ABSTRACT

We describe a new type of graphical user interface widget, known as a “tracking menu.” A tracking menu consists of a cluster of graphical buttons, and as with traditional menus, the cursor can be moved within the menu to select and interact with items. However, unlike traditional menus, when the cursor hits the edge of the menu, the menu moves to continue tracking the cursor. Thus, the menu always stays under the cursor and close at hand.

In this paper we define the behavior of tracking menus, show unique affordances of the widget, present a variety of examples, and discuss design characteristics. We examine one tracking menu design in detail, reporting on usability studies and our experience integrating the technique into a commercial application for the Tablet PC. While user interface issues on the Tablet PC, such as preventing round trips to tool palettes with the pen, inspired tracking menus, the design also works well with a standard mouse and keyboard configuration.