Manchester Computing
Computer Graphics Unit

Report to AGOCG on the Multimedia Support Post

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THE UNIVERSITY
of MANCHESTER

1 Introduction

This report details the status of the work of the multimedia support team over the period June to August 1996

2 MediaActive '96

SC attended this conference which was held on 30th June - 2nd July 1996. Over 170 delegates attended the three days which focused on the general theme of 'Learning Futures'. The conference was organised by the Learning Methods Unit at the Liverpool John Moores University, reflecting their belief that 'learning environments are bound to reflect the converging worlds being made possible by multimedia and the new means of electronic delivery'. Keynote presentations were given by a diverse range of people including Brian Eno, Ted Nelson, Gene Teare and Sarah Turpin, representing many view points on the way education will evolve. For many of the speakers interactivity, and the way we interact, were seen as key points.

A report on the conference is attached and can also be found on the SIMA WWW site at:
http://info.mcc.ac.uk/CGU/SIMA/articles/3dconf.html

3 W^{3}LessonWare

SC attended a UKERNA workshop on 31st July which looked at the W^{3}Lessonware software. This project was set up to produce a suite of tools to enable easier production of HTML documents, specifically for delivering educational material over the World Wide Web (WWW). The integrated suite of tools consists of a visual HTML editor, structure editor and imagemap editor.

This was the second workshop run by the W3Lessonware project. Like the first it was quickly oversubscribed, and so, in keeping with the theme of delivering education over the WWW, it was transmitted live throughout the day over the MBONE. The workshop demonstrated the beta version of the LessonWare tools, and allowed participants to get some hands on experience. At the end of the day all the participants received a copy of the beta tools. The tools can also be downloaded from the WWW site, and are freely available for use within the UK Higher Education community.
A report on the workshop has been submitted to the Graphics and Visualisation Newsletter and is attached.

4 SIMA projects presentations event

The SIMA workshop/presentations will be on October 22nd/23rd. To date the following projects have expressed an interest in attending:

Videoconferencing
Sue Pomfrett - The Dos and Don'ts of Videoconferencing in Higher Education
Chris J Schnurr - Video Conferencing in Education: Meeting Teachers and Learners Support and Training Needs
Dr S Morgan - Videoconferencing on Unix Workstations to Support HelpDesk/Advisory Activities
John Martin - Survey of User Experience of the University of Wales Video Network

WWW
Stuart Lee - A Case Study: Teaching on the WWW-Isaac Rosenberg's 'Break of Day in the Trenches'
Sarah Holyfield - Online Learning in Non-Scientific Disciplines - Two
Case Studies
Janet Wheeler - Software Tools for the World-Wide Web

VRML
Neil Ashdown - The Virtual Reality Modelling Language in Art and
Design Higher Education
Stephen Boyd Davies - The Design of Virtual Environments / Authoring and Design for the WWW

Toolbook - A Critical Evaluation of Multimedia Toolbook

The first half of the workshop is likely, therefore, to be devoted to videoconferencing, and the second mainly to WWW and VRML related issues. As requested by several speakers, the videoconferencing section will consist more of informal discussion sessions, rather than formal presentations.

5 Review of new ITTI products

The following new ITTI products have been reviewed:

Software

Toolbook Tutorial

Authorware Tutorial for the PC

Reports and Booklets

An Introduction to Multimedia for Academic Use

Understanding IT: Developing Multimedia Courseware

The report is attached, and has been appended to the ITTI products review on the WWW.

6 Multimedia Courses in the UK

As part of a document which will look at multimedia resources in the UK, a list of taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses relating to multimedia has been compiled. This covers courses whose main topic is multimedia, and does not include courses such as Information Technology or Computer Science courses which have multimedia related modules. Twenty three undergraduate and eighteen postgraduate courses are listed.

7 Introduction to MIME

An Introduction to MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions) which provides an overview of the technical details of the MIME specification and examples of how to configure common MIME compliant mail handlers to send and receive MIME messages has been produced.

8 Staff Development Officer's Briefing Paper on the WWW

A briefing paper for staff development officers providing an introduction to the WWW has been produced. This looks at what the Web actually is, how to produce HTML documents, browsers and gives a summary of good practice recommendations.
WWW

9 Hyper-G

As part of an evaluation of Hyper-G, a Hyper-G server has been set up at Manchester and a number of documents converted to the Hyper-G format. In addition the Hyper-G browser, Harmony, has been installed on the HP server to allow users to make full use of the Hyper-G facilities and report back on their findings. The project has been running over the summer as part of the Summer Students initiative, and has been supervised by Terry Hewitt.

10 World Wide Web

There is continuing support for the world wide web pages. The initial pages, a FAQ, links to file format conversion and links to other multimedia and educational sites, are being maintained and updated, and a number of new pages have been added. Among the most recent additions to the site are:

- Online Learning in Non-Scientific Disciplines - Two Case Studies by Oleg Liber, Sarah Holyfield and Bryan Maguire
- The World Wide Web and its Contribution to Foreign Language Learning by Alison Piper, Julie Watson, Vicky Wright
- A Critical Evaluation of Multimedia Toolbook by Simon Price and Li Lin Cheah
- A Comprehensive Survey of the Legal Issues Relating to the Development and use of WWW Technology at Educational Sites by Andrew Charlesworth
- Exploiting Virtual Reality Techniques in Education and Training: Technological Issues by Professor R.S. Kalawsky
- The DESIGN of Virtual Environments - with particular reference to VRML by Stephen Boyd Davis
- Digital Video for Multimedia: Considerations for Capture, Use and Delivery by Jane Williams, Alan Lock and Caroline Burnett

The web pages can be accessed via the AGOCG web server at (http://www.agocg.ac.uk:8080/agocg/) or at (http://info.mcc.ac.uk/CGU/mmsup.html)

11 Electronic Mail List

Membership of the electronic mail list *agocg-mm*, which is maintained by Sue Cunningham has remained steady over the last quarter at approximately 165, around 80% of whom are from UK academic institutions (E-mail address .ac.uk), the rest being foreign academics and

from commercial companies. Support for the list is continuing with announcements for courses, seminars, documents becoming available on the web server and general multimedia queries. More details, including a list of members can be found on the Mailbase WWW server at *http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists-a-e/agocg-mm.*

12 Future actions

Maintain agocg-mm electronic mail list (ongoing)

Maintain world wide web pages (ongoing)

Maintenance of the File Formats Search Engine and database (ongoing)

An overview of multimedia resources available to UK Higher Education will be performed to see what resources are available, and in what areas they are lacking (ongoing)

The following are suggestions for future work, and the team would appreciate comments on these or other suggestions from AGOCG.

Teaching on the WWW - a review of various products available, such as W^3Lessonware, to assist in providing computer aided learning over the Web.

A review of web servers - there are now many different web servers available each offering different features. An evaluation would compare them against each other and similar products such as Hyper-G.

Java is increasingly becoming the language of the Web, but it is unclear what training materials are available to new users, and whether additional materials need to be created.

Multimedia courses workshop - many institutions are now providing multimedia and multimedia related courses. These are being offered by a variety of departments. The proposed workshop would look at current syllabuses, industry requirements and teaching methods.

Video Conferencing - there is a still a great deal of interest in videoconferencing, but the

actual ‘take up’ does not seem to reflect this interest. An introductory workshop may be of use to many people. It will be interesting to gauge the level of interest in such an event at the SIMA presentations event in October.