The Art and Science of Multimedia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Multimedia at a Liberal Arts College

Conclusions

Liberal arts colleges are faced with the problem of balancing an increasing demand for new courses in rapidly evolving fields, such as multimedia, with limited resources with which to develop a new program of study. By joining forces, we were able to bring a multimedia course into existence via an experimental route. But the interdisciplinary approach of ARTS215/CS215 provides more than a quick fix to a logistical problem. The unique climate of an interdisciplinary course fosters the cross-fertilization of ideas, appropriate at liberal arts colleges with and without full-fledged multimedia programs.

The results of our experimental course far exceeded our expectations for the excellence of the projects, the motivation of the students, and the impact on the students in their subsequent studies and career paths. In the process, the students learned a great deal not only about multimedia, art, and computer science, but also an important lesson about the nature and benefits of collaboration, a subject often overlooked in today's increasingly competitive society.

The collaboration of faculty proved to be a beneficial learning experience in and of itself. It is clear that artists and programmers have very different methodologies. We have both learned a great deal from working together. A welcome by-product of the endeavor was the exchange of art and computer science ideas, which has subsequently inspired our collaboration on other multimedia projects unrelated to the course.

Figure 1 "Language Diversity at Wellesley College," opening screen

Figure 2 "Language Diversity at Wellesley College," index of languages. For each of these languages, a writing sample is provided, as well as a world map indicating where the language is spoken.

Figure 3 "Language Diversity at Wellesley College," a transliterated Russian letter.

Colleen Baik and Eva Pedersen
"The Deluxe Hotel"

Lila Kanner and Alta Lee
"The Fractal Factory"

Janet Lee and Katy Ong
"Language Diversity at Wellesley College"

Rebecca Bargoot and Aditi Rao
"Souls' Midnight"

Olivia Cortina and Susan Wasseluk
"Tunnel Vision"

Figure 4 "Language Diversity at Wellesley College:" with the metaphor of a theater, the user is taught to say "I love you" in Yoruba, with assistance from a native speaker.

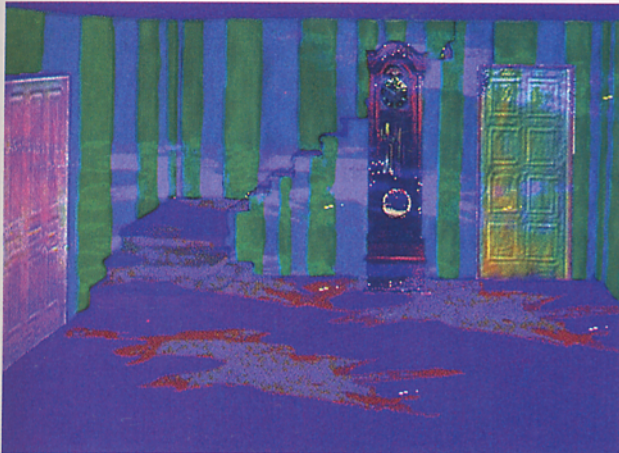Figure 5 "Souls' Midnight," entrance hall of the haunted house, with ghosts.

Figure 6 "Souls' Midnight," the Library. The brick is a movable sprite that was found in the haunted house. The mystery is solved when it is restored to its place in the library.
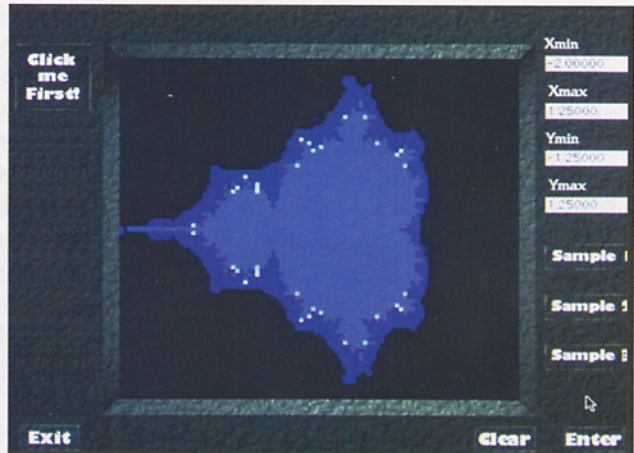

Figure 7 "The Fractal Factory:" The Fractal Machine shown here is creating a custom-made fractal.
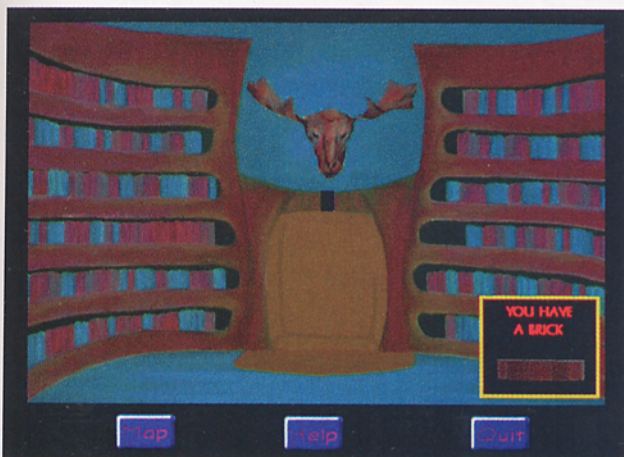

Figure 8 "The Fractal Factory," the completed fractal.

Figure 9 "The Art and Science of Multimedia," the interface of the CD-ROM from which all the projects can be accessed.