

Awards

IEEE VGTC Virtual Reality Career Award 2009

The 2009 Virtual Reality Career Award goes to Jaron Lanier, Microsoft Corporation and UC Berkeley, for his lifetime contributions to the technical and business development of virtual reality. The IEEE VGTC is pleased to award Jaron Lanier the 2009 Virtual Reality Career Award.



Jaron Lanier

Microsoft Corporation and
UC Berkeley

IEEE VGTC Virtual Reality Career
Award Recipient 2009

BIOGRAPHY

Jaron Lanier is currently the first “Scholar at Large” for Microsoft Corporation, and the Interdisciplinary Scholar-in-Residence, CET, UC Berkeley.

Lanier either coined or popularized the term ‘Virtual Reality.’ His tiny, but hugely influential company, VPL Research, Inc. was founded in 1984. VPL supplied the fledgling world of VR research with key products like EyePhone, the first general purpose, commercial HMD, the DataGlove, and the DataSuit, which provided the first source of full-body 3D motion data. (VPL eventually became part of Sun Microsystems.)

Lanier’s team developed the first implementations of multi-person virtual worlds using immersive displays, as well as the first avatars, or representations of users within such systems. VPL’s “Reality Built for Two,” or RB2, became a commercial product in 1989. Lanier and collaborators implemented some of the earliest examples of surgical simulation, rehab, walkthrough, scientific visualization, and other VR applications. VPL licensed glove technology to Mattel Toys for the Power Glove, which was the first VR toy.

From 1997 to 2001, Jaron was the Chief Scientist of Advanced Network and Services, which contained the Engineering Office of Internet2, and also served there as the Lead Scientist of the National Tele-immersion Initiative. Henry Fuchs, Ruzena Bajcsy, Kostas Daniilidis, Andries van Dam, and Lanier demonstrated the first prototypes of Tele-immersion in 2000.

From 1999 to 2002 Lanier was the Chief Scientist of Eyematic Interfaces (later acquired by Google), which created the first real-time facial expression tracking for Avatars based solely on machine vision techniques. From 2001 to 2004 Lanier was Visiting Scientist at Silicon Graphics Inc., where he researched COCODEX, an instrumentation strategy for VR that addresses some of the problems associated with CAVEs and HMDs. Lanier was the founding member of the Board of Advisors for Linden Labs, makers of Second Life.

Although not a cognitive scientist, Lanier’s early observations of cognitive phenomena in VR have been influential in the study of cognition. For example, researchers like Stanford’s Jeremy Bailensen are now exploring his notion of “Homuncular Flexibility” formally. Lanier has had a foundational influence on the esthetic and cultural sides of VR through his lectures and his performances with virtual musical instruments.

Lanier received an honorary doctorate from the New Jersey Institute of Technology in 2006.

AWARD INFORMATION

The IEEE VGTC Virtual Reality Career Award was established in 2005. It is given every year to an individual to honor that person’s lifetime contribution to virtual & augmented reality. VGTC members may nominate individuals for the Virtual Reality Career Award by contacting the 2009 awards chair for virtual reality, Larry F. Hodges, at vgtc-vr-awards@vgtc.org.