Andy Bass and Jules Hancox

Multimedia storyboarding using anchor chains and "Action Profiling"

Introduction

Multimedia development poses a particular form of a general question in technological innovation and development: how can a project manager coordinate a multi-disciplinary team without a deep knowledge of the constituent specialisms? Multimedia design, therefore, is a particularly demanding arena, because the fields of expertise required can include as broad a range of skills as software development, graphic design, human factors, musical composition and arrangement, theatre design, film theory and rhetoric. This involves a much broader range of disciplines than might be involved in the development of, say, a graphical user interface manager for a database system, particularly as it crosses into the "Arts"—a domain not traditionally associated with computing applications. Furthermore, neither technology nor art necessarily has primacy in multimedia, and the appropriate balance can be elusive. One reason why this balance can be difficult to find may be that it requires the cooperation of specialists who, due to their quite different education and professional socialization, are likely to hold very different worldviews.

This article discusses ways to talk about multimedia products so that their design is comprehensible and tractable for the various interested parties. Two basic characteristics sum up the general approach to multimedia design taken here:

- Multimedia is construed in terms of messages which attempt to elicit specific responses (emotional, cognitive or behavioural) in the user;
- Multimedia development is facilitated through prototyping executable storyboards, which allows the development of progressive approximations of the final product.

We have considered these issues from the stance offered by NLP, which provides a promising way of considering multimedia and of coordinating its development. In particular,

- NLP is a general process model of communication (neither "technological" nor "arts" in orientation);
- NLP deals specifically with sensory modalities and their interactions, and so maps well onto multimedia;
- NLP deals explicitly with the communication of emotion as well as of "knowledge".