid number of members. They might have brilliant ideas to attract members and be a great initiative, but as long as the contact base is not big enough, it will remain unattractive to potential new members.

That's why social communities also tend to specialize in order to have a chance in this very competitive field. One relevant case for us are professional networking communities. Their

⁴ *Facebook* is currently the biggest social network worldwide, their statistics can be found under the following link: <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22> (8/2012)

main goal is networking at a professional level, so they don't go much in depth at a personal level. They work more like a compendium of online resumes with embedded recommendations for people to network with other professionals and search for job opportunities. Due to that, usually they are not very time consuming. They are used more as a database, which can come in handy once in a while to stay in contact with colleagues, ex-colleagues, to go job hunting or be hunted by recruiters with an online resume always available. Currently the biggest professional networking community has around 160 million members.⁵

Social communities can become very time consuming and many users spend a lot of time with them nowadays, since they are more entertaining for their members. The most important thing to succeed as a pure social community in this very competitive field, is the amount of features they present and their user friendliness.

A few of those features to consider for Madding Crowd are:

- Sharing of Personal and Professional Information
- Sharing of Pictures and Videos
- Creation of Events
- Wall for Posting Short Public Messages
- Private Messaging System
- Creation of Groups with Shared Interests within the Community
- Chat Rooms
- Audio and Video Conferences

3.2 Art Communities

Art communities exist in many variations, each one dedicated to its own art form. From poetry to audio-visual media, the range covers a vast amount of different art forms. They are the perfect place to publish art, get instant feedback, critique, inspiration and grow as an artist.

Art communities evolved and profited hugely by going online. Art got exposed to a much bigger audience, procreating a much broader feedback, and it started becoming influenced at a global scale. Many art communities are private and restricted to its members, but some

⁵ *Linked in* is currently the biggest professional network worldwide, their statistics can be found under the following link: <http://press.linkedin.com/about> (8/2012)

remain open for people from all ages and with any type of artistic skill. The biggest one currently has over 19 million members, and over one hundred thousand new works get published every day.⁶

Their main goal is to enforce their members to grow as artists. And in fact, there are few artists nowadays that have not been actively involved in an online art community at some point in their life.

Some features that are really attractive for us and worth mentioning here would be:

- Expose art
- Get critique and constructive feedback
- Assemble art libraries
- Watch other artists and get updates
- Drawing online platforms
- Art challenges for the Community

3.3 Project Communities

Project communities are newcomers in the world of virtual communities. With their main goal being the fulfilment of a specific project, they tended to be exclusive for members working on them. By being relatively small and with a short existence, usually existing only while the project was being executed, they lived silently in the community world.

In the last few years they went through a huge evolution and a big recent hype has boosted their popularity exponentially. Now there are project communities which don't necessarily create the projects, but they try to find a way of showing them to the world and to fund them through their members.

Crowd funding, we are definitely going to hear this a lot in the following years, is the term used to describe the funding of a project through contributions from a crowd of people. Projects get exposed and the project initializers pledge for a certain amount of money for their development.

That way, if a project is really good people will give their small or big economical contribution in order to reach the initial pledge and see the project come to life.

⁶ *Deviantart* is currently the biggest artistic network worldwide, their statistics can be found under the following link: <http://about.deviantart.com/> (8/2012)

Does it sound familiar? Yes, Madding Crowd is going to work somehow like that, but it won't ask for economical contributions, it will ask for manpower. It will ask for people, who are willing to have fun and put their time and effort in it, to be a part of it. This doesn't exclude the possibility of entering a pledge, once the project has been approved by the Community, to get some financial aid. It won't be encouraged though.

Madding Crowd is a place where stories should come alive independently of monetary profit. It is a platform to have fun by doing what we love to do, without any external pressure or expectations. It is a place to just work on what we want, because we enjoy doing it and we have time for it. So, if the project gets published to the world pledging for monetary support, expectations will arise from the outside, obliterating the simple fun of being creative which Madding Crowd offers to its members. It stops being a hobby and becomes a workplace, so this decision would have to be discussed with all willing contributors first, since more serious deadlines could arise and contributors would have to keep up with them.

Of course the ideal case would be to create the pledge under complete deadline freedom and share the profit made out of that pledge with the contributors according to the amount of work done. That way, it would still feel as a hobby, but with monetary help from outside!

A lot of animated short films have been already financed by crowd funding communities with more or less success. These projects get done by a small group of engaged people working full time on location, so this becomes impossible for artists already with full time jobs and in other places around the world. Madding Crowd destroys these barriers and enables a massive amount of worldwide collaborations under one established pipeline. And the best part is that everyone can collaborate as much as he or she wants, so artists with a full time job can also be a part of these projects.

Quite recently, *Ed Skudder* and *Zack Keller*⁷ promoted to do the first animated feature film backed through the crowd funding platform, *Kickstarter*⁸. Their pledge to bring the popular web series *Dick Figures* to the big screen started at USD 250.000. That would suffice for their independent studio to make a 30 minute long film and, depending on how much funds the project manages to raise, they would be willing to produce a feature length movie worth USD 700.000. This is very exciting because it happened exactly at the same time this paper

⁷ Ed Skudder and Zack Keller are young independent animators. They are the creators of many 2D based short films that have become quite popular, especially in video communities. They now own their own studio Remochoso. <http://www.remochoso.com> (8/2012)

⁸ Kickstarter is one of the most popular project based communities. <http://www.kickstarter.com> (08/2012)

is written. *Dick Figures the Movie* managed to raise a total of USD 313,411, making it the highest funded animation and the third largest funded film on *Kickstarter*.⁹

Not all the published projects get all the required money out of the crowd funding communities, since it all depends on how the project appeals to them. In fact, *Kickstarter* has a success rate of 44% on funding its projects¹⁰. And although many do get funded, this doesn't guarantee that the financed project will meet expectations. There have been cases of big disappointments.

Madding Crowd, in its core, is not conceived as a workplace. It is a place to make films as a hobby. Staying out of crowd funding communities would guarantee a playground with no stress and with all the liberties it should be offering as such, but financial aid sure does sound tempting. As Madding Crowd progresses and makes itself a name, it should be able to easily fund projects successfully, as well.

Project community features to include would be:

- Project Publication to the Community
- Crowd Collaboration (not funding)

⁹ *Kickstarter* project *Dick Figures the Movie* and all information gathered about it can be found under: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/dickfigures/dick-figures-the-movie/posts> (8/2012)

¹⁰ *Kickstarter* statistics can be found under: <http://www.kickstarter.com/help/stats> (8/2012)

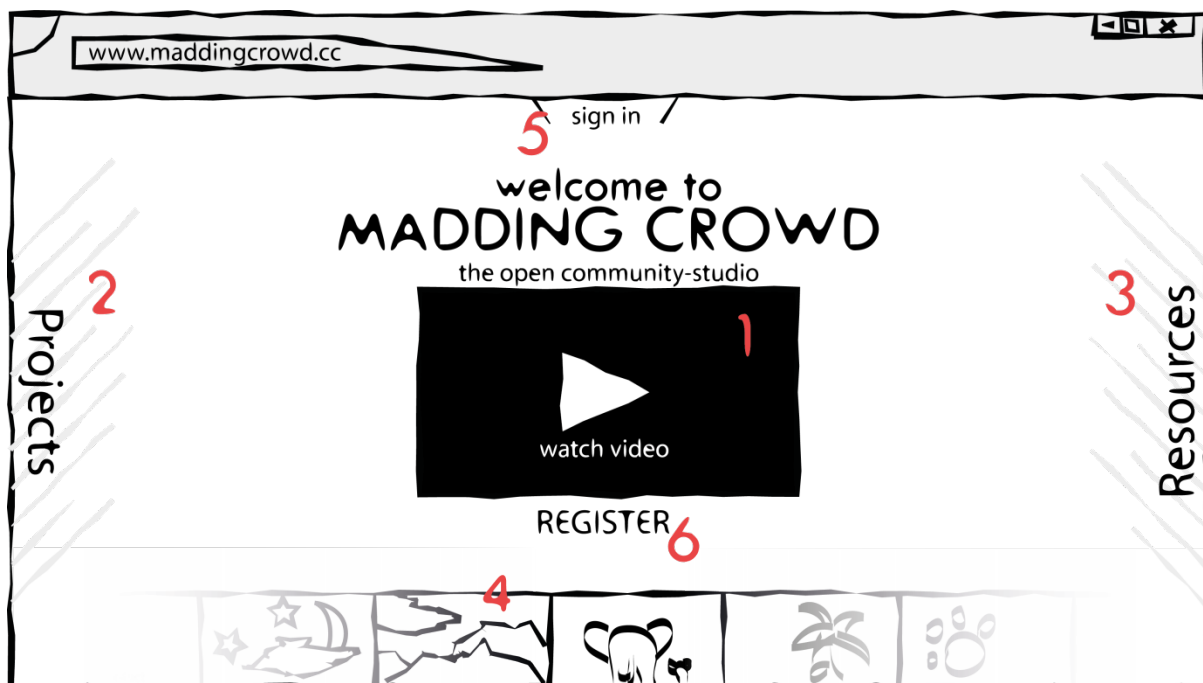
4 Madding Crowd

After analysing and mentioning the features which Madding Crowd is going to inherit from existing studios and virtual community platforms, time has come to start the fun part where we put them all together and develop our new platform.

The easiest way to explain how Madding Crowd is going to work is to explain how one would enter the platform from an outsider's perspective. We will assume that we are artists who heard about it and are opening up the webpage for the first time.

4.1 Public Image

Public image is what the platform is going to look like for the visitors, basically what the main page of the website is going to look like from an outside or logged out perspective.



As seen in the sketch above, it has to be perfectly clear what the Community has to offer.

1. Manifesto: The short introduction video is the key for attracting future members, since it explains briefly and in a fun way, why we exist and what our Mission is. A lot of care and love has to be put into this little short film, since it will be the presentation card to the world. It also will be one of the first own Projects Madding Crowd will be engaged in.

2. **Projects:** The Projects section contains all finished projects and the released information about projects in progress. It is a showcase to the public of the work the Community has developed or is currently developing. More about this in the Projects Lounge section of this paper.
3. **Resources:** The public Resources section will contain a large database of useful links, forwarding to free tutorials, tools, articles and even literature, which have been gathered by the Community around all that encompasses computer graphics. The resources available to the public will nevertheless only be the ones already available openly in the web. They will just be conveniently listed in one single place, classified by categories and with a usefulness rating¹¹ given by the Community Members. More about this and the enhancements it will have for members in the Resource Lounge section of this paper.
4. **Movie Stripe:** This stripe will contain snapshots of finished projects from Madding Crowd for quick viewing pleasure. Once clicked on one, the actual film will pop up and start to screen.
5. **Login:** This pops up the login fields to enter Madding Crowd for registered users.
6. **Register:** This forwards you to the registration process to become a member at Madding Crowd

4.2 The Registration Process

Everyone can enter Madding Crowd and volunteer to help on different projects since we are an open Community-Studio. But as cool as this may sound, it becomes dodgy at the moment of production. How can one know if volunteers actually know what they are volunteering for? In order to guarantee the quality of production at the Studio, the registration process will have potential members go through a filtering process.

4.2.1 Member Filtering Process

The filtering process will enable the following prospects to enter Madding Crowd.

- Professionals in the Computer Graphics industry
- Students in their last year of college aiming to enter this industry
- Hobbyists showing competent skills

¹¹ Usefulness rating is an internal rating system used on the Resource Lounge inside Madding Crowd. It shows in form of stars from 1 to 5, how useful the material is for the acclaimed purpose. Ratings can be given only by members.

People from other industries will be able to enter Madding Crowd as well, but may have restricted access within the Studio. For example, scriptwriters from other industries will have access to the Pre-Production Lounge and musicians will have access to the Pre- and Post-Production Lounges. This is done in order to avoid being overwhelmed by all departments in the Studio.

For professionals it is required to clearly state the position at the company they currently work for and its name. This is needed in order to split responsibilities on projects accordingly. How can we guarantee that members are saying the truth about this? First, they will have to register with their company's email, in order to verify their entries. Second, we will assume that the user is stating his real position within his company, because he/she will want to save himself/herself awkward moments once colleagues enter this profile and find out he/she is feigning a higher position.

In the case of students, we would require to verify their university email. They will be automatically considered as Trainees and will only be allowed to volunteer on a project with the support of a mentor, unless it is another student's project or his/her own.

For Hobbyist we would require to see a show reel of his/her work in order to be accepted within the Community. The same goes for musicians and professionals from other industries.

4.2.2 Terms of Agreement

The Terms of Agreement will be very similar to the ones found for registrations at other communities except for the points concerning the Studio. That will have to be clarified.

- The money earned through a Madding Crowd production will be designated only to those collaborators who worked on the project.
- Every user is responsible for the Software he/she uses at home. Madding Crowd is only liable for the software being used inside the Community Platform, meaning the web apps and the in house tools.
- Everything done by members on behalf of Madding Crowd will be considered Free Cultural Work and will go by the *Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported*¹² license.
- Madding Crowd will publish its own productions under a *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported*¹³ license.



¹² License details can be found under: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/> (08/2012)

¹³ License details can be found under: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> (08/2012)

I want to clarify that even though productions get released under a *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported* license for people to share freely under attribution to the Studio, this does not mean that Madding Crowd will not earn money out of them in form of sales, festival awards or merchandising. It will actually be the only one with the rights to make commercial use of its production, and it may be sharing certain financial rewards with the artists who worked on it.

Our goal nevertheless is to reach out to the widest audience possible, so finished productions will be immediately available for streaming at an established partner video streaming community. A high definition version and bonus content download will be unlocked under a “pay what you want”¹⁴ pricing system. This is a system in which viewers will be able to pay what they think the production was worth and are able to currently afford. In change they will get the film in the highest quality possible, the soundtrack, director’s commentary and access to all pre-production artwork in full resolution. Additional content can be offered as well, if desired by the project team, like a “Making of” video or a “The art of” e-book.

By having all the work done by members of Madding Crowd under a *Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported* license, it is basically making everything open source. Nevertheless, this licence guarantees accreditation to the makers and further development of the work to be shared alike, under the same *Creative Commons* license. This will not only encourage, but also push open development within the computer graphics industry to a whole new level.

Since Madding Crowd is a non-profit organisation, it will have two different types of revenue. Earnings out of actual Madding Crowd productions and grants donated by other companies or people who want to support our organisation. These incomes will be destined to two different purposes.

Money earned through a Madding Crowd production will be either:

- Shared in form of salaries between all artists who created the film, according to the amount of work and responsibilities.
- Given to different charity foundations, depending on where the artists involved might find it appropriate.

¹⁴ Information about the “pay what you want” business model can be found under: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pay_what_you_want (8/2012)

- Stored as a buffer in order to facilitate future projects with a budget for outsourced services, like motion-capturing, 3D scanning, on location shooting, etc.
- All of the above in any combination possible.

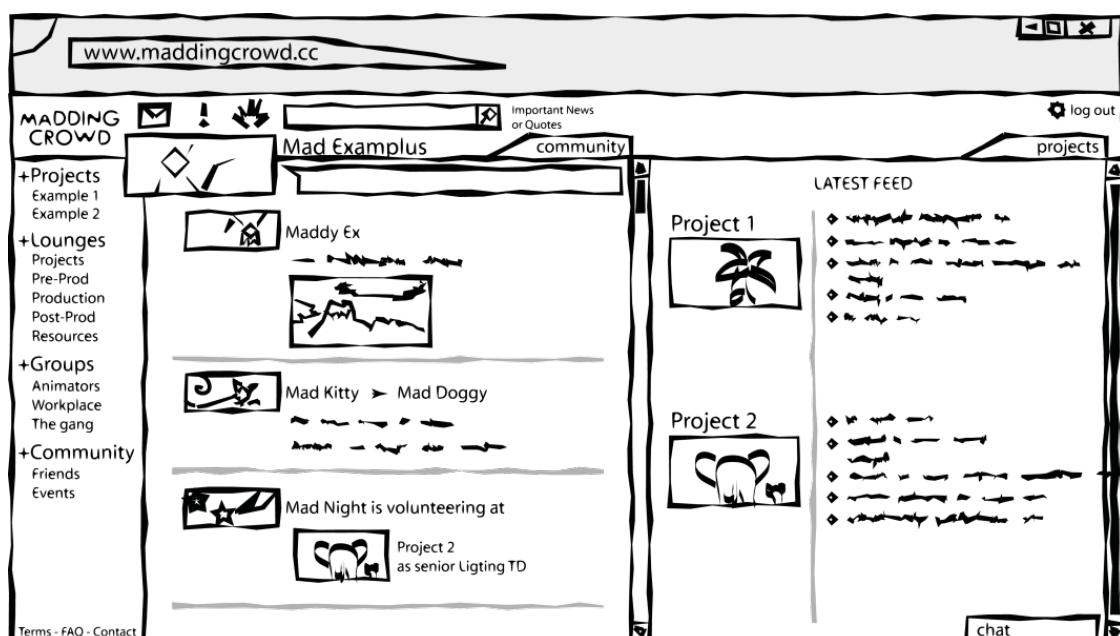
Everything donated by companies or people will be invested in the further development of Madding Crowd. Therefore, it will be directed to platform maintenance and improvement, with the goal of making it a state of the art facility for its members.

Some people may wonder why any company or person would want to donate to our cause. First of all, donations to non-profit organizations can be deducted from taxes. Second, why would a computer graphics company not want to donate to a non-profit organization training artists and developing the industry further for free? Lastly, as our name grows, a certain reputation will arise and we hope to get even more donations from people who want to support us.

Even though we would love to facilitate any desired software to our members, it will be financially impossible for us to deliver licences to all members working on Madding Crowd projects. We will therefore actively encourage, support and further develop the use of open source software.

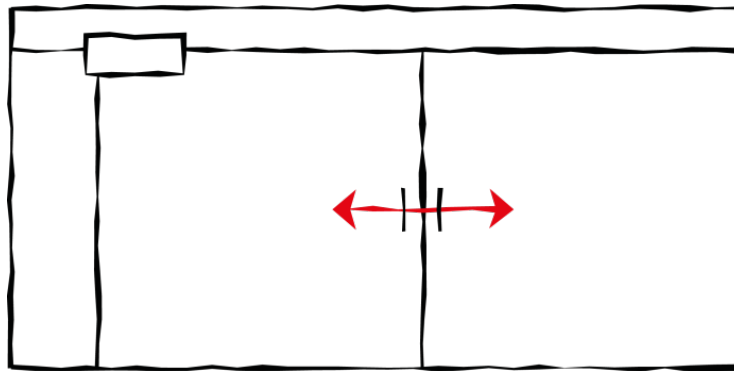
4.3 Main Site

Once registered, the main site for members will appear looking somehow like this:



It is hard to enable all the features the platform should have without overwhelming the user at first sight, but they are necessary for a powerful platform being able to substitute a studio virtually. All the physicality of a studio has to be replaced in the best possible way and all the sections have to be accessible immediately.

In order to fully understand the main page, the layout has to be explained first. The layout consists of a header, a left navigation column and two dynamically independent content columns. By dynamically independent content columns I mean that the middle separation bar can be moved from left to right, in order to make one column wider or thinner.

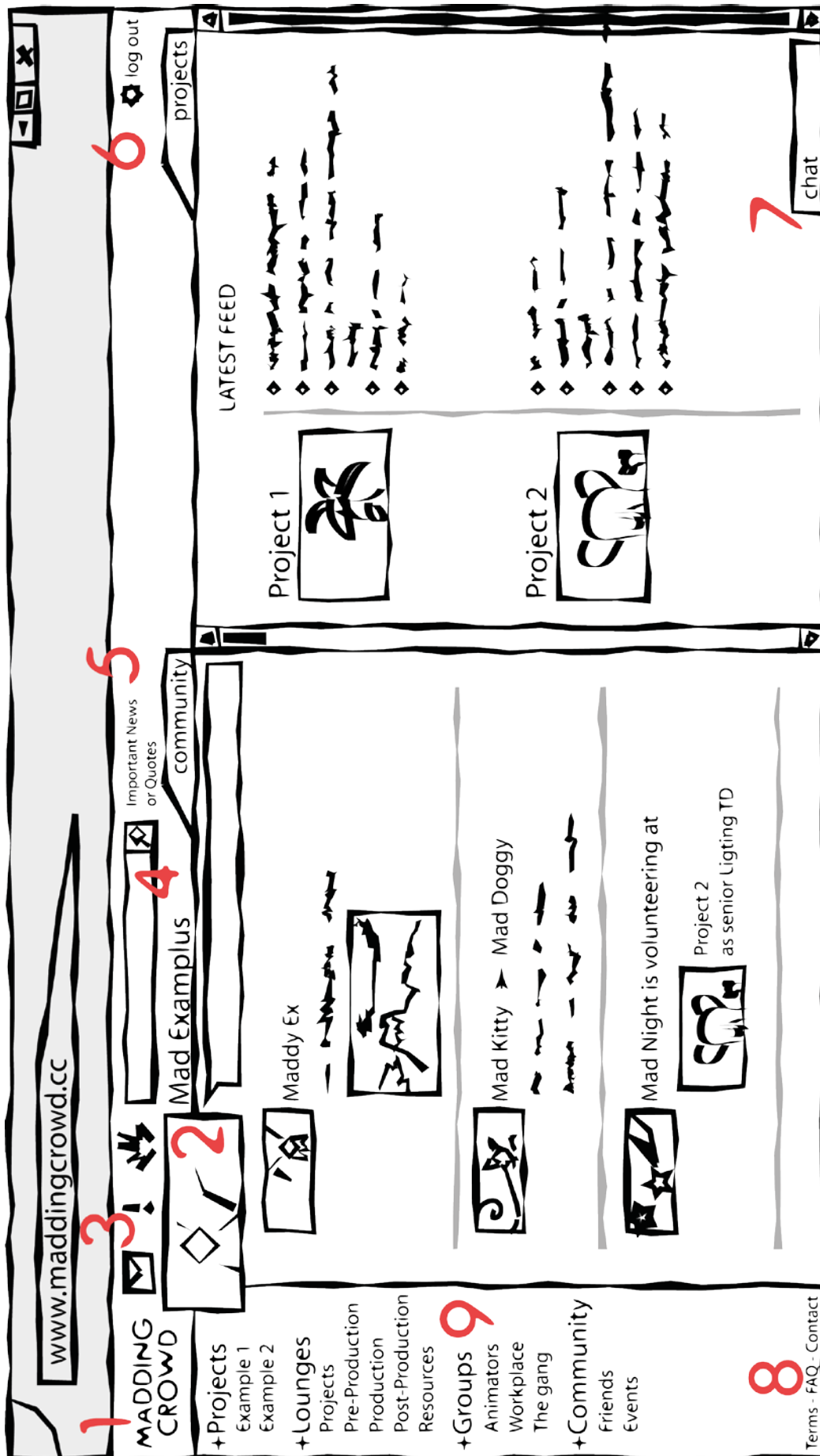


That way, the user can customize his working environment and multitask within the same browser. Each content column can be set to display any content of the platform through the top right arrangement tab or by middle mouse dragging the section from the left navigation column. We will refer to the content columns as panels in the future.

The left navigation column consists of a tree view of all the areas and contents Madding Crowd has to offer. The more the member gets involved in the Community and Studio, the more it will expand. The cool thing is, that everything can be accessed right away and navigation through the Studio is easy and clear.

Users will be able to also hide the navigation column in the settings, since everything can be accessed through the arrangement tabs of each panel either way. This will be a feature that benefits the experienced users, who want a cleaner interface and know already how Madding Crowd works.

Now that we know how the layout works, let's take a closer look at the content of each area on the following page.

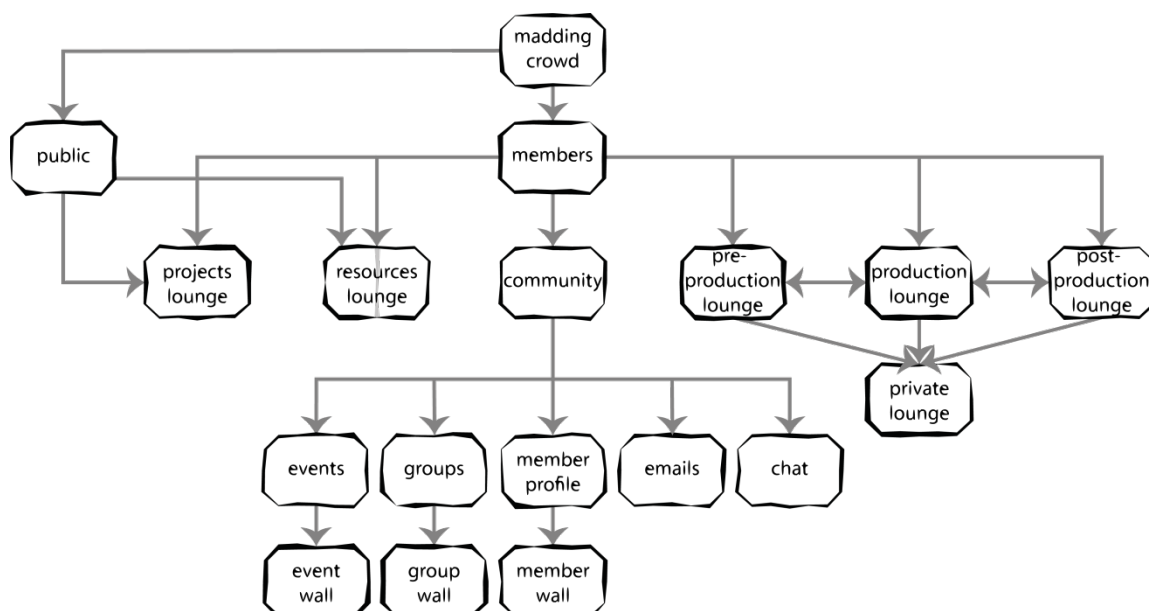


As seen on the previous page, the sections are:

1. Madding Crowd: brings us back to the default arrangement: Community and Projects.
Nevertheless, one can choose one's own default arrangement in *Settings*.
2. User Profile: brings us to the members' profile page.
3. Emails, Notifications and Requests: each one opens a small dialog with the latest emails, notifications or friendship and project requests. Depending on where you click on this dialog (left or right) the page will load on the left or right panel.
4. Search bar: standard input bar to search within all of Madding Crowd
5. Important News: important news or quotes will be available directly in the header for them not to be missed.
6. Settings and Log out: enters the settings for the portal or you log out.
7. Chat: Pops up all the connected friends, groups and project chat rooms. It will also enable video conferences in the future.
8. Legal Metadata and Terms of Use: about us, terms of service, contact and FAQ.
9. Navigation Column: this column classifies all of Madding Crowd under categories. By default, it opens each option on the left panel. Middle mouse drag will be available to display content on any desired panel. The arrangement tabs contain the elements of the navigation column, as well.

Before going more in depth with all the sections of Madding Crowd, the following sitemap will give a helpful overview:

4.3.1 Sitemap



It might look a bit confusing at the beginning, so I will explain each part from left to right through the sitemap.

4.4 Project Lounge

Project Lounge is the place where all the information about Madding Crowd projects can be found. It can be accessed by the public and members alike, since it contains only official releases of finished projects and previews of projects in development.

4.5 Resource Lounge

The Resource lounge can also be accessed by the public and members alike, but the public is restricted to view only the resources available openly in the web. Members have full access to the resources created by Madding Crowd, including the tools of the entire Studio Pipeline.

Resources are classified by meta-tags and appear categorized and sorted out. They will also be rated by the Community Members through a usefulness rating scale, depending on how useful they find them according to the acclaimed purpose. Comments will also be available for each resource entry. This way, members can discuss with each other and clarify things that may not work or might work even better.

Resources gathered in the Lounge are very diverse and go through all areas of production. Nevertheless, technical resources will focus on supported DCC Packages (Digital Content Creation) inside the Studio and be categorized by them, as well. Open source Software will always be preferred, but any DCC Package will be supported at Madding Crowd. We will go more into detail about this in *Pipeline and Technology* at the Studio section of this paper.

Resources listed will be the following:

- Madding Crowd's official pipeline tools for each software package
- Tutorials
- Tools
- Plug-ins
- Rigs
- Articles
- Literature

The Resource Lounge is a place to learn and expand the Community's knowledge, so it is very important to keep it updated. Members can contribute by creating resources themselves, submitting relevant stuff they found on the web and rating the existing ones. The computer graphics industry mostly generates collaborative art. What we are trying to do is to make the learning of it collaborative, as well.

4.6 Community

The Community is the core element of Madding Crowd. Madding Crowd exists because and thanks to the Community and depends on it. The good thing is that there are many communities out there already, from which we can learn in order to create our own Community. There is nothing real new regarding communities, and we know that the most important thing for a community to succeed is the features it offers.

Since our goal is to replace the personal interaction at a normal studio the best way possible, we have to implement most of the features of common social communities and enhance them for our purposes.

4.6.1 Members

The member profile is where all the information about the user will be stored, from very elemental things, like the name, to very detailed information, like what shots of a project he/she has worked on.

Since it is a Studio, everyone at Madding Crowd will be considered as a colleague, and professional information will always be available. Professional information includes everything work related.

- Full name and profile picture
- Madding Crowd email address
- Current workplace and position (university and planned degree)
- Positions within Madding Crowd
- Projects he/she has worked or is currently working on within Madding Crowd and which position he/she is presently occupying
- Wall with publicly made posts
- Reels with featured own artwork done at Madding Crowd which the member chose

- *Professionalism rank*¹⁵

All other information might be visible for colleagues, if desired, but this is up to each member to decide.

It is possible to *add* colleagues as friends, in order to share more personal information. It will also be possible to *follow* other colleagues without adding them as friends, in order to be updated with things they openly want to share with the Community. Friends will have access to all the given information within the profile.

- Professional information including resumes, if uploaded
- Personal information and contact details, including private email address
- Photos and Videos (*tagged* or personally uploaded)
- Personal artwork and favourite artwork within the Community
- Wall with all posts
- See their friends' network

Personal information includes everything the member has entered so that it may be shared, from birthdate to personal web page or spoken languages. Chat will be available with friends, once they are connected, as well.

Every piece of artwork which one contributes to Madding Crowd will be linked to the member profile, enabling users to easily keep an overview. But only their own featured artwork, chosen by the members themselves, will be shown openly to the Community in form of reels on the member's profile gallery.

A member can also collect artwork from anywhere within the Community and put it in his/her gallery of favourites and each member has the freedom to open this collection to the Community, as well.

4.6.2 Groups

A Group's features derive from the members' profiles. Groups enable the creation of smaller communities within Madding Crowd. Groups can be formed due to professional purposes, common interests or just for fun.

Smart Groups will be created automatically depending on the following things:

¹⁵ *Professionalism rank* is a rank given by project colleagues when a project is finalized. It grants the ability to build up a reputation, according to how the user has achieved what he had proposed to do.

- Project
- Project-position
- Workplace or university
- Position
- Area currently living in

All project related Groups will be compulsory, but the rest of Smart Groups can be deactivated if desired. They may be very useful though. A very interesting Group will definitely be the Smart Group formed by the area where members are currently living. Members of this Smart Group may get to know each other and work at a personal level, as well. This might also be useful to promote local Events.

It is important to keep in mind that Groups can also be created by any member and for any purpose, without any limitations!

Groups enable a group profile and a group wall, where only people belonging to this particular Group will be able to communicate. It also includes an optional public wall, where everyone at Madding Crowd can write, hopefully encouraging messages, to the Group. The Group's communication to the outside will also work through this wall. Photos and videos can be uploaded within the Group, so that only Group members can see them.

Specialized chat rooms will be available for Groups, as well. This will enable instant, easy and casual exchange within the Group.

4.6.3 Events

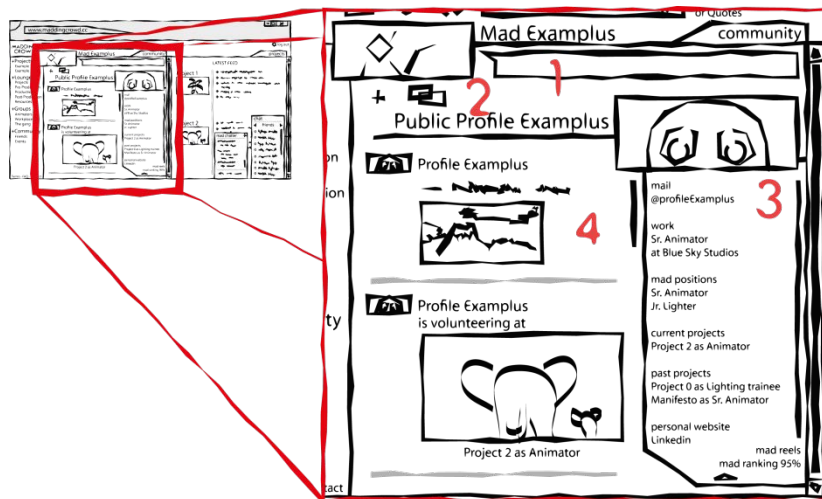
Events usually originate from Groups and basically consist in temporary groups of members focussing on planning an event, such as a film release, a birthday party, a LAN party or whatever comes to mind. It's up to the Community to organize them and to share the fun together.

Events have their event wall and the possibility to upload photos and videos, as well. A public wall or chat room is not necessary for events and will therefore not be available.

4.6.4 Profiles' layout

It has been described how the member, group and event profiles are going to work, but what are they going to look like? In the following, there is a sketch of how a member profile is going to look. Group and event profiles will inherit this layout.

The following sketch is the view of a profile from a colleague's perspective. Colleagues are restricted to view only information publicly given, but this is enough for demonstration purposes.



1. The writing bar: The writing bar will always appear on pages where there is something to write on, independently of the panel. Depending on the panel's content, the writing bar will have a different function. For example, on a member profile from a colleague's perspective, everything we write there will be sent as an email. If we are on a friend's profile, it will go directly to his/her wall. If there is more than one option, the user may choose how the message shall be sent. In the case of a Friend, as a wall post or as an email. When the bar is empty, the function it has by default will be readable in grey for quick viewing.
2. Profile options: Here we have available all actions the user can take with respect to another member's profile. Depending on how one is connected, different options will appear. Some of these, for example, may be:
 - a. Add as friend or follow
 - b. Pictures and Videos (only public ones)
 - c. See connections (in friend profile)
 - d. See all personal and favourite artwork within the Community (in friend profile)
3. Profile information: All profile information will be displayed in this section, the compulsory and the additional information the member wants to show publicly. This section grows as soon we are connected as friends. The wall and the profile

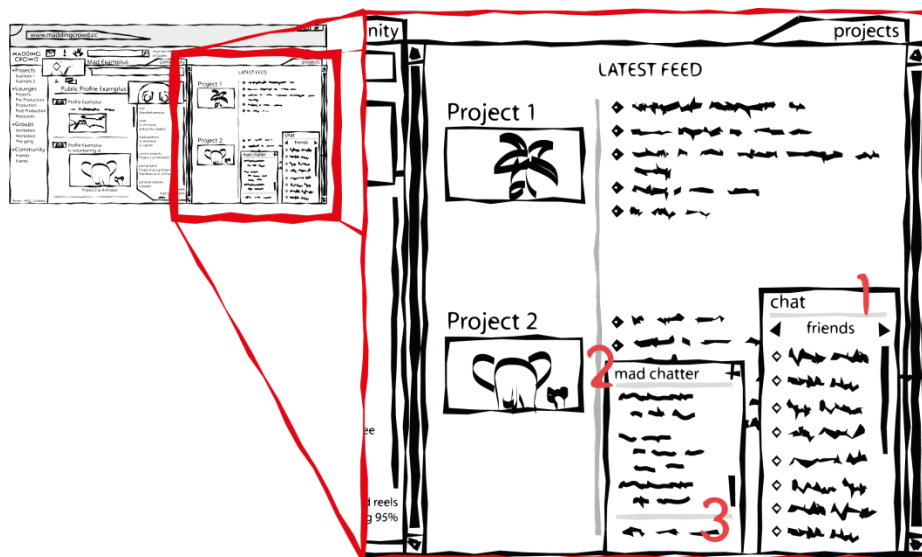
information section have two independent scroll bars and the profile information can be minimized and expanded by clicking on the arrow at the bottom.

4. Wall: The profile wall expands if the profile information is minimized. It will automatically show content depending on the connection we have to the member profile we are currently checking.

4.6.5 Chat

Chat functionality will be available for friends and Groups and it can be automatically used within production, because of the Smart Project Groups already created. Colleagues working on the same project may also be able to chat with each other privately. Members taking part on a chat session can always add contacts on the fly to an existing chat session.

The chat functionality, like in other community platforms, will run parallel to whatever is going on in the background and can be minimized anytime. It works like a pop up at the bottom of the platform that may be called up anytime.



1. The chat list: The chat list shows all friends currently connected. It can be changed to show the different Groups and its members. The first contact will always be the Group itself, enabling instant group chat with all members. The rest of the contacts will always be the members of the group who are currently online.
2. The conversation header: The conversation header shows with whom we are having the conversation and enables us to add contacts to it. By clicking on the header the window minimizes or maximizes.

3. The conversation: This is simply where the conversation will take place. The upper field is where the conversation is stored and colour coded. The lower field is where the user can write new stuff.

4.6.6 Emails

Emails will work directly through the Community. Each member will have an internal email address assigned, so members don't have to communicate through or give away their private ones. If desired, a forwarder can be set in order to have emails redirected to the personal email address. Important news and projects will be emailed directly to the private address, unless otherwise stated by the member.

Having a Community backing the Studio makes it very simple to get in contact with other colleagues and having the email system running through the Community even more. No more need for an email client or remembering email addresses. Simply by typing the name, the contact will be there.

Smart filtering can be activated to automatically sort personal or project related emails. And it also allows filtering by task type and priority.

4.7 Studio

The Studio is the last, most complex part of Madding Crowd and the most powerful feature. It is the key to attract new members to the Community and where the magic of Madding Crowd happens. It is a full featured online Production Studio where people from all around the world can work at.

Being a Studio on its own, each member has a specific position at the Studio. Positions inside the Studio follow the standard hierarchy, starting from Trainee up to Supervisor. Promotions inside the Studio can also happen, according to the experience gathered in projects done. Members start off with the positions they already have at their workplace inside the industry. For example, if a member is a Sr. Composer already at a studio, he will get the same position inside Madding Crowd. By having that position, he can volunteer at any project with his position, but it will still be possible for him to volunteer at lesser positions in order to avoid the burden of a lot of responsibility, for a change. This also becomes very interesting, since they can get supervised by other colleagues that may have other points of view. Members can also apply for trainee positions at other areas, the Sr.

Compositor from our example could apply for a trainee position as an Animator, as long as he has a mentor to guide him. This enables members to grow as artists and to work at different fields they might have always been interested to try out. Let's take a closer look on the position hierarchies and how these are applied at the studio. We will take a rigger's example for demonstration purposes.

- Trainee (everyone with the supervision of a mentor)
- Jr. Rigger
- Rigger (considered normal position)
- Sr. Rigger (can offer his mentorship)
- Lead Rigger (has to have at least one other normal position)
- Character Supervisor (has to have at least two other normal positions)
- CG Supervisor (has to have at least three other normal positions)

This hierarchy works for each task within the Studio, although Pre-Production will be separated from Production and Post-Production. This means that in order to become a Lead Rigger, one cannot accredit a pre-production normal position. Though, it is possible to acknowledge up to one normal position to pre-production artists from other production stages. It is very valuable when pre-production artists know about production or post-production, as well.

4.7.1 Pre-Production Lounge

It all starts at the pre-production of a movie and the Pre-Production Lounge has to offer everything possible in order to encourage the greatest artistic exchange. Inside the Lounge, it is all about exchanging ideas and going "mad", but in order to really do this we need a very special approach.

The Pre-Production Lounge has always three main goals in mind: to inspire, to motivate and to produce new things. The Pre-Production Lounge should feel like a playground. Creative ideas are usually spontaneous and arise from the interaction with others. The more we can stimulate this exchange, the better the playground will be. But how can we make people interact without them knowing each other? Through simple games that get their creative juices flowing. The Pre-Production Lounge will feature the following.

- WTF -> WhaT iF: The "*What if*" game is a collaborative game, which is all about accepting and adding ideas within a chain reaction. One starting idea is given and

then the next one has to add to it. It continues like this, always accepting all the ideas already added and contributing to them, until a perceivable end is met. It is played at many studios and it is a good opportunity to come up with great crazy plots.

- The written WTF: The classic "*What if*" in written form.
- The graphic WTF: "*What if*" with drawings. It works in the same way, one draws something and the next one accepts it and continues the drawing. It goes like that until the final image is completed.
- The audible WTF: "*What if*" with sounds, a very experimental form of the game.
- A moment: "*A moment*" is a game where artists are encouraged to tell a moment and the viewer can interpret it.
 - The written "*A moment*": An artist describes a moment with up to 200 words and the rest can interpret it either graphically or musically.
 - The graphic "*A moment*": An artist creates an image of a moment, and the rest interprets it in written form with up to 200 words or musically with up to 30 seconds.
 - The audible "*A moment*": An artist composes up to 30 seconds of a soundtrack and the rest can interpret it graphically or written in 200 words.

The interpretations of other artists will not be shown right away; they will only be unlocked if the user wants to see them. Albeit, it will be encouraged not to see the other interpretations before finishing one's own.

- "Challenge accepted": This will be a place full of "legen..." wait for it, "...dary" challenges! As our Community grows, we need a place where our members can be challenged and win themselves a reputation and hopefully great prizes sponsored by the industry. Challenges will not involve a lot of workload, but they will be tricky, very fun to do and entirely pre-production related.
- "Doodles": Doodles is the place for members to showcase their own pre-production artwork that may, one way or another, inspire the Community. Members can then comment, give constructive feedback and, of course, add them to their favourites' collection.
- "Muse": Interviews with great pre-production artists featuring their work.
- "Dude, this is awesome": This is the pre-production wall to post awesome related stuff found on the internet about pre-production!

- “Let’s do this”: This is the place to gather people in order to start a project. It is a forum based platform where members can put into light their first idea, exposé or treatment, discuss it and gather like-minded artists, who want to contribute in bringing the story to life. Communication is essential at this point, so members are enforced to inform themselves well, before joining a project, in order to not be disappointed later on. Each new topic created in this forum will have the options to be *liked*¹⁶ and to be *contributed* to. That way, we can see right away how well received an idea is and how many people are willing to contribute to it. The Contribute option opens up as a pop-up, where the member can decide, as what he would like to contribute. These options change according to the member’s position at Madding Crowd Studio.

Once enough pre-production volunteers have been found, a request is sent to start up a private Lounge for the Team. Because of the nature of pre-production teams, once the volunteers are set, no more new volunteers can enter the private Lounge unless needed. That way, the size of the Pre-Production Team can be limited and a better workflow can be guaranteed.

Everything sounds good, but there is still one missing part to guarantee full artistic exchange, what about going “mad”? It may be very awkward to contribute on crazy new things sometimes, especially since they will be open to the whole Community. In order to guarantee this freedom of “madness”, we will be adding the option to stay anonymous when contributing. The member can reveal himself/herself if desired on anonymous posts already written. The only place where it won’t be possible to stay anonymous will be in the “*Let’s do this!*” forum and “*Doodles*”, in order to guarantee the least spamming possible.

4.7.2 Production Lounge

The Production Lounge is Madding Crowd’s “muscle” and it is the place where things become tangible. After finishing the Pre-Production of a project in a private Lounge, the film gets pitched to Production. This is the most crucial state, because here the destiny of the project within the Community is being decided. The Pitch can be created in many ways, showing an animatic, concept art, test animations, interviews with the current staff, Russian top models, anything goes! The important thing is to sell the project to the Community and

¹⁶ The term *like* is being used by many social communities like *Facebook* or *Vimeo*. It works as a voting system to see which content is popular and appealing to the reader. It is also used to classify them to the relevant posts’ section of the community. The more likes/hour the post has, the more relevant it is.

to recruit volunteers. If it appeals to the Community, volunteers will start to appear, the Private Lounge expands and Production can get started!

Before going too much into detail about Production in the Private Lounge we will explore a little bit the features the Production Lounge has to offer. Many are directly inherited from the Pre-Production Lounge but adapted to Production.

- “DEV”: A forum based place to further develop Madding Crowd and ask for help in any production related task. Development has to be backed with a versioning system to allow collaboration within the Community and the world. Since everything developed for Madding Crowd is open source, all the work done here will be available for non-members to be seen, used and improved.
- “Challenge accepted”: Works in the same way as pre-production *Challenge accepted*, but entirely production related. So expect a lot of awesome challenges for the more technical people, hopefully prizes and a lot of fun. And, of course, an epic reputation lifting up a member’s profile and resume.
- “Muse”: Interviews with great production artists featuring their work.
- “Doodles”: The place for members to showcase their own production artwork, inspiring other artists and showing perhaps new techniques to the Community. Members can also comment and give constructive feedback and, of course, add them to their favourites’ collection.
- “Dude, this is awesome”: This is the Production Wall to post awesome related stuff members find on the internet!
- “Let’s do this”: Is the place where pre-production finished projects get pitched, in order to recruit production volunteers. It is also forum based to allow communication between and with interested people. Options to *like* the project and to *contribute* will be naturally available, as well. The pitch will be active for up to 30 days in order to gather all volunteers possible. Once the time deadline has passed and the minimum required number of volunteers has been reached, the new recruits enter the project’s Private Lounge in order to begin Production. The deadline for a successful pitch goes according to time and not according to a minimum amount of volunteers needed in order to split the workload in a balanced way. If the deadline would end according to a minimum amount of volunteers required, the amount of work being split at the beginning among the initial volunteers would be much larger. Because of its nature, volunteers can join anytime to the private Lounge during production. New tasks will

pretty much always be available and, if not, a bigger workload from a volunteer can be split, if the member in charge allows it.

Production is very broad, usually slow and can take a large amount of time and work, so it is difficult to make the Production Lounge a playground. Therefore, it is completely focused on the projects available and on the challenges it will offer.

4.7.3 Post-Production Lounge

The Post-Production Lounge is all about fine tuning of projects. After a project has been green lighted at Production, the project may be pitched to the Post-Production Lounge. Volunteers will be invited right away, inside the Private Lounge, to join Production.

Post-production teams tend to be the smallest ones, so no minimum number of volunteers will be required. The project has already been green lighted and will be pushed further, until finalizing it. Nevertheless, it will contain the standard features of any Studio Lounge within Madding Crowd.

- “DEV”: Will be shared between Production and Post-Production Lounges. Entering DEV from the Post-Production Lounge will be the same as from the Production Lounge.
- “The bad touch”: This is a game where artists will be encouraged to create humorous interpretations of existing things. As the name implies, it is a place where everything should be taken lightly and with an open mind. After all, the artists are just trying to give members a good laugh. Being it photo manipulations, sound or even video manipulations, we are sure our post-production artists will be excited to play around and have some fun.
- “Challenge accepted”: Works in the same way as in the other Lounges but will be post-production related, with challenges for the more technical and graphic fine tuners. Hopefully with prizes and a lot of fun, with the possibility of obtaining an epic reputation within and outside of the Community.
- “Muse”: Interviews with great post-production artists featuring their work.
- “Audiodies”: This is the place to showcase post-production artwork, inspiring other artists and showing new techniques to the Community. Members can, as expected, comment and give constructive feedback and, of course, add them to their favourites’ collection.

- “Dude, this is awesome”: This is the Post-Production Wall to post awesome related stuff members find on the internet regarding post-production!
- “Let’s do this”: Is the place where current productions get pitched in order to recruit post-production artists. It works in the exact same way as in the Production Lounge, it is forum based and with *like* and *contribute* options, but it won’t have any deadlines. Contributors enter the Private Lounge automatically and the volunteering positions remain open until the project finalizes.

After having presented all Studio Lounges and how they all work together, we have to go further into depth. Where does the whole production really take place? We have talked all this time about the Private Lounge, but what on earth is this Private Lounge?

4.7.4 Private Lounges

At this point I would really like to thank an amazing visionary person and friend, *Marcus LeVere*¹⁷, for mentoring me and granting me beta access to what he has developed on virtual production related platforms so far. His ideas about the future of this industry really caught me and inspired me to develop Madding Crowd. It surely wouldn’t have been the same without him, and I am really looking forward to collaborate with him in the future to bring our “mad” ideas into life.

Private Lounges are dedicated private platforms, which are basically the digital studios for our projects. Everything within a project takes place here! Once a project has been green lighted in Pre-Production, the founder, director and producer are invited to open a Private Lounge.

In the Private Lounge they find a studio ready for production, but completely empty at the beginning, though it carries a template full of features to be discovered.

- **Home Page:**

An editable Home Page is provided for the project, where they will be able to arrange all the general information about the project. There will also be an introduction video on how to set up the Private Lounge and properly adapt it to the project’s needs. The video can be removed, once the page is edited, but all introduction videos will nevertheless still be available for the members inside the project’s *Pwiki*.

¹⁷ *Marcus LeVere* is the creator of the professional community *vfxConnection*, currently hosting over 8000 members. (www.vfxconnection.com) He is also a Lead Matte-Painting artist at *Lucasfilm LTD.* in Singapore (2012).

- **Pwall:**

This is the project's internal wall, used to communicate any desired information within it, from news to cool features being added, in short, anything members want to communicate to all other volunteers. It is a great form to reach everybody currently working on the project, but since not everyone will be checking the Project Wall every day, emails should always be used for important things.

- **Tasks:**

This is where all Project Tasks can be found. Tasks are created by members with administrative rights and can be chosen freely by volunteers with the required positions. The director will be in charge of, together with the supervisors, defining what type of task it is, splitting tasks and deciding which positions are required. They will be later sorted out according to priorities. This has to be done, because some tasks down the pipeline require others to be done first, so these tasks will only be enabled if the required previous ones have been concluded.

All tasks will have at least one month of time to be concluded and there will always be a generous deadline policy. Volunteers can continue with other tasks as soon as the task they are working on is approved by the director and supervisor.

Chosen tasks will always appear at the top and the necessary files will be available for download any time. The designated member can commit the files again and upload new versions, as well. Every commit will be versioned and listed within the task. After committing, each member is free to send his/her task to dailies for revision through the *sweatbox* or keep on working on it. The *sweatbox* is our in-browser application used for reviewing. More on this and the way data will be handled there is explained in the *Pipeline and Technology* section of this paper

It is extremely important for the tasks to be classified properly, so that the files are saved in the right place on the server, allowing the pipeline to run smoothly. On tasks with multiple files and folders it will only be required to upload the task folder, and if committed it will automatically version the new changes, only on the files needed.

- **Lists:**

Project Lists are created automatically according to the positions, which the members are volunteering for. Nevertheless, lists can still be created by members with an administrative

right. These lists then become the Smart Project Groups inside the Community we talked about in the *Groups* section.

It will also be possible for project members to write emails directly to these lists, if required.

- **Members:**

This section lists all the members working on the project with their respective volunteering positions. It also shows which members are currently working on tasks and which ones are idle. This list is automatically generated, updated and cannot be changed.

- **Pwiki:**

Pwiki is, as the name denotes, a project wiki which can be edited by anyone inside the project. A start up configuration will already be available, featuring information about all task types, current technologies, apps, Studio and Private Lounge information. Yet it is up to the members to fill in the rest with project specific information and keep that information up to date, if necessary.

4.7.5 Pipeline and Technology

The Private Lounges require a lot of very specific technology for them to work properly. Apart from existing technology handling the database with all tasks, members, lists and deadlines, real applications have to be developed. The challenge here is to deliver these applications to members without them having to do any extra work, like searching for them, installing them and keeping them up to date. They also have to be able to run on all platforms and be really easy to use, since many of our members won't be coming from a technical background.

In real production studios, special programs are usually developed and the IT department is responsible for everything to be up, running and updated. This is very easy to accomplish at a normal studio, since everyone is working under the same roof. Here we encounter a much greater challenge. Since all the members are spread around the world, no IT department can personally come to their rescue. More technical members can offer remote support to others at Madding Crowd, but since our Virtual Studio depends completely on volunteering members, they won't always be available.

The job of a support team is also very monotonous and this work could be reduced significantly if the development of our applications is done right. This is very hard to do though, since each member is working at its personal workstation with very different hardware and software configurations. How can we develop the right applications, retrieve

the hassle for support teams and accomplish that each member keeps everything up, running and updated according to the production needs?

Nowadays, there is a simple answer to that... through the internet! Since *HTML5 (HyperText Markup Language)* came into play, the web has evolved and browsers are now able to do much more than just surf the web. They can become real front-end applications.

HTML5 has revolutionized the web and the users' experience on it. Apart from being very secure, it enables fast and easy development of highly interactive applications through a huge range of pre-built libraries, which are growing every day. *HTML5* has made the browser a full featured engine¹⁸ and it is the main reason for the browsers' war going on for the last five years. The language and its features are evolving at a very fast pace and the browsers have to keep up with these changes. There are even features that we will be using for Madding Crowd which merely appeared in 2011!

The cool thing about running all applications inside a browser with *HTML5* is, that users will not have to download or keep applications updated. The browser will always run the latest available version of the application found on the server natively, without the need of extra plugins. This turns all the applications cross-platform, between devices and operating systems. It also eradicates all compatibility issues that may arise and it keeps our pipeline simple, versatile and solid.

Under this technological standard we would like to develop the following applications:

Sweatbox

Sweatbox is the application which will enable interactive screening of images or sequences of images (videos). It is named in homage to the *Disney* screening room in the old days. We will use this application in order to allow cross-platform screening of server files. The main idea though, for this application, came to light while thinking about dailies. How could we make it possible to have dailies with the supervisors and directors remotely at completely different time zones? This is quite straight forward to implement at a normal studio, even if it is split at different locations. A schedule is set up, and people on both ends meet for dailies through a real-time conferencing system, where both sides give feedback, take notes and communicate seamlessly.

¹⁸ For a good introduction to all that *HTML5* features I would recommend to check out the following webpage: <http://www.html5rocks.com/en/why> (08/2012)

This seems reasonable at a small scale, but if artists are split up all around the world, time differences become a major problem! We cannot take for granted that the members will be online at the same time to allow instant exchange and even less for the director to be awake all the time every day in order to give feedback to the worldwide volunteers. To solve this, a completely new system for dailies has to be created.

The new system for dailies is based on remote review sessions inside the *Sweatbox*. Once the reviewing session begins, the application will record the audio and the necessary visual data from the reviewer's interaction within the application. This is possible through the *getUserMedia()* API¹⁹ and the `<canvas>` elements of *HTML5*. Through *getUserMedia()* we can access the microphone directly from the browser, recording the session. With the `<canvas>` element we can show images and even draw over them, saving them on a separate layer. If a sequence of images is given, metadata of the interaction with them, like scrubbing through or pausing the video, will be recorded as well. All these recordings are stored on the server and linked to the submitted files for future reference with additionally written notes. This method is optimal since it wouldn't require both parties to be present at the same time and reviews are automatically stored in a very efficient way to be seen anytime.

Why not screen capture the whole session? At a normal studio, this would be the easiest and simplest thing to do. This would nevertheless saturate our servers, because of the all the necessary storage it would require.

Sweatbox is an in-browser application that features the following:

- Native server access to all relevant submitted files
- Playback of still and image sequences in real-time with embedded audio
- Standard playback controls with FPS (frames per second) settings
- Over the image drawing and recording
- Notes at specific marked times
- Layer support for different render passes and versions
- Multiple reviewers within one session
- Embedding of additional notes

¹⁹ *getUserMedia()* is an API that is part of the *WebRTC* (Real Time Communications) open project which is being developed with *Javascript* and *HTML5* and is supported by Google, Mozilla and Opera. <http://www.html5rocks.com/en/tutorials/getusermedia/intro/> (08/2012)

FTPai

FTPai is an FTP (File Transfer Protocol) client application specifically configured for the Madding Crowd server. This application will adapt itself according to the positions of members on their projects granting them different privileges. It can be as simple as an upload-download UI (User Interface) or become a fully featured file explorer. Files uploaded will always overwrite the existing ones on the server and only committed files will be versioned. In order for files to be sent to dailies, they will have to be committed first.

While there are many free FTP clients existing out there, we would like to reduce the amount of work and complications to our members. Having an internal FTP application fully integrated to our server would eliminate the need to configure any client and it would be fully integrated to the tasks in the Private Lounges. This means that it will automatically download the right necessary files for the tasks on the members' local machines and also upload and commit them to the right places back into the server.

These options could be programmed directly inside the DCC Software eliminating the manual step of selecting files, but having an external application that takes care of this kind of data makes our pipeline software independent. Nevertheless, we would still like to grant access to our servers directly from every DCC Package in the future. But this can only become possible once our development team has grown to the point of affording all the workload it would implicate. FTPai is the perfect solution for what we can afford at the moment.

External Software

As stated in Terms of Agreement, Madding Crowd will not be able to supply DCC Software licences to its members. This means that each member is responsible for the software he/she is able to legally use at home, making this the biggest technological barrier to overcome. Pipelines vary a lot depending on the Software Packages used at the studios, so having a Studio that literally takes for granted that users will be using any kind of DCC Software available, makes it a big challenge!

Many projects may have Software preferences for members to work with, but we cannot allow members to be excluded from a project because they don't own the preferred software. That would go against the open studio principle!

It is very difficult to transfer files created on one DCC package to another one, without losing any software specific implementations. Each package handles digital content

differently and has different features, which make them stand out at diverse fields. The creation of an intermediate file format, which allows lossless transfer of data, is therefore almost impossible. Some Software Packages, like *Autodesk*, have proprietary file formats for intermediate data storage between the Programs they develop, though by making them proprietary and restricted to *Autodesk's* Software, it immediately loses all the appeal to Madding Crowd.

There has been an open project called *Collada* (Collaborative Design Activity) initiated by *Sony*, which tried to pursue this goal. It is based on the intermediate open file format *.dae* (digital asset exchange). While the file format saves data in a lossless way, it still has conflicts when importing it to other DCC Packages due to Software specific technology the file might require. A file exporter and importer would also have to be created for each different program. Although tedious to maintain, this technology has proven to be useful, especially in the Games Industry, since it needs real time implementation and interaction, requiring files to remain editable.

This technology would be really hard for Madding Crowd to maintain, simply because of the amount of software we would like our members to be able to use. If we planned on supporting *Collada* on every DCC Package and keep it backwards and forwards compatible with all Software versions, this would involve a development workload being completely insane.

This would be unrealistic to even consider, so the key for us is not to focus on the recipe, but on the final results. This is something we can afford since the resulting final frames are all that count in the Animation and VFX Industry. Everyone can work with one's desired software, as long as the final image is satisfactory for the director. This makes it very convenient for us, but it still involves a lot of challenges. There are many DCC Packages and members may want to switch between them for specific tasks. How can we still partially allow this? The solution is through geometry caching.

Geometry caching, in few words, is taking geometry samples over time of whatever there is in the scene. They then can be exported and imported to any DCC Package without any problems. After all, it is only geometry over time. Many studios already rely on geometry caching for their pipeline, but it requires a real big amount of disk space and therefore a huge bandwidth for us, making it unthinkable.

Once again, new technology is released at the perfect time for us, much like *HTML5* made it possible to implement a lot of pipeline tools directly into the Browser, *Alembic* has come to the rescue in terms of geometry caching.

Alembic is an open framework that offers a geometry caching solution. Initially developed by *Sony Pictures' Imageworks* and *Lucasfilm's ILM*, they state the following about it:

*"At the highest, most simplistic level, Alembic is "merely" a hierarchical sampled data storage format. It is intended to be used to store a baked representation of scene data, in the same vein as GTO or OBJ. It was designed to facilitate handoff of data between disciplines, vendors, and applications."*²⁰

Of course there have been other open geometry caching solutions in the past, which offer similar functionalities, but where *Alembic* really stands out is in its performance. When taken into comparison with the popular open format *OBJ* at a 217 frame long production scene at *Imageworks* the following results were gathered.²¹

Caching of the entire scene:

OBJ → 87GB

Alembic → 173MB

Write time:

OBJ → 95min

Alembic → 3,5min

Read time:

OBJ → 65s

Alembic → 0,2s

It can also be implemented directly for streaming capabilities at 10 frames per second without any optimizations at the DCC Packages that have started supporting it. By being completely open, it allows further development by everyone interested and, thanks to that, pretty much all Software companies are incorporating it. It is becoming the standard for geometry caching and interchanging of scene data.

²⁰ This quote can be found at the *What is alembic* section at: <http://code.google.com/p/alembic> (8/2012)

²¹ Data gathered from the *Alembic* Press conference at Siggraph 2011. It can be found on the internet under: http://youtu.be/I_MeR8jsFk (8/2012)

Madding Crowd, by being an open studio, will hearten the further development of open source technology the most. While every DCC Package will be allowed in the pipeline, the use of open software like *Blender* or *Gimp* will highly be encouraged within the Community.

There are many open source technological initiatives²² and as an open studio we wish to support this. Although we cannot implement each one of them into our pipeline, our mission will be to back and further develop open source technologies like *Alembic*.

We will actively contribute to an open world, releasing all development done within Madding Crowd. All the pipeline tools for the different DCC Packages, the Sweatbox and FTPal will be just the beginning of an open revolution.

Partnerships

Partnerships are essential for the growth of our company, especially since we are just starting and cannot offer internal solutions on the short run for some of the features we would like our members to use. There are many existing companies offering these features and some of them even share many of our principles and would be therefore preferred.

GitHub: Currently being the largest code host in the world²³, but this is not the only thing that makes *GitHub* such a strong partner. Apart from having the biggest community of code developers, it also offers unlimited public code repositories where an unlimited amount of members can collaborate. This means that everything Madding Crowd develops can immediately be hosted with all the services their established platform has to offer.



Vimeo: While it is not the biggest video community around, we share more things in common than the competition. *Vimeo* is made by filmmakers for filmmakers²⁴ and that is shown by the quality of their platform, which completely supports Creative Commons, adds user attributions, allowing to link to all artist's profiles, and with significantly less clutter and advertisements. Arranging a partnership with *Vimeo* seems like the natural choice, plus it would reduce the amount of bandwidth used for streaming Madding Crowd projects, and productions would profit from a respectable video community with a solid platform. Nevertheless, we are aware that *Youtube* has become the



²² Actual open source technological initiatives can be found under: <http://opensourcevfx.org/> (8/2012)


²³ Information about *GitHub* can be found under: <https://github.com/about> (08/2012)

²⁴ Information about *Vimeo* can be found under: <https://vimeo.com/about> (08/2012)

standard for many people to search for videos, we will therefore still publish Madding Crowd production trailers with links, directing them to the full length movies at *Vimeo*.

vSwarm: This is a newcomer to the business, but by offering cloud rendering services for free, through member sharing computational resources, and being completely open source definitely appeals to us²⁵. Although they currently only support *Blender* and *Luxrender*, we would love to create a partnership and help them further develop and apply compatibility with other DCC Packages and Madding Crowd.



Team Viewer: This is a very robust remote support software and conferencing program, which is completely free for private use.²⁶  Therefore, we really like their business model and hope to get into an agreement for our Community to be able to use it. It would be a great partner and of great help for our IT Volunteers to be able to give personal remote support within our Community.



These are four existing companies with potential services, with whom we are currently considering to partner up. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Madding Crowd is closed to other partnerships that may arise. We are an open organization and are always on the lookout for professional partners, sharing our view of the future and wanting to support us. We cannot offer much, since we are a non-profit organization, but we will give our best possible to promote their services among our members and they will always be mentioned as sponsors at any Madding Crowd production that benefited from them.

As long as this paper could be, Madding Crowd is just walking on its baby steps. But this is great! We are an open initiative, and as an open initiative we look forward to collaborations. We know that the ideas stated here alone will not make Madding Crowd work at its full potential so we look forward to whoever wants to contribute with it.

²⁵ Information about *vSwarm* can be found under: <http://www.vswarm.com/how-it-works/why-you-should-join.html> (08/2012)

²⁶ Information about *Team Viewer* can be found under: <http://www.teamviewer.com/en/company/company.aspx> (08/2012)

5 Future Projection

As the reader may have noticed, Madding Crowd would have been unthinkable a few years ago. The people, technology and the industry were simply not ready for it. In fact, I doubt some of them are now. But the world is changing fast and it is inevitably heading towards this direction. Open initiatives are starting to rise and everyone is starting to see all the benefits open collaboration and networked intelligence is gradually bringing to the world.

*Wikipedia*²⁷ was probably the first big game changer perceivable for everyone, by opening a wiki platform to gather the world's knowledge in a free online encyclopaedia. From its start in 2001, it has become, by far, the biggest source of information worldwide with over 470 million unique visitors monthly. There are more than 77,000 active contributors working on over 22,000,000 articles in 285 languages.²⁸ This did not only revolutionize the way knowledge was handled, it destroyed the competition.

Now please, don't get scared, let me clearly state that we are not trying to put any Animation or VFX company out of the game. While it is true that we are trying to enter the industry in a very innovative way, supporting open development of any thinkable project, success in this industry is gained by end results. We are therefore pushing focus on content, while making technology available for everyone.

But in a way, it is a lot like *Wikipedia*. We are a platform opening up knowledge for free, giving our users the opportunity to take part in it. The whole world can benefit from this, but, in the end, all that matters is what this knowledge is used for: The final result!

The film!

"Story is King" is a common say within our industry, and this will really be the one and only success recipe in the industry once Madding Crowd reaches its full potential. We want to get rid of the closeness within our industry, put an end to proprietary software and closed development. How many companies have focused all these years on developing the exact same technology that others have developed at the same time? How much further could we be now if each production house would have focused on collaboration, instead of internal closed development? For the good of the industry, big companies like *Lucasfilm*, *Pixar*, *DreamWorks* and *Sony Imageworks* are slowly realising this, starting to collaborate and to share some of its technology.

²⁷ *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia: <http://www.wikipedia.org/> (08/2012)

²⁸ All data can be found under: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About> (08/2012)

"We have benefitted from using Open Source, and we are pleased to contribute back into the Open Source community in sharing OpenVDB..."²⁹

This was said by Dr. Lincoln Wallen, Head of Animation Technology at DreamWorks Animation a few days before *Siggraph* 2012 where *Pixar* also released *openSubdiv*. These two new open source technological releases from two of the main studios in the industry add up to the technology that has been released to the public domain in the last few years. It is a phenomenon that is particularly happening in this industry, what makes it really exciting.

We really want to enforce and pioneer this revolution, not only by granting the world our open technology and by further developing existing ones, but by enabling a fully featured open production studio to whoever wants to bring a story to life. We want to grant everyone with a great film idea the chance to make it happen.

5.1 Reaching for the stars

Madding Crowd will start as a group of passionate friends that wants to create cool short films. That group of friends already exists, we are not many but we are slowly gathering and recruiting more passionate artists by word of mouth from all around the world in order to bring this colossal project to life.

The domain name *www.maddingcrowd.cc* has already been bought and the first development tests are already running, as well. We just need more active passionate members, good partnerships and the right investors. It is definitely not cheap to develop Madding Crowd from the beginning. But I am convinced that we will be able to find a big number of passionate people by the end of the year, willing to overcome the challenge. Initial members will be rewarded with *"studio"* positions inside Madding Crowd, having all privileges and the pleasure of seeing our open little baby grow up and slowly mature.

As Madding Crowd grows, it will not only be able to produce short films. Bigger scale projects should start to become tangible. Our goal in the long run is to be able to produce feature length movies, which we all can watch worldwide on cinemas.

²⁹ Quote by Dr. Lincoln Wallen, Head of Animation Technology at *DreamWorks Animation*. <http://ir.dreamworksanimation.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=698100> (08/2012)

We would then have to evolve in ways we are still uncertain of, but we already are very curious to know. Our principles as an open studio will always be there and we will keep on working on any cool projects, appealing to the community, for the fun of it. Nevertheless, volunteering members at bigger projects could be heavily rewarded monetary wise. Since we are a non-profit organization, all the money will go mainly to the artists involved in the making and no owners or shareholders would profit from their efforts.

To guarantee the greatest experience for our audience and the biggest revenue for our members, feature length productions will not be released immediately after production. There will be a certain period of time in which the film will only be available on cinemas. After that “time of grace”, the entire film will be posted online for everyone to see under the same strategy used for our smaller productions.

Outside clients will start contracting Madding Crowd in order to bring their commercial projects to life. Although we might not be cheaper than other Studios, we would have a huge talent base that will be able to work globally around the clock under a known pipeline. In the best scenario, this would mean that we could produce films much faster than normal studios could. These cases would be special, since the rights to the final film won't reside at Madding Crowd. We won't be able to free this type of project to the commons, unless the investor agrees to it.

Once Madding Crowd has grown enough and made its own name, exciting times will start for our Community. We would stop considering the platform to be just a place to have fun, but also as a potential workplace with all the benefits the virtual studio has. We just have to make sure to never forget our roots and keep pushing the industry forward.

5.2 Studios around the world

A big dream I personally have is to be able to build physical studios around the world for Madding Crowd members. But not just any studios, they will be strategically placed so that members can experiment something completely different and feel like on vacation. A studio could be placed at the Caribbean, another one in the middle of the Himalayas, why not one perhaps in the Amazon forest, the African savannah or at the heart of New York City? Members who have volunteered at many projects would be able to apply for a limited stay at one of our physical studios as a reward for their good will.

But that is not the only reason why our studios would not be like any other regular studios. Members at physical studios would only be required to work for 20 hours a week at any time they want. They can arrange their own schedule and have the rest of the time to enjoy a beautiful vacation with their families at very exciting places. Simple housing would be provided and, depending on the location, different facilities in order to make the stay really fun! We would like our active members to at last interact personally, not only at work but on great adventures on their free time. Madding Crowd is convinced that such a regime would rather have an inspiring and motivational effect on its members.

5.3 Opening the World

I would like to finish this paper with a great reflection that Don Tapscott made in his talk at TED called *"Four Principles for the Open World"*³⁰

"It is an age of vast promise.

An age of collaboration where the boundaries of our organizations are changing.

Of Transparency where sunlight is disinfecting civilization.

An age of sharing, and understanding the new power of the commons.

and it's an age of empowerment and of freedom."

These are exactly the four principles Madding Crowd is aiming for.

- Collaboration: enabling people from everywhere around the globe to volunteer in our studio and our projects.
- Transparency: guaranteeing that the incomes reach the people really involved in the projects through our non-profit policy.
- Sharing: releasing everything done within our organisation as a free cultural contribution to the commons.
- Empowerment and Freedom: allowing every member to propose their own productions and be in a position to actively contribute or not without any bindings to the organisation.

This is not a phenomenon that is happening only within our industry. The whole world is heading in this direction! We just want to push it and have an active role within this new Open World, doing what we love to do the most.

³⁰ Don Tapscott's TED speech can be found under:
http://www.ted.com/talks/don_tapscott_four_principles_for_the_open_world_1.html (08/2012)