

# ACM SIGGRAPH PIONEERS

The Siggraph Pioneers are a seasoned group of computer graphics influencers from the fields of education, research, engineering, and entertainment. The group originated in 1980 with one requirement for membership – 20 or more years of professional experience in the computer graphics or interactive techniques industries. As a Siggraph Pioneer, these people have committed to serve the worldwide computer graphics community in a variety of year-round ways.

The Pioneers got their start thanks to an early effort by Ken and BJ Anderson, and former Presidents of the group include Dave Kasik, Jon Peddie, and Frank Foster. The current Chair, since 2019, is Ed Kramer, who is helped by a number of volunteer steering committee members. The criteria to become a Pioneer remains the same as it was when the group was formed - more than 20 years of professional work experience, and a small monetary contribution to support the annual Pioneers Reception and other yearly projects. Currently that sum is \$20, which is added to the \$50 annual Siggraph membership fee to form a Pioneers Membership level.

While the criterion is simple enough on the surface, it's what lies below the surface that distinguishes this group from the thousands who attend Siggraph each year, and from among the hundreds of thousands who work in the graphics industry.

Many of these folks are truly pioneers in this industry, and through their work, have revolutionized and advanced computer graphics. They are trailblazers who are committed to enriching and advancing the craft through education and interaction with the next generation. They have influenced continued discoveries, developments, and the maturation of the industry. They are people like Kurt Akeley, Jim Blinn, Ed Catmull, Matthew Conti, Donna Cox, Susan Crouse, Paul Debevec, Donald Greenberg, Pat Hanrahan, Jeff Jortner, David Kasik, Jon Peddie...and well over 600 more!

The Pioneers Reception is always fun and informal, with plenty of food and drink, and most of all, a plethora of interesting, engaging, and challenging conversations. While many would point to the attendees themselves as the highlight of this annual gathering of old and new friends, it would be a terrible oversight not to highlight the Pioneers Featured Speakers - who have entertained and educated the group over the years at the receptions. These are people whose careers have had a profound influence on the field of computer graphics and interactive

techniques, and they present a retrospective of their careers, complete with videos of their early pioneering work. Among some of the past speakers have been CG artist David Em, Pixar co-founder Alvy Ray Smith, the Jet Propulsion Lab's Jim Blinn, CG film pioneer Jeff Kleiser, the late VFX luminary Douglas Trumbull, scientific visualization pioneer Donna Cox, ray-tracing inventor Turner Whitted, foundational textbook authors Jim Foley and Andy van Dam, futurist Ken Perlin, and frame buffer inventors Nick England and Mary Whitton. In 2025, Ed Catmull gave his presentation ***Catmull Story: To Siggraph and Beyond*** to a packed auditorium in Vancouver, which was followed by a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary screening of a remastered *TOY STORY* for conference attendees.

Being a Pioneer also offers access to a number of year-round events. There are always between-conference Zooms for the Pioneers to get together virtually, and year-round online panel discussions curated on selected topics. Panels have included: The Pioneers of Analog Animation, The Pioneering Graphics Processors, Pioneers of Computer Graphics Education, Pioneers of Computer Art and Animation, Pioneers of Computer Graphics in Aerospace (two panels), and A Pioneer's Perspective on Generative AI (also two panels). The Pioneers conduct interviews with important voices in the history of our industry, and have also interviewed many Siggraph Conference Chairs. They also compile historical computer graphics content, create an *In Memoriam* video each year, and address topics like archiving one's legacy of documents and artifacts. A full list of Pioneers video content is available at this link:

[Pioneers Online Videos](#)

Anyone interested in becoming a Siggraph Pioneer and who meets the criteria detailed above can apply [here](#).

- Originally written in 2024 by Jon Peddie, updated in 2025 by Ed Kramer