

A new way of Rich Image Representation (VectorPixels)

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ABSTRACT

For decades the same technologies has been used for generating images on computer systems. On the one hand you have bitmap and on the other hand vector technology. Bitmap or pixel technology is mostly used for the representation of rich colour images. The other available imaging technology, vectors, is mainly used to present logos and drawings without photo realistic details.

But both techniques have their disadvantages and advantages. In recent years a lot of research has been done to combine the advantages of both techniques in a comprehensive solution. Much research focused on giving a vector illustration a realistic picture look.

There was no development from scratch and that is exactly what this paper wants to propose, an algorithm to invent the pixel again. By always applying new developments on existing technologies generating images became a mix of various techniques and a rather complex matter.

With the use of VectorPixels (VP) the concept of a pixel will be redefined. In contrast with a pixel (Picture Element) a VectorPixel will be defined by a mathematical description and be resolution independent.

Keywords

Pixel, VectorPixel, image description, resolution independent, enlargement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every day people are looking at images on a personal computer, tablet or mobile device. Programs used on these computer systems are becoming more complex and the use of images most specific on websites has increased significantly in recent years. Instead of working on a wired network, computer system users are using more often wireless networks. Wireless networks are becoming faster but a reduction of data transmission enable a more fluent browsing. VectorPixels would also minimize this problem by

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using a reduced file size. This can be done by using

Scalable Vector Graphics (.svg) to store traditionally files. The .svg file format is supported by a lot of vector based software but delivers a large file when saving rich images.

A second issue is that making enlargements on

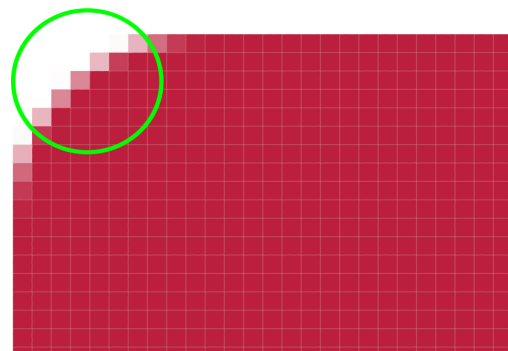


Figure 1. Jagged corner when using a bitmap solution when enlarging.

bitmap images will always end pixelated ((Figure 1).

Lines for example will be jagged and a mixture of pixels with different values of shades will be generated. This technique works fine when an image is viewed at 1:1 ratio and not enlarged. VectorPixels aims to provide a solution for this problem and



Figure 2. Smooth vector based corner when enlarged.

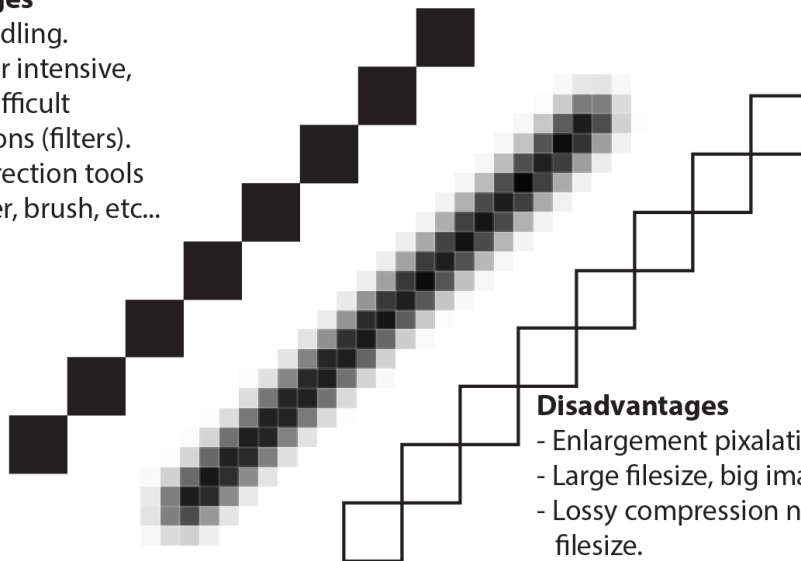
achieve the same image quality as obtained with vectors (Figure 2) with a “Richer Image”. Vectors present a sharply defined shape but there is no “natural look” or smooth color transition. The new proposed approach wants to keep the advantages of both imaging technologies but get rid of their disadvantages in particular, lack of smoothness for vector-based solutions and pixelated enlargements for bitmaps (Figure 3, 4).

2. RECENT SOLUTIONS

Research done by Orzan, Bousseau et al. [1] describe a new vector based tracing method for rendering smooth gradients from diffusion curves. This technique improves the smoothness of transition

Advantages

- Easy handling.
- Processor intensive, but no difficult calculations (filters).
- Easy correction tools like eraser, brush, etc...



Disadvantages

- Enlargement pixelation.
- Large filesize, big images.
- Lossy compression needed for smaller filesize.
- Large compression gives quality loss.

Figure 3. Advantages and disadvantages of using pixels to build up Rich Images.

between shapes but not the overall quality of the image. Also in this case, image information is added that wasn’t there before. This research is partly based on a paper published by Elder and Goldberg [3] in March 2001 which used edge maps for certain image adjustments.

Tracing is an important issue in creating VectorPixels. At a first stage there is a simple line tracing, secondly an Edge tracing is carried out. Edge tracing has been the subject of a lot of research. There are different kinds of Edge detection like Ant-Based Detection by Aydin [9] which uses a state transition function based on 5x5 edge structures. Sobel is another possibility a technique used by Kunal [10] which uses an edge mask generated by a fast edge detector. Generating VectorPixels is complex, given that different techniques have to be combined to get a result. These techniques are line tracing, edge tracing and generating the VectorPixel itself. Also a VectorPixel has to be positioned with shape definition, fill, etc... Currently there is no solution that combines all these techniques with each other.

3. PROPOSED SOLUTION

Our solution is a new algorithm called VectorPixels and differs much from solutions proposed in the past by other researchers. Despite this it uses existing technologies. VectorPixel starts from a point that is defined by vectors and there is no such thing as a resolution grid. Instead of using a bitmap grid to position pixels, VectorPixels are positioned relative to a reference point. This reference point will be in the left upper corner of the image. A logarithm set up for VectorPixels can be seen in figure 5.

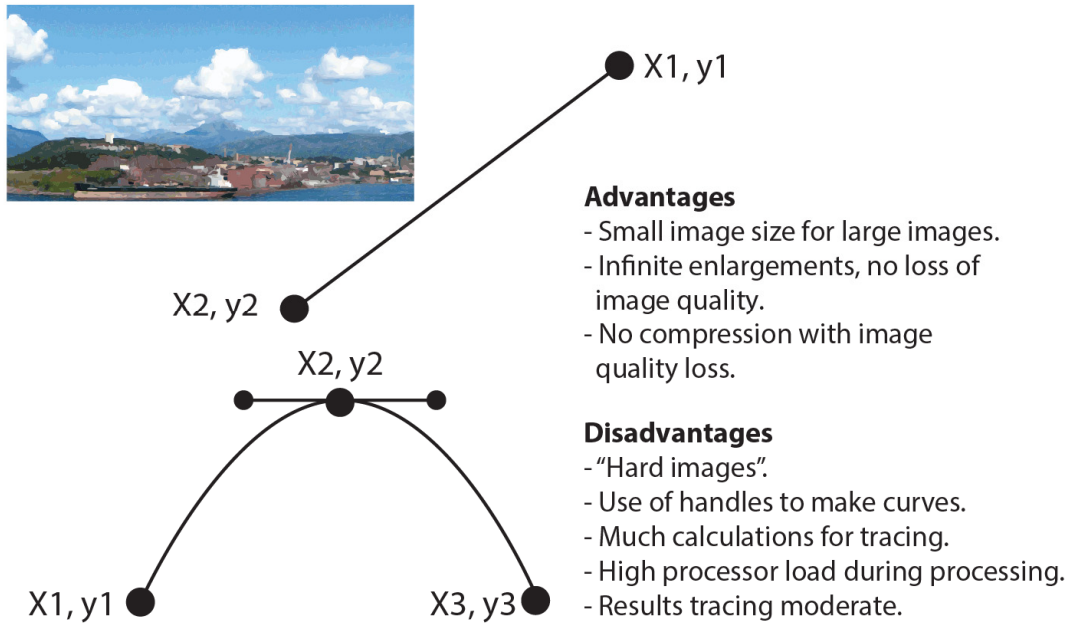


Figure 4. Advantages and disadvantages of using vectors to build up Rich Images.

This algorithm consists of five parts:

- Tracing mode
- Converting pixels to VectorPixels.
- Retracing edges.
- Smoothing.
- Export.

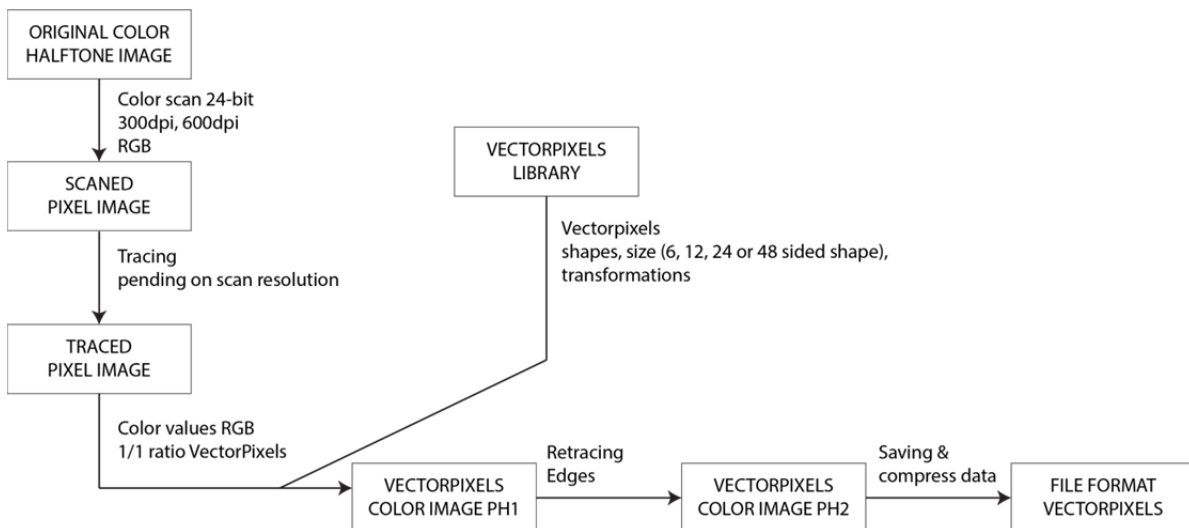
Because there are no capturing devices available to output VectorPixels based images, tracing of existing images is necessary. For testing purposes a simple line tracing is used. At a later stage other tracing techniques could be used or tested. Tracing will detect edges in the image by difference in color values of pixels. These edges can be rebuilt to be resolution independent with VectorPixels. Note a main difference with existing solutions using a closed

path to represent an area of similar pixels (Figure 6). With VectorPixels the area is built up with similar "vectorized" pixels. The shape and position of a VectorPixel can also vary depending on the detail needed in an image when enlarged. Changing resolution is already embedded in VectorPixels when they are created. VectorPixels can also include a gradation in order to give softness to edges.

A library can be provided where different sizes or shapes of VectorPixels can be archived and used as references. This can offer great advantages when saving VectorPixels based images especially with compression. In this case only the position of a VectorPixel and a reference, need to be saved. Of course this is together with the properties of the specific VectorPixel such as Fill Color or gradient

ALGORITHM VECTORPIXELS

Version 1.0



Phase 1: VectorPixels creation

WSCG 2014 Conference on Computer Graphics, Visualization and Computer Vision

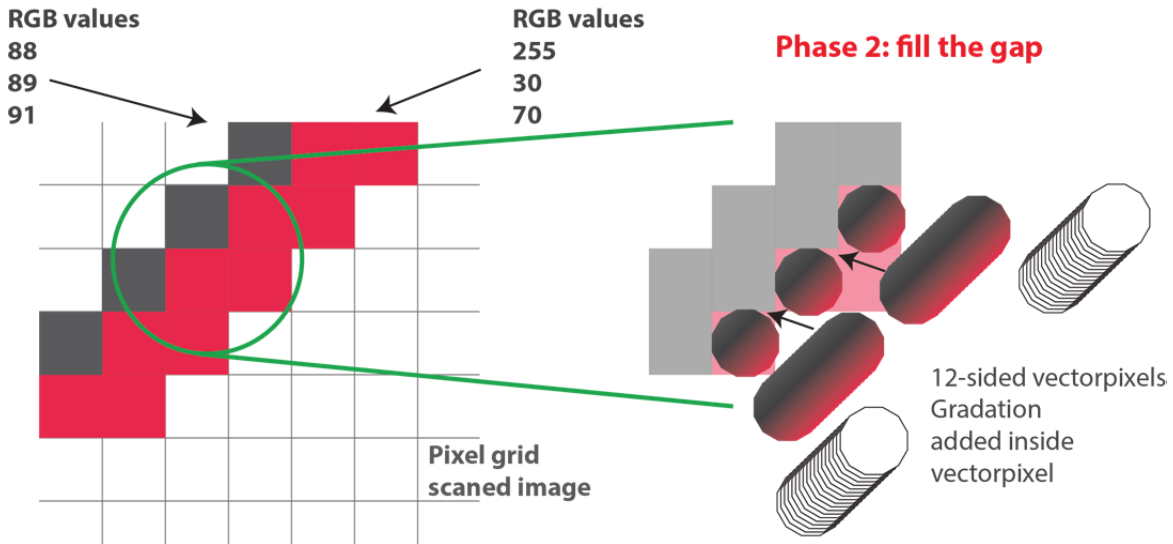


Figure 6. Tracing and smoothing VectorPixels.

and transformations. Making use of a gradient gives the possibility to make a smooth looking edge without additional programming. Because it is not working with a grid as with bitmaps, it is possible to position VectorPixels anywhere on the screen. For good order a maximum area (width and height) needs to be defined. Instead of using a fixed size in pixels a percentage could be used. VectorPixels can also overlap each other when a smooth curved line needs to be established (Figure 6). An algorithm (Figure 5) has been setup for first testing this new technique. Secondly this algorithm has to be realised in a programming environment which will have to deliver evidence that VectorPixels work effectively.

4. RESULTS

Our new developed algorithm is a theoretical one for the moment. Experimental research has now been carried out but useful results will be available by summer 2014. At a first stage OpenGL programming is being carried out to generate Algorithms to implement the VP technology on primitive shapes. This can be transferred to more complex cases such as Rich Images. In a third stage, a more practical application on Rich Images is provided with the use of VP in combination with Augmented Reality. Most of the augmented information is presented on top of an image (Figure 7). Information can be very divers, like distance between two points presented by a line

(and value) or a 3D representation of an object. AR technology is often a collaboration between software and hardware (glasses) for displaying additional

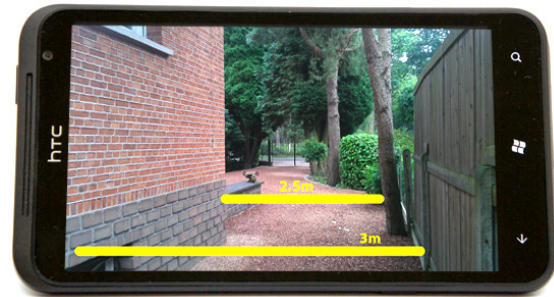


Figure 7. Augmented reality on top of a bitmap image.

information. Earlier research indicated that especially the lack of decent representation of extra information is a barrier for most users to get involved with Augmented Reality. In general there are also great expectation in the area of smoothing edges to be achieved more easily (Figure 8) than it happens with current technologies. Also reducing file size is an important goal. Another area where VectorPixels will be tested after been implemented in a 2D environment will be the use in a 3D environment [4]. Experiments will be conducted to measure the



Figure 8. VectorPixels shape define quality. Gradation included for smooth transition.

elapsed time for computation of VectorPixel algorithm. This could become one of the biggest drawbacks of VectorPixels due to the large processing requirements of calculations.

5. CONCLUSIONS

A lot of experimental research has to be done yet. Once first results become available a preliminary conclusion can be made. A schedule has been setup to get the first results published by the summer of 2014. The proposed algorithm is the baseline and could be refined when testing VectorPixels. This research is part of a larger whole. VectorPixels were first started to be used in 3D texturing. When VectorPixels are finally defined and working for 2D rich color images it can be transferred for use in 3D texturing. Especially in the area of shading it could be a great addition when Phong or Lambert shading needs to be calculated. This work will also benefit from the antialiased voxelization described in Prakash [11], [12].

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