

VISUAL COMPUTING LAB: LOOKS TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Recently, the Rogers Communications Centre updated the Visual Computing Lab (VCL) in response to advances in the New Media option of the Image Arts program. Emil Kolompar, a faculty member in the Image Arts New Media program, spearheaded this initiative. The VCL is home to a host of animation software that continues to be used by students for various 3D projects. However, with recent advances in digital communications, 3D projects are converging with other forms of media. "One of the needs that has emerged because of technologies like Flash is the ability to work with various media types and render out more advanced forms of streaming media. These media types include video and composited media. We're also starting to see the emergence of the 3D interface and the VCL provides Image Arts with an ideal hardware and software base to explore this emerging field," explains Brad Fortner, Program Director of Operations and Technology in the Rogers Centre.

The VCL was chosen as the best place to meet this challenge. In addition to Lightwave, Houdini, SoftImage and Digital Fusion software, the lab now hosts current versions of Macromedia Flash and Cold Fusion, Adobe Photoshop and Terran Media Cleaner Pro. The new software allows students to develop and stream media using the most advanced tools available across a wide range of media disciplines. For instance, Photoshop 6 now allows the user to output work better related to the web-based environment. Media Cleaner Pro filters streaming video to work smoothly with the bandwidths found on the net. Cold Fusion, which works with audio and video as well as text, allows students to employ database principles to their content. Databases, applied to media, represent the next wave in digital content creation often referred to as metadata. In terms of hardware, the Rogers Centre also added additional ZIP drives and CD burners to the VCL giving students greater flexibility with regards to rendering and saving their projects. The School of Image Arts assisted financially with the upgrades. ▀