Lecture 12:

Rendering for Virtual Reality

Interactive Computer Graphics
Stanford CS248, Spring 2021
Virtual reality (VR) vs augmented reality (AR)

**VR = virtual reality**
User is completely immersed in virtual world (sees only light emitted by display)

**AR = augmented reality**
Display is an overlay that augments user’s normal view of the real world (e.g., terminator)

Image credit: Terminator 2 (naturally)
VR headsets

- Oculus Quest 2
- HTC Vive
- Sony Morpheus
- Valve Index
- Google Daydream
- Google Cardboard
AR headset: Microsoft Hololens
AR on a mobile device
AR “passthrough” on VR headset
VR gaming

Eleven: Table Tennis (Fun Labs)
VR teleconference / video chat

Image credit: Spatial
VR video

Vaunt VR (Paul McCartney concert)
VR video
Today: rendering challenges of VR

- Today we will talk about the unique challenges of rendering for modern VR headsets

- VR presents many other difficult technical challenges
  - display technologies
  - accurate tracking of face, head, and body position
  - haptics (simulation of touch)
  - sound synthesis
  - user interface challenges (inability of user to walk around environment, how to manipulate objects in virtual world)
  - content creation challenges
  - and on and on...
Oculus Rift CV1 headset
Oculus Rift CV1 headset
Oculus Rift CV1 headset

- 1080x1200 OLED display per eye (2160 x 1200 total pixels)
- 90 Hz refresh rate
- 110° field of view

Image credit: ifixit.com
Aside: what does a lens do?
Recall: pinhole camera (no lens)

(every pixel measures light intensity along ray of light passing through pinhole and arriving at pixel)
What does a lens do?

Every pixel accumulates all rays of light passing through lens aperture and refracted to location of pixel.

When camera is in focus: all rays of light from one point on focal plane in scene arrive at one point on sensor plane.
Out of focus camera: rays of light from one point in scene do not converge at point on sensor.
Bokeh
Lens focal length ($f$)

Here: camera’s focal plane is infinitely far away.
Lens focal length ($f$)

Here: camera’s focal plane is infinitely far away.
Lens field of view

Sensor plane: $(X,Y)$

Lens aperture

$f$
Role of lenses in VR headset

1. Create wide field of view
2. Place focal plane at several meters away from eye (close to infinity)

Note: parallel lines reaching eye converge to a single point on display (eye accommodates to plane near infinity)

Lens diagram from Open Source VR Project (OSVR) (Not the lens system from the Oculus Rift)
http://www.osvr.org/
Accommodation and vergence

**Accommodation:** changing the optical power of the eye to focus at different distances

- Eye accommodated at far distance
- Eye accommodated at near distance

**Vergence:** rotation of eye to ensure projection of object falls in center of retina
Accommodation/vergence conflict

Given design of current VR displays, consider what happens when objects are up-close to eye in virtual scene

- Eyes must remain accommodated to near infinity (otherwise image on screen won’t be in focus)
- But eyes must converge in attempt to fuse stereoscopic images of object up close
- Brain receives conflicting depth clues… (discomfort, fatigue, nausea)

This problem stems from nature of display design. If you could just make a display that emits the same rays of light that would be produced by a virtual scene, then you could avoid the accommodation - vergence conflict…
Aside: near-eye “light field” displays

Attempt to recreate same magnitude and direction of rays of light as produced by being in a real world scene.
Acquiring VR content

Google’s Jump VR video:
Yi Halo Camera (17 cameras)

Facebook Manifold
(16 8K cameras)
Name of the game, part 1: low latency

- The goal of a VR graphics system is to achieve “presence”, tricking the brain into thinking what it is seeing is real

- Achieving presence requires an exceptionally low-latency system
  - What you see must change when you move your head!
  - End-to-end latency: time from moving your head to the time new photons hit your eyes
    - Measure user’s head movement
    - Update scene/camera position
    - Render new image
    - Transfer image to headset, then to transfer to display in headset
    - Actually emit light from display (photons hit user’s eyes)
  - Latency goal of VR: 10-25 ms
  - Requires exceptionally low-latency head tracking
  - Requires exceptionally low-latency rendering and display
Thought experiment: effect of latency

- Consider a 1,000 x 1,000 display spanning 100° field of view
  - 10 pixels per degree

- Assume:
  - You move your head 90° in 1 second (only modest speed)
  - End-to-end latency of graphics system is 33 ms (1/30 sec)
    - In other words, the time from you moving you head to the display emitting light for a frame that reflects that movement.

- Therefore:
  - Displayed pixels are off by 3° ~ 30 pixels from where they would be in an ideal system with 0 latency
Oculus CV1 IR camera and IR LEDs

Headset contains:
IR LEDs (tracked by camera)
Gyro + accelerometer (1000Hz). (rapid relative positioning)

60Hz IR Camera
(measures absolute position of headset 60 times a second)
Valve’s Lighthouse: cameraless position tracking

“Lighthouse”

Emit LED flash at 60 Hz

Receiver (headset, controller, etc.)

LED light (“flash”)

No need for computer vision processing to compute position of receiver: just a light sensor and an accurate clock!

Position of laser at t=0 (relative to flash)

Position of laser at t=8ms

Position of laser at t=16ms

Image credit: Travis Deyle
http://www.hizook.com/blog/2015/05/17/valves-lighthouse-tracking-system-may-be-big-news-robotics
Accounting for resolution of eye
Name of the game, part 2: high resolution

iPhone 7: 4.7 in “retina” display:
1,334 x 750 (1 Mpixel)
326 ppi → 65 ppd

Human: ~160° view of field per eye (~200° overall)
(Note: this does not account for eye’s ability to rotate in socket)

Future “retina” VR display:
65 ppd covering 200°
= 13K x 13K display per eye
= 170 MPixel per eye

Strongly suggests need for eye tracking and foveated rendering (eye can only perceive detail in 5° region about gaze point)

Eyes designed by SuperAtic LABS from the thenounproject.com
Density of rod and cone cells in the retina

- Cones are color receptive cells
- Highest density of cones is in fovea
  (best color vision at center of where human is looking)
Addressing high resolution and high field of view: foveated rendering

Idea: track user's gaze, render with increasingly lower resolution farther away from gaze point

Three images blended into one for display
Traditional rendering (uniform screen sampling)

[Patney et al. 2016]
Low-pass filter away from fovea

In this image, gaussian blur with radius dependent on distance from fovea is used to remove high frequencies

[Patney et al. 2016]
Contrast enhance periphery
Eye is receptive to contrast at periphery

[Patney et al. 2016]
Accounting for distortion due to design of head-mounted display
Lenses introduce distortion

- Pincushion distortion
- Chromatic aberration (different wavelengths of light refract by different amount)

View of checkerboard through Oculus Rift lens

Image credit: Cass Everitt
Rendered output must compensate for distortion of lens in front of display

Step 1: render scene using traditional graphics pipeline at full resolution for each eye
Step 2: warp images so rendering is viewed correctly when screen viewed under lens distortion
   (Can apply different distortion to R, G, B to approximate correction for chromatic aberration)

5 Getting Started

Your developer kit is unpacked and plugged in. You have installed the SDK, and you are ready to go. Where

is the best place to begin?

If you haven’t already, take a moment to adjust the Rift headset so that it’s comfortable for your head and

eyes. More detailed information about configuring the Rift can be found in the Oculus Rift Hardware Setup

section of this document.

After your hardware is fully configured, the next step is to test the development kit. The SDK comes with a

set of full-source C++ samples designed to help developers get started quickly. These include:

- **OculusWorldDemo** - A visually appealing Tuscany scene with on-screen text and controls.
- **OculusRoomTiny** - A minimal C++ sample showing sensor integration and rendering on the Rift
  (only available for D3DX platforms as of 0.4. Support for GL platforms will be added in a future
  release).

We recommend running the pre-built OculusWorldDemo as a first-step in exploring the SDK. You can find a

link to the executable file in the root of the Oculus SDK installation.

5.1 OculusWorldDemo

Figure 4: Screenshot of the OculusWorldDemo application.

Image credit: Oculus VR developer guide
Problem: oversampling at periphery

Due to:
Warp to reduce optical distortion (sample shading densely in the periphery)
Also recall eye has less spatial resolution in periphery (assuming viewer’s gaze is toward center of screen)

[Image credit: NVIDIA]
Multi viewport rendering

Render the scene once, but graphics pipeline using different sampling rates for different screen regions ("viewports")

[Image credit: NVIDIA]
Lens matched shading

- Render with four viewports
- Modify $w$ prior to homogeneous divide as: $w' = w + Ax + By$
- “Compresses” scene in the periphery (fewer samples), while not affecting scene near center of field of view

[Image credit: NVIDIA]
Accounting for interaction of:
display update +
display attached to head
Consider projection of scene object on retina

Here: object projects onto point X on back of eye (retina)
Consider object position relative to eye

Case 1: object stationary relative to eye:
- (eye still and red object still)
- red object moving left-to-right and eye rotating to track object
- red object stationary in world but head moving and eye rotating to track object

Case 2: object moving relative to eye:
- (red object moving from left to right but eye stationary, i.e., it’s focused on a different stationary point in world)

NOTE: THESE GRAPHS PLOT OBJECT POSITION RELATIVE TO EYE
RAPID HEAD MOTION WITH EYES TRACKING A MOVING OBJECT IS A FORM OF CASE 1!!!
Effect of latency: judder

Case 2: object moving from left to right, eye stationary (eye stationary with respect to display)

Continuous representation.

Case 2: object moving from left to right, eye stationary (eye stationary with respect to display)

Light from display (image is updated each frame)

Case 1: object moving from left to right, eye moving continuously to track object (eye moving relative to display!)

Light from display (image is updated each frame)

Case 1 explanation: since eye is moving, object’s position is relatively constant relative to eye (as it should be since the eye is tracking it). But due discrete frame rate, object falls behind eye, causing a smearing/strobing effect (“choppy” motion blur). Recall from earlier slide: 90 degree motion, with 50 ms latency results in 4.5 degree smear.

Spacetime diagrams adopted from presentations by Michael Abrash
Reducing judder: increase frame rate

**Case 1: continuous ground truth**
- Red object moving left-to-right and eye moving to track object
  - OR
- Red object stationary but head moving and eye moving to track object

Light from display (image is updated each frame)

Higher frame rate results in closer approximation to ground truth

Spacetime diagrams adopted from presentations by Michael Abrash
Reducing judder: low persistence display

Case 1: continuous ground truth
- Red object moving left-to-right and eye moving to track object
- Red object stationary but head moving and eye moving to track object

Light from full-persistence display
- Frame 0
- Frame 1
- Frame 2
- Frame 3

Light from low-persistence display
- Frame 0
- Frame 1
- Frame 2
- Frame 3

Full-persistence display: pixels emit light for entire frame
Low-persistence display: pixels emit light for small fraction of frame
Oculus Rift CV1 low-persistence display
- 90 Hz frame rate (~11 ms per frame)
- Pixel persistence = 2-3 ms

Spacetime diagrams adopted from presentations by Michael Abrash
Artifacts due to rolling OLED backlight

- Image rendered based on scene state at time $t_0$
- Image sent to display, ready for output at time $t_0 + \Delta t$
- “Rolling backlight” OLED display lights up rows of pixels in sequence
  - Let $r$ be amount of time to “scan out” a row
  - Row 0 photons hit eye at $t_0 + \Delta t$
  - Row 1 photons hit eye at $t_0 + \Delta t + r$
  - Row 2 photons hit eye at $t_0 + \Delta t + 2r$

- Implication: photons emitted from bottom rows of display are “more stale” than photos from the top!
- Consider eye moving horizontally relative to display (e.g., due to head movement while tracking square object that is stationary in world)

Result: perceived shear!

Similar to rolling shutter effects on modern digital cameras.
Compensating for rolling backlight

- Perform post-process shear on rendered image
  - Similar to previously discussed barrel distortion and chromatic warps
  - Predict head motion, assume fixation on static object in scene
    - Only compensates for shear due to head motion, not object motion

- Render each row of image at a different time (the predicted time photons will hit eye)
  - Suggests exploration of different rendering algorithms that are more amenable to fine-grained temporal sampling, e.g., ray caster? (each row of camera rays samples scene at a different time)
Increasing frame rate using re-projection

- **Goal:** maintain as high a frame rate as possible under challenging rendering conditions:
  - Stereo rendering: both left and right eye views
  - High-resolution outputs
  - Must render extra pixels due to barrel distortion warp
  - Many “rendering hacks” (bump mapping, billboards, etc.) are less effective in VR so rendering must use more expensive techniques

- **Researchers experimenting with reprojection-based approaches to improve frame rate (e.g., Oculus’ “Time Warp”)**
  - Render using conventional techniques at lower frame rate (e.g., 30 fps), then reproject (warp) image to synthesize new frames based on predicted head movement at high frame rate (75-90 fps)
  - Potential for image processing hardware on future VR headsets to perform high frame-rate reprojection based on gyro/accelerometer
Near-future VR system components

- Low-latency image processing for subject tracking
- Massive parallel computation for high-resolution rendering
- Exceptionally high bandwidth connection between renderer and display: e.g., 4K x 4K per eye at 90 fps!
- In headset motion/accel sensors + eye tracker
  
- High-resolution, high-frame rate, wide-field of view display
- On headset graphics processor for sensor processing and re-projection