

Papers Preface

This volume documents the presentations made at SIGGRAPH 96. The 52 papers printed here are the end result of a tremendous amount of creative work and a highly selective review process. They represent the state of the art in computer graphics and interactive techniques. The panels sessions are highlighted in the Preface to the Panels section of this volume.

Several years ago there was concern that the subject matter represented in SIGGRAPH papers was tending to become too narrow, and divorced from the mainstream computer graphics community. Thanks to the efforts of previous papers chairs, and many other dedicated, imaginative people, this has not happened. This year excellent papers were submitted in a rich variety of subject areas. The diversity was so great that one of the challenges was to group sets of papers into sessions that made sense.

Credit for the quality of these proceedings goes first and foremost to the authors. They contributed a great deal of effort and creativity to produce this work, and I am very thankful that they chose SIGGRAPH as the place to present it. All of the authors who submitted papers, both accepted and rejected, are responsible for keeping the SIGGRAPH papers program vital.

Credit also goes to the 24 papers committee members, who donated enormous blocks of time from busy schedules to carefully read and evaluate the 247 submissions. Each submission received 5 reviews, two by committee members and three by appointed reviewers. As a result, each committee member had to review approximately 20 papers, and find an additional 3 reviewers each for 10 of those papers. Committee members were chosen for their leadership in the field, their reputation for honesty and good judgement, and their capacity to enjoy and appreciate other people's work. They all scrupulously avoided any involvement with decisions on papers they were connected with in any way.

The over 400 appointed reviewers selected by the committee members also deserve a lot of credit. Appointed reviewers write lengthy, thoughtful reviews, with nothing in return except the satisfaction of serving the computer graphics community. The papers program could not exist without these contributions.

Credit for the coordination of the printing of this volume and the production of the corresponding CD-ROM goes to Stephen Spencer, SIGGRAPH Director for Publications.

Politics and weather made the administration of the papers program unusually challenging. All papers were to be delivered to my place of employment, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), an agency of the United States Department of Commerce, located in Gaithersburg, Maryland. On December 18, 1995, NIST was shut down since the government had not appropriated money for the operation of the Department. During a shutdown, facilities are not only closed, but it is against the law for employees to work voluntarily or use government equipment. Historically shutdowns had never lasted more than a few days. As the weeks wore on during this time though, panic set in as submissions accumulated out of reach in the NIST mail room, along with the mountains of other mail for the 3000-employee agency.

Legislation was eventually passed to reopen government January 8, two days before the North American papers deadline. Unfortunately, on January 7, the East Coast was hit by one of the biggest blizzards of the century. I was on the phone and e-mail almost continuously for three days reassuring concerned authors from all over the world that their submission would not be counted late because of the weather.

On January 10, the roads began to clear, but NIST remained closed. Despite the policy that submissions would be accepted as long as they were sent by a courier that would have reached NIST on time under normal circumstances, some people tried to deliver papers the 10th. One individual arrived at NIST after flying across the country and driving through the Washington region in the snow. When the guard wouldn't

let him into NIST he made numerous phone calls and drove around Gaithersburg until he located my house. We had finally been able to get out, so he found no one home. Our front door was standing wide open, so he left the paper in our entry way and left.

On January 11, NIST finally reopened, and 190 papers were delivered to my office. I loaded up several carfuls and took them home. Another blizzard came on January 12, the due date for papers from outside North America. The city was closed again. My administrative assistant could not come to help open, log and sort the papers. My husband was pressed into service instead.

Turner Whitted, the 1997 papers chair, had been scheduled to come up from North Carolina and help sort the papers out for distribution to the committee. The weather made this impossible. Fortunately, we had required electronic abstracts for all papers. Instead of meeting together we used ftp, e-mail and the telephone to sort out all of the papers.

January 14 was a Sunday, and Monday January 15 was a Federal holiday. Finally on January 16, the rest of the papers sent by means of express services were delivered. Thanks to the electronic abstracts, we knew what papers to expect. On the 16th we were also able to rescue the rest of the submissions from the still overwhelmed NIST mail room. We worked frantically, and by the end of the week all of the papers and electronic abstracts were logged in, acknowledged and delivered to the committee members.

The rest of the process had its ups and downs, but settled down to being a more "normal" paper review process. The committee members worked hard, and we met to make the final decisions in a very chilly Washington, DC on March 8 – 10. As the result of a lot of preparation by and discussions between committee members beforehand, the meeting went very smoothly. As in past years, committee members left the room any time a paper they were connected with was discussed. There was no quota for the number of papers to be accepted. Each paper was judged individually on the basis of its content and clarity of exposition. On March 11, the notifications of the results were sent to all submitters.

I would like to thank my husband Russell and my administrative assistant Amy Struble for their help processing papers. Our work was made much easier by following the procedures developed and passed along by the SIGGRAPH 95 Papers Chair, Rob Cook. I would also like to thank my NIST co-workers for helping me through everything – Christine Piatko, Bob Lipman, John Hagedorn, Tere Griffin, Jim Sims, Darcy Barnett, Bob Raybold, Lina DeLeonibus, Joan Murphy and Arlene Carlton. Finally, I would like to thank the whole SIGGRAPH 96 conference committee for their support – in particular Theresa-Marie Rhyne (Panels Chair), John Fujii (Conference Chair), and Molly Morgan (Conference Coordinator).

It was difficult, but the 1996 papers saga has a happy ending. You have the book of exciting ideas you are starting to read now. And yes, the paper that was delivered to my house January 10 is in here.

Holly Rushmeier
SIGGRAPH 96 Papers Chair