Forum: The Role of Creativity in Computer Graphics Education

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Abstract

This forum will give attendees a chance to present their own views on creativity and curriculum, as well as hear those of educators from a diverse group of colleges. Computer graphics education has grown tremendously in the last five years, particularly on the department level. Many issues have arisen related to the place of computer graphics education within a specific department's curriculum. They include the type of courses offered, challenges arising from the impact of this added educational component, and the desire to maintain traditional art education elements, such as theory and critique.

Creativity has historically been addressed in theory and critique classes. It is also now being taught along with software in computer graphics classes. Outcomes from this forum will allow educators to gain insight into their approach to nurturing creativity as it relates to computer graphics education. Other topics to be discussed include interdisciplinary approaches to curriculum, creating content for courses, and the relationship of computer graphics to traditional art education. The role of creativity in computer science classes, particularly programming, will also be discussed.

1 Background

Digital tools have become an integral part of the creative professions over the past decade. The Web is now a part of everyday life and an entire genre of computer animated feature films has evolved. Digital art received considerable public exposure in 2002 with major museum exhibitions at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Early pioneers in these fields were either artists interested in new technology or computer scientists interested in art. When the time came in the mid-1980™s to start educating students to pursue careers in these emerging fields, educators were faced with dilemmas that continue to this day. Some schools teach art first before allowing the students to touch the computer, while others take a professional training approach and focus on teaching software. Institutional issues are still critical in defining where this education takes place. Does the Art Department buy computers or does the Computer Science Department teach art? Interdisciplinary concerns make solutions to these problems even more difficult. Designers are now working with print, the Web, animation, and video, in addition to design software. Many first year college students already have basic literacy in imaging, animation, video and design software. What major should they declare? Solutions to these issues have included bringing in outside professionals to lecture and critique, a renewed emphasis on traditional art skills, and the establishment of new degree programs.

2 Discussion Topics:

- Exactly what is creativity and how do you teach it?
- How do traditional art skills relate to computer art skills?
- Should individual departments add digital courses to their curricula, or should a separate department be created?
- What are some of the revenue issues for colleges teaching computer graphics, based on current economic conditions?
- What is the future of computer graphics education?