

# CG: An Evolving Medium

**M**any people select summer as their favorite season—a perfect time to kick back and relax. For those of us in the computer graphics and interactive technologies community, summer means SIGGRAPH, where we can meet up with old friends and colleagues, learn about new technologies, and just be amazed by it all.

SIGGRAPH 2008 marks the 35th anniversary of the conference. Over those years, the show—like the technology around which it revolves—has changed significantly. And no doubt, it will change even more in the future.

In the early days, the SIGGRAPH crowds were small in comparison to the 30,000 attendees expected to converge in Los Angeles this month. And decades ago, the papers were written primarily by those in academia. Today, the technical papers still contain techie-sounding names, such as “Folding and Unfolding Surfaces,” “Differential Equations,” “Faces and Reflectance,” and so forth. Indeed, these are not for the CG hobbyist. They are for the hard-core computer graphics artists who can talk the talk, as well as walk the walk. For those wanting a behind-the-scenes look at how a new technique or technology was implemented in a real working environment, the talks are a good choice—for instance, “Bend Me Break Me” offers a look at the creation of the Rope Bridge animation system used in *Kung Fu Panda*, how Rhythm & Hues made statues come to life in *The Mummy 3*, and the invention of Digital Domain’s CracTastic tool for the fragmentation of solid geometry in that same film. (Of course, for those of you not attending the show, you can read about those particular feats right here in *CGW*.)

Back in the 1970s, very few people could afford the hardware required to run computer graphics. For many outside the government, computer graphics were cool though not economically feasible for the masses. Today, the show floor is filled with commercial products for just about every aspect of CG creation, from motion capture, to modeling, to rendering, and beyond. A number of vendors also will be leading Exhibitor Tech Talks and Sessions about their latest hardware, software, and systems.

For years, the highlight of SIGGRAPH has been the Computer Animation Festival, which comprised the prestigious Electronic Theater (the best of the best) and the Computer Animation Theaters (juried selections presented in themed showings). This year, however, the show’s organizers have created a new Computer Animation Festival tradition for conference-goers—a real “festival” format, which means an actual competition, with prizes given for Best of Show, Jury Award, and Student Prize, as well as Well Told Fable Prize and Audience Prize. Of course, the event remains an official qualifying festival for the Academy’s Best Animated Short Film.

In fact, the SIGGRAPH organizers are promising a number of changes this year, among them, New Tech Demos, which replaced the Emerging Technologies area. But don’t fret, this area will still feature hot new innovations and very cool applications.

And speaking of change, I hope everyone likes the new look of the magazine. Like SIGGRAPH and the CG industry, we want to continue evolving, and have given our magazine pages and our logo a modern makeover. Soon we will be unveiling a newly redesigned Web site, so stay tuned. But rest assured, we will continue to adhere to our professional editorial standards and experience that have made us the leader in this industry. Enjoy.



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