MicroCosm™ Report
April 2, 1986

"Because we thought you'd want to know"

Chip Morningstar
Lucasfilm Ltd. Games Division

Introduction

This is the fifth in a series of monthly reports detailing the progress on the **MicroCosm** project at Lucasfilm. This report describes events and achievements during the month of March, 1986.

Work In Progress/Tasks Accomplished

The Project Schedule calls for us to meet three deliverables for mid-March. These are: to demonstrate the completed animation and graphics sub-system in action, to provide further imagery and artwork for objects, and to demonstrate objects functioning in an integrated system. As discussed in the previous progress report, the third deliverable was adjusted to reflect the state of the database system at the time of delivery, and was instead a demonstration of an integrated system loading under Q-Link and communicating with the host, but without object-oriented database transactions driving the behavior on the screen. A videotape addressing these three deliverables was sent out March 20. All three deliverables (the third modified as we just said) were met handily.

During March Aric Wilmunder added several enhancements and improvements to the graphics subsystem and made major progress on development of the avatar motion control sequencer.

Randy Farmer has optimized and improved the communications routines. In particular, we are now able to simultaneously perform disk access, modem communications and animation on the screen without any noticeable glitching effects on the screen. He has also implemented the code to unpack contents vectors and initialize new regions when they are entered.

Ron Gilbert has finished the object-oriented disk database system.

Our major accomplishment during March involved the entire MicroCosm team working together. This was to integrate the various parts of the system, weaving the strands of development being followed by the various team members into a single, functioning unit. Further development will build on top of this integrated system rather than following several parallel paths.

I have completed the first pass of the detailed specification of the internal behavior of the entire object set. Randy and I have plotted out the development plan for the objects themselves based on this specification.

Tasks For April

The essential task for April is to create a complete working system (if you will, an alpha-test release). The major element of this is the programming of the bulk of the object behavior.

The development schedule lists one milestone for us to reach by April 15. This is to deliver a rough but testable C64-based system. We anticipate that we will reach this goal with some effort, barring unforeseen disasters cropping up along the way.

Quantum Comments

I will be traveling to the Quantum offices during the first part of April in order to intensively work on the host-end of the object behavior software. The host database processor needs to be ready for object installation by this time. However, all indications we have so far are that it will be.

We have developed quite a good working relationship with the technical people at Quantum. In particular, Janet Hunter has been very helpful and productive, and has contributed a number of excellent ideas to the overall system. The Quantum folk have been especially tolerant of the shifting sands of the communications protocol specification, which gratifies us greatly.