

Message from the Chair

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Division News

I would imagine that this year will be one of great change for many readers. We have become used to the constant change of technology: hardware, software, networking, and new and different applications of graphics in almost every profession. But add to this a change in who we teach graphics to, and how.

Much of how we teach is based on an established Engineering Graphics Model, one where students come to us because we not only have the knowledge, but also the laboratories in which to learn. This is changing rapidly. It is often impractical for potential learners to assemble en masse at one location due to distances or work schedule. We find that many graphics topics are best learned at the time they are needed and in the location they will be implemented, hardly adhering to a semester of 16 weeks in length at an often remote university campus. And we have found that maintaining large, up to date computer laboratories, can bankrupt even the most well endowed department.

Those departments who placed the onus of responsibility for hardware and software on the student are a step ahead of the game. They have set the stage for decentralized

learning. Now we have to work on decentralized teaching.

We have found ourselves increasingly in a paradox, certainly for the 27 years I have been teaching graphics. We know that more and more technical occupations make use of what we teach. Yet, we find it more and more difficult to convince curriculum committees in engineering, science, business, and management (and yes, even technology) to keep their graphics requirements, let alone add to them. I suggest that we are trying to apply an inappropriate curricular model to current population dynamics. If we are to grow, we must develop a system that delivers the graphics instruction that's required, at the time it's needed, and to learners who demand it.

Our potential customers, our next students, may not be drawn from the class of 2002. Instead, they may be drawn from the class of '92, now able to see where graphics fits into their occupations, and keenly interested in learning. The question is this: will we continue to passively await the next freshman class to come to us, or will we actively seek our future students wherever they need what we teach?