focuses on languages and systems for specifying animation, using object-orientation and related techniques. Three fourths of this chapter is devoted to the Thalmans’ own systems, as are the case studies in Chapters 11 and 12. Chapter 12 traces the entire process of producing the film “Dream Flight,” shown at SIGGRAPH 83.

Following the 12 chapters are a reference section, three appendices, and an index. The references are numerous and should be very useful. Appendix A attempts to list active groups involved in computer animation. This is almost entirely useless. The organizations’ names are listed with a few key personnel from each. However, there are no addresses or other means of contacting the groups directly. Furthermore, the personnel have changed in a large number of the groups, making the whole thing badly out of date. Either contact information should have been included or the whole appendix should have been left out.

Appendix B covers published systems and languages. This is a bit better since it allows one to look up the articles describing the systems. However, Appendix C, a list by year, of computer-generated films, suffers from the inadequacies of Appendix A. The years, titles, and those responsible are listed along with the length in minutes for many of the films. However, there is no hint how one might find these films for viewing, or what they are about. Most of the more recent listings are available on the SIGGRAPH videotapes. Certainly that information should have been included.

From the preceding, it should be clear that a good deal of the subject of computer animation has indeed been covered. I believe the authors have met their first goal (“an introduction for designers and animators”). However, the book has serious flaws as a reference book for professionals in computer graphics and computer animation. The book may be somewhat successful, but not for those who are heavily technically oriented.

In summary, the book makes a good introduction to the field for the beginner. It suffers from brevity and lacks information that could make it vastly more useful. It also suffers a bit by being a much better and more exhaustive survey of the Thalmans’ own work than of the rest of the field. Roughly 60 out of 200 pages of narrative cover the Thalmans’ work. I would like to see a revision that addresses some of the points raised above. However, I’m sure that many will find this edition useful.

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