

Another Round of Roundtables - IGDA Montreal

by Jason Della Rocca (April 2006)

Ever the popular format, this was the chapter's fifth members-only roundtable style discussion night. About 70 developers and industry professionals showed up to discuss and debate on various game development related topics (see summaries below). Unlike the chapter's usual beer infused social/presentation nights, the evening was somewhat more serious as developers were locked in debate for about an hour and a half.

After the roundtable sessions, everyone hung around for snacks/coffee and continued discussion. And, we raffled off a few game development books along with t-shirts.

Roundtable Summaries

“Procedural/Generative Content”

– *David Lightbown, Artistic Technical Director, A2M*

Next-Gen consoles have much more processing power, but much less RAM. This processing power could be used to generate content in real-time to make up for the lack of memory. Will execs cut team sizes if procedural tools allow more content to be created more easily? In regards to gameplay, open games benefit more from procedural content than linear games. People tend to forgive errors in procedural content in open games more than in linear games. Content creators must be careful that the procedural content does not block the critical path. The more procedural content in a game, the more difficult a job Quality Assurance will have to test every possible outcome. Procedurally generated missions can sometimes be very inhuman, it takes a lot of effort to make them natural. Artists will have to become more technical since content creation tools are becoming more complex. [Grab the full notes from the discussion.](#)

“Designing for Broadening Audiences”

– *Heather Kelley, Game Designer, Ubisoft Montreal*

Over 20 developers from the complete range of Montreal's game studios talked about ideas for broadening the audience for video and computer games. Discussion ranged from age differences in players, to whether the Revolution can live up to its name and bring in whole new audiences. Numerous suggestions were put forth about potential new markets and gameplay that could help grow the games industry past its niche. [Grab the full notes from the discussion.](#)

“Business/Production Models Evolved”

– *Jason Della Rocca, Executive Director, IGDA*

Everyone still seems to be looking for a free lunch. Many developers bemoan the traditional funding model of having a publisher provide an advance against royalties – which, when discussed, is an outdated model. When the group actually took the time to enumerate all the possible avenues for funding and potential business models, it was a wonder that developers still ask publishers for money! From direct-to-gamers approaches like Steam to real-money-trade Korean style in-game revenue generation to government support and venture capital, the business savvy developer should have no problem getting a game production off the ground. Admittedly, most of the discussion focused on the money/biz side of things, without much reference to the production implication... [Grab the full notes from the discussion.](#)

“Multiprocessor Models”

– *Martin Walker, CTO, A2M*

Multiple processors and what to do with them? The clear benefactor seems to be AI, yet it seems that AI would be the most difficult part of a game engine to multitask. What is AI anyway? One definition would be a combination of physics, animations and behavioral code which makes a character believable. Physics, for one,

can easily be clustered and distributed across several processors. The same can be said for animations. But true AI will be a challenge to distribute given the behavior interdependency between characters acting in the same scene. Clustering might help but most game logic is sequential in nature and not easily broken down for multitasking. In the end, if we want more characters on the screen behaving “intelligently”, this problem will need to be tackled. [Grab the full notes from the discussion.](#)

April Gathering Pictorial

...here are just a few shots I took during the April gathering:

Game designers in discussion during the “Broadening Audiences” roundtable...

A close up shot of Ollie Sykes (DC Studios) making a really goo point. Vander Caballero (EA) and Philippe Poisson (Ubisoft) listen attentively.

Ubisoft’s Clint Hocking and Patrick Redding debrief after the intense “Procedural Content” session.

Vander demonstrates the cool Sony wrench (from the GDC party) to Heather Kelley (Ubisoft), who won it during the mini prize raffle.

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