

Interface and Animation Terms

GUI (Macintosh and windows 'graphical user interface): provides a standard patterns of activity that produces a standard expected result. GUIs rely on a common language and the following rules are usually followed: predictability, consistency, progression, natural constraints, visibility, transparency, feedback, modes of operation, pace, appropriateness.

interface: provides control to the people who use it. It provides access to the 'media' of multimedia (see above) without calling attention to itself. A good interface then is transparent.

authoring tool: (such as Macromedia Flash or Director) Create fully self-contained, self-running programs. Software used to create other software.

interactive multimedia (interactivity): the ensemble of the above multimedia elements controlled by the viewer. Further, control consistency, context, and corroboration can be used to determine if a project is interactive and if it is successful (control is the minimum requirement for interactivity to be present).

button: hot spots on a screen that interact with the mouse or keyboard. Buttons are objects, such as blocks of text, or an image. They sometimes manifest effects to indicate that you have 'hit the target'.

bitmap: information matrix used to describe the individual dots that are the smallest elements of resolution on a computer screen. Created by scanning in an image, paint program in Photoshop or Director etc.

vector: object oriented graphic that can be sized up and down to any resolution without loss. Uses a fraction of the memory space that a bitmap uses. Created in Illustrator or Flash or in the new Vector Shape Window found in Director 7.

persistence of vision: light's stimulus lingers on the retina slightly longer that it actually shines on the eye. Because of this persistence such innovations as the zoetrope create the illusion of motion.

cell animation (frame by frame): all key poses are drawn by hand, allowing for subtle changes of movement and expression as well as camera angle. Inbetweens are drawn by the animator or assistant.

keyframe animation (tweening): graphic elements are imported and dragged into position at key positions to create frames of extreme change but absolute position; the inbetweens are automatically calculated by software.

gif animation: bitmap-based animations. plays in almost all browser windows without plugins; easy to create and include in HTML. Timing is set for individual frames and it has custom (yet limited to index color) support. Browsers download and display gifs one frame at a time and then play them through again at full speed if the animation is set for looping playback. It allows for cell animation.

Flash Animation: vector-based animations. needs a plugin to play back in a browser window (Netscape version 4.5 comes with Flash 3 plugin). Because it is vector based it has a smaller file size and loads faster onto your computer via modem. I can be played independent from the browser or the internet using a flash player. It allows for both cell animation and keyframe animation.