

ACM SIGGRAPH User Experience Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

There has been a substantial growth in the number of educational and networking opportunities for professionals in the computer graphics and related fields in the last three years. One of the fastest areas of growth is in the field of computer user experience and the development of cultural communities through the advent of portal technologies, blogs, and wikis.

Author Keywords

Cooperating Societies, special interest groups, user experience.

ACM Classification Keywords

UX

INTRODUCTION

ACM SIGGRAPH is exploring a number of avenues to retain its excellence in the field of computer graphics and interactive techniques. As the field has expanded the growing diversity at the main conference needs to be supported. The Executive Committee (EC) and the Conference Advisory Group (CAG) working in cooperation are looking into several avenues that could be adaptable to the UX community.

COMMUNICATE

The first step is to communicate with the professional groups that support the community. We seem to think that we have the answers and solutions. We won't know if we need to form a new society without asking, and we can't re-think what it means to be a cooperating society without bringing the individuals that has the power to make those decisions together. Then because we are mostly an elected volunteer base how do we sustain that communication and cooperation over multiple terms? It can be done, but it will take champions in each participating society to achieve the goals. But open communication with all the players is the first step.

SMALL CONFERENCES

The number of small conferences that ACM SIGGRAPH sponsors on a yearly basis has grown to forty, which is a growth of almost fifty percent in the last three years. Unlike the annual SIGGRAPH conference, these small conferences deal with specific subsets of the computer graphics field. More often than not, these small conferences are sponsored by multiple SIGs within the ACM family or with sister organizations that have members with similar interests. These conferences range in the 100 to 250 participants.

As the ACM SIGGRAPH small conferences program has expanded there has also been an increased need to support those conferences with more publicity and advertising support. There is a need to provide more than just a link off of our main web page in an effort to get information out about these programs. ACM provides the approver from every SIG a list of events that are occurring within a three-month window of the event. These database lists could be applied to a central calendar that would support all the activities of the ACM SIG family.

As portal and XML technologies evolve, the ability to repurpose content in multiple ways will be important to our members. The use of dynamic Web content and taxonomy-based delivery mechanisms, similar to Amazon.com, could give our membership information concerning other learning opportunities in the categories that support their interest. All information on an event could be entered once by the organizer of the conference, and then distributed to SIG members as interest is displayed.

In a similar vein, most small conference are attended by word of mouth of the organizers, published final reports, summaries or event reports with pictures that give the professional a flavor of what the conference is like. ACM SIGGRAPH gives a small monetary sum to one attendee for writing an event report for a small conference. As the number of conference opportunities grow so do the decisions on which conference to attend, these users experience and summary reports will allow the professional to make informed decisions.

HUB CONCEPT

In an effort to support the growing diversity of our membership, the EC and the CAG are looking jointly at a Hub Concept for the annual conference.

The Papers Program has been the center of the technical excellence of the annual conference. Last year's program received a record number of submissions, totaling near 700, with 88 accepted papers in 22 different categories. Even still, this represents a small subset of the diverse topics within the community. Other programs, such as the Sketches and Courses, are experiencing similar growth.

The Hub Concept will take a two-prong approach. The first will be to have the spokes of the wheel being co-located small conferences that will run prior to the annual conference. From those small conferences the best papers, panels, sketches, and courses will be peer reviewed with a finite number of slots allotted to these quality submissions. This could work well with the UX community where the diversity of interests spans multiple disciplines.

SIGGRAPH and most of the small conferences have a defined view of what a technically excellent submission contains. All of these submissions are peer reviewed with the same process from year to year. This leaves little room for a case-based course or paper to be accepted. In many experienced-based venues case-based submissions are the norm. The organizers of each co-located conference would set the standard for submissions, and the peer review process for the main conference would be based on the criteria set by the individual small conference.

The Hub Concept also provide opportunities for the intermingling of diverse communities at joint sessions, and the ability for any attendee to sit in on sessions that are of interest in the other small conferences.

BLOGS AND WIKIS

Last year SIGGRAPH introduced both a conference blog and wiki. These met with mild interest, mainly because advertising and pre-conference hype was minimal. It is hoped that these will be expanded this year.

Every group has its "star" players, be it people or topics, and capitalizing on the "star" in the form of a blog will allow intercommunication among like-minded people. The concept of sites, such as TheFaceBook, allows college students to post information about themselves so other people AT THE SAME COLLEGE can view that information, could be applicable in this discussion as well. It is sort of a networking tool that allows people to communicate in non-threatening ways.

As security issues arise these can go behind portals, where members can respond and participate, while non-members can only read. Participation in vital blog could help promote membership as well as provide useful discussion among the community.

Intronetworks provides this networking opportunity at conferences where meeting a person with similar interests in a crowd of over ten thousand is slim. Each participant at the conference is given the choice to enter interests through kiosks situated throughout the venue. Through tracking, participants spark meaningful professional partnerships with this comprehensive, interactive, online directory of technology players. A similar concept could be applied to a map technology to allow users throughout the country, or globally for that matter, to connect.

CONCLUSION

The user experience is paramount, and you have one shot to make an impression on your membership base. If it is good loyalty will follow, but if it less than optimal, there are many possibilities for the professional to find what they need. Knowing what they need is the first step; working cooperatively among the SIGs and to provide the sense of community will be obtained if the first goal is met.

Author

Barbara Helfer graduated with a Masters of Mass Communications from the University of South Carolina in 1979. She went on to get an associate degree in Broadcast Engineer in 1982. She first started working in the computer graphics at the Ohio Supercomputer Center with the Ohio Supercomputer Graphics Project and aPE the Animation Production Environment a data flow scientific visualization package. She then went to work for the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design at Ohio State University and managed the Emerging Technology Studio (ETS) a multimedia that helped art professors in the College of the Arts use technology in traditional classes. From Ohio State she spent over a year at the Naval Postgraduate School in the MOVES Institute archiving video, researching distance education and SCORM technologies, visualizing 3D objects on the web with X3D, and working with the America's Army Project archiving the progress of the game. She is now at Capital University where she is the Director of New Media Services, which deals with the Web, distance education, and portal technologies.

She has volunteered in ACM SIGGRAPH related activities since 1991 when she started reviewing courses for the annual Conference. She was Conference Courses Chair in 1997 and 1999. In 2001 she was Pathfinders Chair, a program that she helped initiate in 1998. In 2002 she was elected Vice President of ACM SIGGRAPH, a position she holds today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like thank the ACM SIGGRAPH EC and CAG, CHI, and all small conference organizers, for allowing me to discussions and thoughts that were generated through our communications.