MSX: Sparking careers since the 80s (and still...)

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The Faculty of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunications was created twenty-five years ago, shortly after the UOC was founded. Over this quarter of a century, we have witnessed three transformations: three different, complementary and surprising changes.

The first transformation was that of gadgets, of physical devices, of technology. We have all experienced this accelerated change. And, if I may, I'll illustrate it with a brief personal anecdote.

I first came into contact with computing when I had to prepare for the assessment process to be named a full professor. To prepare properly, I wanted to replace the old Olivetti I'd bought in London with what I, mistakenly, thought was a smart typewriter. Following the advice of my colleagues, I bought a clone that, according to the salesperson, was the most powerful model on the market: a Pentium 3 with a huge CPU, a great big screen with green letters, and a nine-pin dot matrix printer.

The 40 megs of that machine pale in comparison to the power of any second-rate smartphone today. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not nostalgic for the gramophone and vinyl records, I just regret that my work from that time is on five-and-a-quarter inch floppy disks, which are practically unreadable today. The effects of technological obsolescence...

The second change has been the centrality of computing, relating to both new advances – a constant, almost daily trickle – and the skills we now need. **Computational thinking has become a core competence for the generations to come**. Coding is a 21st-century skill. Children are starting to learn how to program in school.

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And the third change is linked to knowledge. Nowadays, not only does knowledge come from many different sources – from hospitals or companies, from administrations or the professional sector – but it also grows and multiplies through collaboration, exchange and even play.
This was true for those “digital pioneers” who were more ambitious than I was with my Pentium 3 and who saw having a personal computer at home as a chance to learn how to program for themselves.

Many of today’s experts saw the spark for their future careers in one of those 8-bit computers: an MSX, a Spectrum, an Amstrad or a Commodore. **That fascination of yesteryear set the foundation for the world of tomorrow**.

As part of this celebration of the first 25 years of the Faculty of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunications, we are joined by the creator of MSX: Dr Kazuhiko Nishi.

Dr Nishi's impact is clear to see in the case of the members of the MSX friends’ association, whom I would like to thank for their help and support. But he has also had a very significant impact on the rest of society. Without his work, and the work of other leading figures, it's hard to see how there would have been the same evolution in digital technologies that we have seen in recent years.

Without them, our world would not have undergone these three transformations that I mentioned at the start: rapid refinement of electronic gadgets, the centrality of computing, and the explosion of knowledge. **These three pillars of innovation must act as the foundations for building tomorrow's world**. So, we must continue to work, as the theme for today's event says, on sparking careers. I can think of no better way to celebrate this first quarter of a century.

Thank you very much!