Conference Report

International Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques in Australasia and Southeast Asia (Graphite 2004) Singapore, June 15-18, 2004

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Graphite 2004 was co-located with VRCAI 2004. As an attendee of Graphite, I was able to also attend VRCAI paper presentations. Ca. 120 people registered for each conference. The conference was 4 days long with workshops on the first day. I did not attend the workshops because of their cost. The venue was located on the National University of Singapore campus.

Organisation

The conference was well organized. A notable exception was the presentation schedule which for example allowed for "tea-breaks" that were too short to walk to the place where tea and nibbles were handed out. The organisers also did not announce the end of breaks, resulting in empty lecture theaters after breaks.

The presentations were separated into three, sometimes four streams. This made me miss some interesting presentations. Many attendees, including myself, hopped between streams.

A number of presentations had to be cancelled because the speakers did not turn up. Inconveniently, this was never announced in advance.

I stayed at the students' hostel on campus together with other students from COSC.

Keynote Presentations

Professor James D. Foley from the Georgia Institute of Technology talked about when an image is *good enough*. He stressed the point that photo-realistic imagery is not always what we want, and that more abstract images can be more efficient. While his message seems to be trivial, it was inspiring to see how he wants to integrate HCI techniques such as user studies into the often rather playful and self-centered field of computer graphics.

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Jos L. Encarnao from the Fraunhofer Institut fuer Graphische Datenverarbeitung talked about "The Vision of Ambient Intelligence and How to Make It Happen". He talked about how to make everyday objects such as toasters "intelligent" and connected. His presentation and his content did not motivate me enough to stay. Later on at lunch, he and I had a discussion on industry funded students. Being a student funded by an industry-focussed scholarship, this was a relevant topic for me, and I could not agree with his neo-liberal position.

Jacquelyn Morie from the University of Southern California talked about "Augmented Cognition and Augmented Art", showing several VR art installations and discussing the "Augmented Cognition"

concept introduced by DARPA. Her presentation was certainly inspiring and entertaining. But while she explained the concept of Augmented Cognition well, I could not quite see the relationship between it and augmented art.

Presentations

I was only interested in a few papers. Some of them were presented in parallel, reducing the number of relevant papers even more. Here are some of the most memorable ones:

A virtual environment to re-create the auditory and visual hallucinations of psychosis: This paper showed how VR environments can produce very emotional responses, even at relatively low level of detail.

Object, Function, Action for Tangible Interface Design: This paper did not have much original content, but it showed how budget tangible interfaces can be built, and that there might be a barrier for some people when interacting with tangible interfaces. For example, not all participants immediately liked to interact with a water surface or a model tree.

Approaches to Interactive Art Systems: This paper was on only one approach to interactive art systems and mainly demonstrated the power of the scripting language the authors have developed for their art installations.

A Sense of Touch in Online Sculpting: This paper was interesting because I had already implemented a very similar system: The user can deform a virtual ball by pushing a real tool into it. Their tracking and haptic feedback technology was more advanced (and a couple of ten grands more expensive) than mine. However, the application was still unusable.

My Presentation

My presentation was on the last day of the conference. I had attended presentations with an audience of only five at this conference and was very pleased to have an audience of about 30 while competing with three other streams.

I believe my presentation went well for my first time at a conference. I finished on time, and several people asked questions about my system design and future work which were easy to answer. We have video taped my presentation to help me improve my presentation skills.

I felt a little off-topic, presenting a paper on interaction at a graphics conference. But on the other hand, many other papers seemed to be off-topic as well.

Meetings and Events

I spent a few days in Singapore before the conference with other COSC or HIT Lab students who also attended the conference. We visited the Mixed Reality Lab at the Nanyang Technological University, where I had an interesting discussion with its director, Adrian Cheok, giving me new inspiration for my Ph.D. project.

We also attended a SEAGRAPH and ANZGRAPH meeting during the conference, with Barb Helfer, the SIGGRAPH vice president present. SEAGRAPH is the South East Asian chapter of SIG-GRAPH, and ANZGRAPH the Australian and New Zealand chapter. The Graphite conference is jointly organised by the two chapters. The meeting discussed topics such as founding procedures

for SEAGRAPH, the total lack of active NZ people in ANZGRAPH and the places for the following GRAPHITE conferences.

We attended the conference dinner where we mingled with researchers from all over the world.

Conclusion

The conference was well organised in advance but lacked organisation during the actual conference days. The content of some presentations seemed trivial, and there were many I was not interested in.

On the other hand, several interesting and relevant papers were presented as well, I met interesting researchers and discussed their and my research. My presentation was well received, and I am looking forward to the next Graphite conference, which will be held in Dunedin.