

CG087 Time-based Multimedia Assets Assignment

Audio-Visual Haiku

Assignment	Date Set	Hand-in date/time	Assessment weighting
1 of 1	26 Sep 2005	16 Jan 2006, 14.00	100%

Note: work may be submitted early but not late.

Instructions

This assignment is designed to assess the learning objectives of the module; that a student should be able to:

1. Originate time-based assets using computer technologies;
2. Integrate and synchronise time-based assets within a computer-controlled multimedia setting;
3. Make informed and effective use of time-based assets as a means of communication in a specific context;
4. Define and discuss cross-media issues and issues relating to the design and implementation of time-based assets;
5. Justify his/her design and technology decisions in the context of above issues and of issues of communication, accessibility, ethics, and professionalism.

The assignment consists of a portfolio of assets, each of which should be accompanied by the requested documentation. Complete **all** the tasks.

- Sources of material (other than module teaching materials) must be referenced. This includes sound and image assets. References should be included within and additional to the specified written work.
- Multimedia files must be handed in on either a CD-R or 1.44Mb diskette (if they will fit—it is acceptable to bundle all your files into a .ZIP archive to make it fit onto a 1.44Mb diskette). Note, lomega Zip discs are **NOT** acceptable as staff machines do not have lomega Zip drives. Your disc should be virus-free and checked to ensure it runs correctly.
- All work on disk (individual folders/files) must be clearly and unambiguously labelled and the disk itself should be marked with your name, student number and module code.
- You must not use pornographic or illegal source materials. This is an individual assignment and you are reminded that the University regulations for copying, collusion and plagiarism will apply.

The written work should be collated into a single, printed document and **must** be presented in line-and-a-half or double line spacing in an 11- or 12-point roman-style font (like this paragraph). Please mark your work for the attention of Dr Paul Vickers.

Background

On this module we have been exploring the use of audio and video. In multimedia applications we would normally consider creating assets that combine audio and video. However, for many years the two modalities were largely separate; sound was the sole interaction medium for radio and movies were silent. Only when motion pictures with sound were introduced did the two media begin to merge. Someone once said that they preferred radio to television as the pictures were better. What they were referring to was

the ability of radio to create rich environments that are visualised by each individual listener and that the reality created in one's mind is rarely bettered by those realised for film and television.

Because we are so used to audio-visual multimedia it is useful to take a step sideways and reconsider our use and understanding of both media separately. In this assignment you will construct an audio-visual piece in which **both** the audio and video tracks will represent the narrative given in a haiku, a limerick, or a poem.

Haiku

The haiku is a traditional Japanese form of poetry. It has a 17-syllable verse form comprising three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. Strictly, a haiku should contain either a direct or oblique reference to a season; in Japanese-language haiku this would be through a *kigo*, or season word. A haiku is normally divided into two sections with each section contributing to the understanding of the other; in English-language haiku this is accomplished by ending either the first or the second line with a colon (or a dash, or even an ellipsis). Here's an example of a haiku (though not, necessarily, a particularly good one). It's a haiku for a program auralisation system (yes, really — see www.auralisation.org):

*Bugs swarm in the dark:
Music plays, and in its light
Logic is made clean.*
(P. Vickers, 1999)

The tasks

I. Creating an audio-visual piece.

You will be given a haiku in the first lecture for which you are required to create a single audio-visual piece that communicates its story. The piece will use sound and moving images (or sequenced stills) to portray the characters, objects, and events of the haiku. The duration of the piece must be between 40 and 45 seconds (marks will be deducted for submissions that stray outside this range).

The soundtrack

[35 marks]

The soundtrack will use a combination of MIDI-triggered sounds and digital non-speech audio. The soundtrack should communicate the ideas, events, objects, characters feel, story, and mood of the haiku without having to rely on the video for its meaning. Think about what ideas and events you want to communicate and how you are going to do it. Will you use music (think of film music); auditory icons; sound effects; earcons?

Be aware that we do not want your soundtrack to rely solely on analogic sounds. Instead we want you to focus on metaphorical representations. For instance, if you were representing a walk in the countryside then solely playing back sounds of birds and cows would not be acceptable. You can choose to have some analogic sounds to provide initial context to the piece but beyond that you should be thinking more carefully about the metaphoric representation of mood and object.

What atmospheric and ambient sounds are you going to use? Are you going to rely on modified actual sounds or are you going to simulate/synthesise new sounds? (Of course, there is a point at which editing an existing source becomes the synthesis of a new sound).

You should use Cubasis VST 4.0 to create the soundtrack. When it's finished you should then export a stereo 16-bit 44KHz mixdown which can be imported into an Adobe Premiere project to link it to the video.

The video track

[35]

The video track may be motion video, animation, sequenced stills, or any combination of the above. The video track should also tell the story of the haiku, but should do so **IN REVERSE**, that is, you will tell the haiku's story backwards. The video track should make use of visual effects, metaphors, and film language to communicate the narrative and supporting concepts and feelings. Think about how you are going to capture the mood of the piece with pictures. Whilst the occasional snippet of actual reverse motion video may be included for effect, **DO NOT** simply create a video that tells the story from start to finish and then reverse it so that it plays backwards – this will not be acceptable. You will need to

think very carefully about the subliminal effects that telling a story in this fashion may have upon the viewer.

2. Produce written documentation for the above assets to include: [10]
 - a. A description of the soundtrack, and the video track. State what you were attempting to communicate with each element. Explain what each aspect of the sound and video represents, its structure, and what techniques you used to accomplish this (e.g. an auditory icon to convey the shutting of a car door).
 - b. Sources and acknowledgements of all found material .

Complementarity [10]

Now we want you to consider issues of cross modality and how sound and vision complement each other.

3. You have designed a video and soundtrack that communicate the haiku's meaning, but in opposite directions. Consider the constraints that each modality imposed on your design:
 - a. How did the limitations of audio and video affect your design decisions? What difficulties did you have communicating the various parts of the haiku in sound and vision? How did the rhythm and pace of the haiku affect a) the design of the soundtrack, and b) the design of the video track?
 - b. If you had to represent the whole concept(s) in only one of the media (sound or vision), which medium would you choose? Some aspects of the narrative will be particularly easy and others quite difficult to communicate with only one medium. Describe the principal areas affected in this way. Why is this so?
 - c. Discuss how the story-telling is affected by having the sound track and video track run in opposite temporal directions. Does the reversed narrative in the video alter the perception of the sound track, and does the sound track alter the meaning of the video? Discuss how the meaning of the piece is changed when one of the modalities is removed. How does removing the video affect your perception of the piece? How does it look (and feel like) when the soundtrack is removed? Do you get unexpected results? Does either of the assets take on different meanings at any point with the addition of the other modality?
 - a. Describe how the two assets complement each other. That is, how does the sound enhance the video (and vice versa) to create a more complete experience?

Discuss the above issues in 800-1200 words.

Accessibility and generality [10]

4. Accessibility. There is really no such thing as a generic user. People have many different auditory and visual acuities ranging from 20/20 vision (or even better) with perfect colour perception to total blindness, and from full spectrum hearing with absolute pitch perception to total deafness. In addition, people's preferences, prejudices, and cultural background & identity serve to affect how they receive and perceive what they hear and see. Even the language people speak impacts upon their sensory perception (think of Deutsch's experiments with the tri-tone). So, what should a multimedia designer take into account when designing for a general population? How do your decisions affect:
 - a. People with sensory and perceptual impairments (deafness, blindness, tone deafness, colour blindness, etc.)?
 - b. Those from different cultural backgrounds? Do your designs rely upon a particular set of social constructions¹ and/or age-related experiences?

Discuss the above issues in **no more than 800** words. Your answers should draw from research/reading you have done around the subject, but, where relevant, may also refer to the work you did for task 1.

General points

You should attempt to create some of the media yourself. That means you should create some original MIDI data and sound files (n.b., creation of MIDI could be achieved by altering existing sources) and some

¹ For a very short definition see <http://www.brocku.ca/commstudies/courses/2F50/SCohd2.html>

original pictures and motion video files. You are encouraged to use found material, though you must acknowledge all your sources in the documentation. The BBC has a very useful collection of video clips available through their free Creative Archive Licence². The Licence allows you to download as many clips as you wish without payment as long as you do not use them for commercial purposes. You will need to create a user account, but that only takes five minutes. Unless all the material in your assets is your own original work or from royalty-free/copyright-free sources, you must not distribute your compositions or make them available for downloading by posting them on a web site. If you use externally sourced royalty-free sources you should adhere to any licensing or usage conditions imposed by the provider. Of course, access to motion video cameras is limited, therefore, we will accept submissions:

- that incorporate animations that you have created using programs such as Director, or that make use of sequenced still images (like a storyboard);
- that incorporate found video clips produced by third parties. However, do not simply submit a complete video track produced by someone else, as that clearly involves no creativity on your part;
- that use a combination of the above.

If you can get access to a video camera and can thus create 'real' video, then fine, but you will not be disadvantaged in the marking if you use any of the above three strategies. But I repeat the warning that a simple submission of somebody else's video will not be acceptable.

It is **vital** that you consider the role of **narrative** in your work. You are describing a scene in which events will occur in a certain order, or in structural relation to other events. You may therefore find it helpful to use storyboarding techniques as a framework for developing your pieces. Consider the story that you're trying to tell.

Summary

To summarise, you should hand in:

1. A CD (or diskette) containing:
 - a. A single multimedia file on the root of the disc that contains your audio-visual piece. The file **MUST** be in one of the following formats: Windows .AVI, QuickTime .MOV, or **standalone** Flash/Director;
 - b. In a sub folder all the project files for the source soundtrack and video track together with the supporting individual audio and video files.
2. Written submissions for tasks 2, 3, and 4.

Assessment

We will mark the audio-visual piece in a lab. After submission you will be given a time and venue at which you will set up and demonstrate your piece. Your CD will be given to you at the start of the session and will be taken back in again at the end.

² Go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/calc/radio1/>