Shared Design and Prototyping Environments

Introduction

This workshop considered various aspects of computer support for shared design and prototyping environments. These distributed systems provide environments in which designers can work alone and collaborate, while providing a place in which product information like design ideas, drawings, and materials can be shared. When the place is no longer a physical space, the use of technology becomes fundamental to the success of creating a virtual environment. The workshop considered the experiences and technological developments that allow virtual environments to be a possibility.

The workshop combined ideas from shared design environments and shared prototyping environments. A shared design environment is an extension of the traditional design studio to include network communications so that the studio is no longer bound by the walls of a particular location. The basis for establishing a presence in a virtual design studio requires an understanding of the technology support for working alone and working together. A shared virtual prototyping environment provides for the design and generation of a version of a product that might not have all the features of the final product but has enough key features to allow testing of the product design against the product requirements. Virtual means that the result of the product design is not yet physically created but that the visual representation of the object is presented to the user for observation, analysis, and manipulation and the object has approximately the same behaviour as the physical model.

This workshop was organised by Mary Lou Maher (Key Centre of Design Computing at the University of Sydney, Australia), Hans Joseph (Fraunhofer CRCG, USA), and Uwe Jasnoch (Fraunhofer IGD, Germany). The agenda included eight presentations, five of which are included in this volume, and group discussions. The results of the group discussions are included at the end of this section.

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