SigSoft Reorganization

by Miguel Custer

No stories this month folks, just a lot of news and announcements. With the turn of the new semester, SigSoft chair Mike Lee has put his foot down and declared some deadlines, bringing new life to the faltering projects. Some serious reorganization has occurred and all three primary projects are back into production full force.

Chaos Campus, a multi-server, multi-graphical MUD of sorts has a different flavor— the playing field is our very own campus. Some of the server architecture code has already been completed by the new project leader, Steven Hack. There's also *VIDEX*, a new set of developer tools for UNIX and X Windows. Mike Lee has deferred leadership of this project to Mark Ashton. Most of the concept planning is completed and programming is expected to begin soon. Finally, there's *NetPong*, a training exercise for our younger members. It's a networked four player version of the infamous *Pong*. Again, the plan and concepts have been fleshed out and programming will begin soon. This is led by Kiran Srikantham.

Once again, it's a new Sigsoft, with real goals and real deadlines, and meetings still at 6 PM on Wednesdays at 1102 DCL. Each of the individual projects also have their own meeting times.

It's the most fun you can have with "a pre-emptive multitasking, symmetric multiprocessing, protected memory, multithreaded, high performance, object oriented operating system designed for the media-rich, real-time applications of the next decade."

SigVR

by Wyatt Haase

Are you interested in virtual reality, 3D animation, 3D art or anything buzz-wordy on the Web? VR on the Internet is becoming more and more prevalent. 3D is the language of our minds that facilitates visualization, and now computers on the Web have the horsepower to support it.

VRML2.0 is VR on the Internet. Most of the VRML on the Web today is terrible, but this is changing. Soon VRML will be as common as HTML. One can animate anything from colors to a bouncing ball to a running man. Objects can even be morphed. 3D spatial sounds can accompany animations or serve as an ambient background sound. Colors can be animated as well.

Several forms of multimedia can serve as textures on shapes. MPEG1 with or without audio can be embedded onto the face of an object or suspended in the virtual air. The audio from the movie file can be spatialized in synchronization with the movie. JPEG, PNG, and GIF are the static formats supported in the same manner. As the use of VRML develops there will be more formats available.

Now here is where the possibilities really expand: VRML handles events, meaning that a VMRL world can respond to user input. Event handling presents possibilities for 3D toolbars, doors and a host of other applications that make the VR environment more interesting and useful.

Another way interactivity can be implemented is with Java scripting. Using events and Java scripting, one can create games or 3D tutorials. Why is such a complex environment realistic for the Web right now? Well, it is and it isn't. VRML files are relatively small, which makes them easy to download. The only requirements are that the 3D objects need time to render and the other elements (GIFs, WAVs, etc.) need time to download.

SigVR also recently received funding from Kinetix (the makers of 3D Studio MAX) and SGI (who will also be the speaker for the February general meeting).

If you are interested in VRML, come to a SigVR meeting, Thursdays at 6:00 PM in 1102 DCL.

Come bask in our wealth and 3Dness. Also check out `www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigvr/related.html` for links to VRML2.0 browsers, editors, and samples. Questions? Contact me at `w-haase@uiuc.edu`.