

MAPS Recap June 2002

The first week in June I spent working to improve the website. I first attempted to redesign it in Dreamweaver, but decided that it was taking too much time and I wasn't able to create the design I wanted to. One of the improvements I wanted to make to the site was to add descriptions to all of the links for easier navigation of the site. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out an easy way to have the descriptions appear when one would mouse over the links, but in the end I used alt tags over the image links. I also did some reorganization of the site and renamed some things more appropriately (such as the Design link which used to be called Project). When I usually added buttons to the site, I used a website that automatically added the text I wanted. Of course the day I went to do this the site was down, so I had to learn how to add text myself and did so using Paint Shop.

I added a Panic section to our website, and over the course of the month added a few documents about panic (more about this later). I also reorganized the links section of the website, making each subsection of links appear on the page with a short description rather than having a button for each link on the side with an alt as the only description. This improved the look of the site and I also think the usability. I also spent a lot of time cleaning a lot of our unused html pages off of the server.

There are still a few more things I want to do on the website such as writing a brief description of all of our presentations that we have pdf links to and putting them on that page so that people will know what they can look at. We also still want to get around to putting the papers by other people behind a password.

The most exciting part of June was spent talking to other L3D folks about panic. Before this, Stefan and I did some research online on panic. We searched the net for any existing systems that used some sort of panic mechanism or any other panic related research. We found several things and put together a book with all of the info. The most interesting papers that we found on panic related stuff I read and wrote a little summary paper that talked about how it relates to our research. These are posted on our website under Research --> Panic --> Papers.

Next we met with Andy Gorman, Mike Williams and Jim Sullivan to discuss panic. We approached the problem by drawing nodes on the board using something called a clone language. We drew nodes of our system and described them, breaking things down into visual form. This proved very helpful to clarify a lot of things for us. We will probably be writing a paper about this, so I won't say much more. One of the key things we discovered or realized was that the majority of the action took place in the transition between prompting nodes, and less in the nodes themselves.

I spent a lot of time translating one of Anja's bus trip scripts into our current working visual basic demo that does not use databases. This we did mainly to learn more about the language used in the scripts that is appropriate for the user.

A good part of the rest of this month was spent quite unfortunately struggling with the database stuff. While we were waiting to start working with Sybase, we first attempted to get a working database behind our current VB script using Microsoft Access on the Pocket PC. Unfortunately, we are having little success. We have gotten to the point where it will write the stuff, but it only writes half of what we give it, chopping

each file in half. Also, we cannot just grab the binary data from the database, because EVB doesn't read the binary stuff, it only reads files. So what we're trying to get working now is to write the binary data to a file and then read the file. Sybase is giving us other problems and we expect to spend lots more time fiddling with it.

Another wonderful research step we took this month was in prompting. Referred by Rogerio we did a search through the CU libraries on "prompting" and came up with something like 20 titles that sounded very interesting. I requested these books from the InterLibrary Loan and have gone through all of them looking for anything useful to our purposes. Only about 15% of the books have been useful, but we think that is pretty good. What I was looking for as far as usefulness goes was anything about developing actual prompts including anything about wording, sequencing, etc. I was also looking for any information about the end user and their interaction with the prompts. By the end of the first or second week of July we should have extracted what we can from these books and the info will be put on our website under Research --> Prompting.

Finally, we have put into action our plan to clean up the L3D lab, one day at a time trying to clean or organize things so that our workspace is better for energy flow. It is also my request that the L3D lab be kept at a temperature conducive to blood flow which is required for thought and other brain functioning. Thank you.

Plan for July

Our current plan for July, other than continuing our battle with databases, is to finish putting together a Panic package and hopefully begin work on a paper about panic with our fellow researchers. We would also like to get around to programming a PC end script gui.