

Carnival: a modular framework for automated facial animation

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Problem

Facial animation is difficult to do convincingly, particularly when synchronizing with speech. There are various ways to automate facial animation:

- Performance-driven animation

- Audio-driven animation

- Audio-visual text-to-speech synthesis (AVTTS)



Mary had a little lamb...

The problem with these solutions is they bring together software and data formats from different fields—in particular speech technology and graphics technology—that are not well integrated.

Solution

Software framework called “Carnival” which places speech and graphics components within a single object-oriented system.

- Fast and automatic end-to-end processing

- Real-time animation and linked display of time-varying representations for instantaneous feedback/feed-forward information

- Standardized object interfaces for easy integration of new components

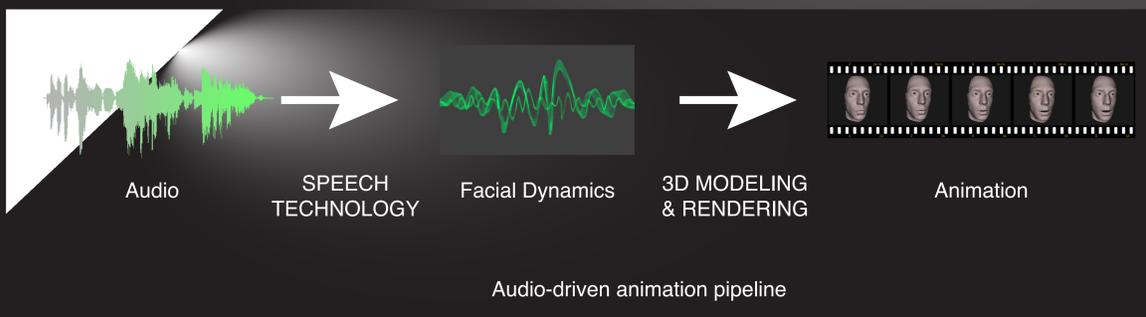
The core of our solution is a platform independent C++ API.

Applications

- API may be used for fast prototyping of automated animation systems

- Suitable for performance-driven, audio-driven, or AVTTS applications

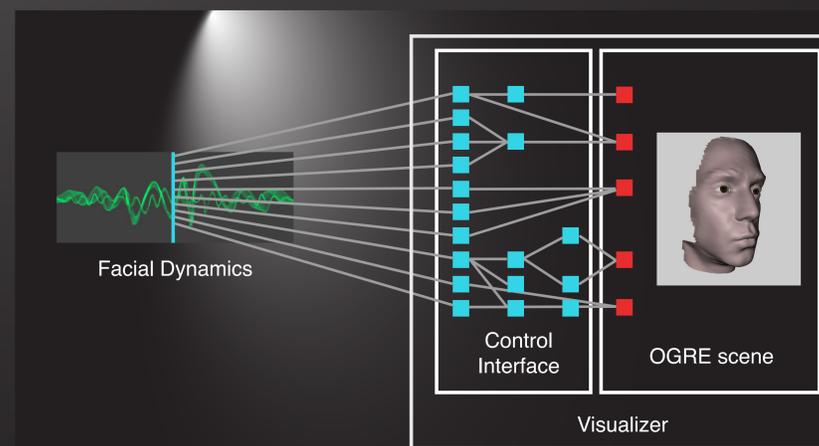
- Our implemented tool built on the API is suitable for in-house industrial or academic use



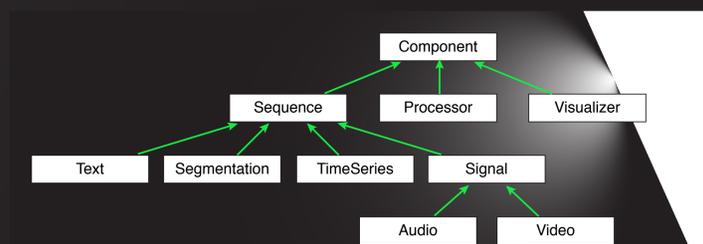
- Conversion of facial dynamics into animation is cumbersome, slow and offline.

- Lack of live connection between speech and rendering pipelines. Difficult to backtrace animation problems, or see outcome of edits in the speech processing level.

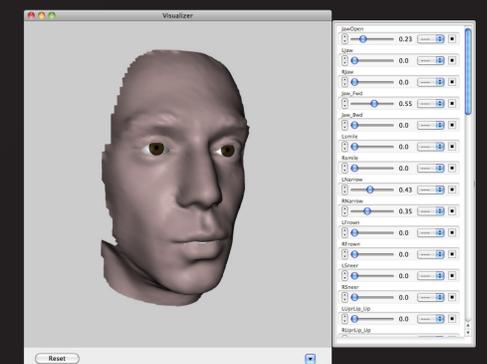
- No standard control interface for different facial models, so adaptation process must be repeated in each case.



Schematic of the *Visualizer*, a real-time, modular animation component that is a key class in the Carnival API. The *Visualizer* consists of a standardized Control Interface and an OGRE scene. The Control Interface comprises a set of deformation parameters (DPs) (blue squares), which may be bound to the current time point in a time series (Facial Dynamics), or to other DPs by linking functions. Ultimately, DPs link to deformer (red squares) of the facial model in the OGRE scene. The *Visualizer* serves as an image decoder, converting deformation parameter vectors to images. It can accommodate any facial model created in standard animation packages.



The *Component* class hierarchy of the Carnival API. Components are objects that can be loaded, edited and saved. They include both data objects and the processing modules out of which systems are built.



GUI window for a *Visualizer*, with real-time output and manual slider controls for the deformation parameters.