Waxweb 2.0
David Blair

Based on David Blair's electronic feature film "WAX or the discovery of television among the bees" (85:00, 1991, distributed by FIRST RUN FEATURES), Waxweb is the LARGEST hypermedia narrative document on the World Wide Web. "WAX" itself was the first feature film sent over the Internet ("Historic First", Markoff, NYTimes, 4.93).

In May, Waxweb 2.0 will become a CROSS-PLATFORM, NETWORK SYNCHRONIZED CD-ROM available from First Run Features. Available for Mac/Windows/Unix, it will run as a standalone on non-networked computers, and in synchronization with the Web site, for those who wish to publicly ADD TO THE STORY.

Waxweb 2.0 Online contains 3000 Web pages with approx. 25,000 hyperlinks: 85 minutes of digital video (the entire feature film): 5000 color stills: soundtrack in English, French, German, Japanese. Plus: MORE THAN 250 3-D VRML SCENES, FILLED WITH THOUSANDS OF HYPERLINKED PARTS. Every part of every object in the virtual world is an active button, triggering access to another 30 scenes, to the movie, to pictures, or to hypertext.

WAXWEB IS DYNAMIC: Waxweb Programmer TOM MEYER of the Brown University Graphics Lab has made it possible for network users of Waxweb 2.0 to add to the narrative with their own immediate, publicly visible hypermedia: hypertext, pictures, audio, video, and hyperlinked VRML. In addition, all VRML objects in the network Waxweb database have their attached hyperlinks changed ON THE FLY, dependent on user interaction. In the near future, custom scenes dynamically recombining internal and useradded objects will allow the synthetic creation of a DYNAMIC, 3-D INTERSTORY on the network.

WHAT IS THE VIRTUAL REALITY MODELING LANGUAGE?

VRML 1.0 (VIRTUAL REALITY MODELING LANGUAGE, 10.94) was the result of a grassroots, Internet-wide effort initiated by Mark Pesce, to define the standard for a 3-D metafile format which would allow DISTRIBUTED VIRTUAL REALITY over the existing Internet.

VRML allows users of World Wide Web browsers to view and interact with computer generated 30 models. scenes and virtual "worlds". The most distinctive attribute of VRML is that 3-D VRML objects can have hyperlinks attached to their different parts. Users can move around 3-D VRML scenes, clicking objects or parts of objects, to eiher "travel" to new 3-D scenes, or load other types of data (from hypertext to video) into their World Wide Web browser (e.g. Netscape. Mosaic).

VRML ON WAXWEB 2.0

Users can enter the 3-0 VRML world from a great many places in the 2D text/picture WAXWEB 2.0 WWW document which is served from the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia. Text links or picture buttons on the flat page can take the reader to a 3-D scene. Once "in" the VRML world, users press 3D hyperlinks to travel through that world, or to automatically change the page on their electronic "book" (the Web browser), or even cause a part of the feature-length movie to play.

This is the "third" interface to Waxweb, which is meant to be readable (hypertext), visual (all 5000 pictures are buttons, allowing visual navigation), and flyable (VRML).

HOW WAXWEB 2.0 IS UNIOUE:

Waxweb is an Internet-based, distributed, interactive and intercommunicative 3-D narrative environment. Waxweb uses MOO technology to dynamically serve hyperlinked 30 VRML objects/scenes. What's a MOO? MOO's are network-based tools for computer supported collaborative work (and play), which allow realtime intercommunication in a multi-room virtual space, as well as the sharing of network information resources … they are text-based virtual realities. By combining VRML with MOO technology on the WORLD WIDE WEB, WAXWEB 2.0 allows 30 narrative content to be shared, examined, added to and reconfigured.

TOM MEYER'S implementation of dynamic VRML allows Waxweb to efficiently serve VRML from the MOO and dynamically auto-assemble objects/scenes and autoinsert hyperlinks (URL's) dependent on user interaction. This allows flexibility in the use of the existing large 30 database, and, in addition, will let users easily add to that 30 world.

WAXWEB 2.0: TOWARDS A PRACTICAL, GLOBALLY DISTRIBUTED, INTERCOMMUNICATIVE, SCALABLE, FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT HYPER-NARRATIVE SERVER

The facts: On Feb. 18th, Digicash was implemented in the MOO (Waxweb is the first Digicash MOO). On the same day Waxweb also became a Sesame server, capable of handling Ubique's Web client for the Sun platform (and soon PC). The first publicly available system for realtime chat through a Web client. Media mirroring has also been established with Sunsite at UNC and Internationale Stadt in Berlin. Visitors to Waxweb from Germany receive text VRML and control information from the Waxweb server in Virginia, but are pointed to Internationa,e Stadt for pictures, audio, and video. These three experimental implementations point to a practical globally distributed, intercommunicative, scalable hyper-narrative server, based an an open system. and capable of being financially self-sufficient.

THE PRINCIPALS:

David Blair is an electronic cinemamaker based in New York City. He is currently at work on a second feature, set in the US and Japan.

Tom Meyer is a virtual reality specialist in the Brown University Graphics Laboratory.

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Waxweb 2.0:
Normaler Zugang: http://bug.village.virginia.edu
Zugang über VRML (3D): http://bug.village.virginia.edu/vrmt
Zugang über MOO: telnet to: bug.village.virginia.edu 7777