

Vive Virtual Reality Technology Demonstration

Khen Cruzat and Philip Nilsson

**Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Computer Science**

2016/2017

The candidate confirms that the following have been submitted.

<As an example>

| Items | Format | Recipient(s) and Date |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Final Report (2 copies) | Report | SSO (DD/MM/YY) |
| Final Report (digital) | Report | VLE (DD/MM/YY) |
| Project Code | GitHub Repository | Supervisor, Assessor (DD/MM/YY) |
| User Manual | Report Appendix | Client, Supervisor (DD/MM/YY) |

Type of project: Software Product

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and the appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

I understand that failure to attribute material which is obtained from another source may be considered as plagiarism.

Khen Cruzat

Philip Nilsson

Summary

< Concise statement of the problem you intended to solve and main achievements (no more than one A4 page) >

Acknowledgements

<The page should contain any acknowledgements to those who have assisted with your work. Where you have worked as part of a team, you should, where appropriate, reference to any contribution made by other to the project.>

Note that it is not acceptable to solicit assistance on ‘proof reading’ which is defined as the “the systematic checking and identification of errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence construction, formatting and layout in the test”;

see <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/gat/documents/policy/Proof-reading-policy.pdf>.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

The goal of the project is to produce a technical demo for the HTC Vive to be used by the university to showcase development skills for virtual reality. This demo would be used in the School of Computing open days.

1.2 Client Background

The client for this project is the School of Computing in the University of Leeds.

1.3 Problem Background

The School of Computing wanted this project to be done as currently they own virtual reality hardware, however they do not have any software made by University of Leeds students to show to potential students. They are currently using software bought online in order to show the capabilities of the virtual reality hardware. They would prefer it if the software that they used is made by students from the School of Computing.

1.4 Project Aim

The aim of this project is to create a technical demo for the School of Computing, using the HTC Vive. This demo should appeal to prospective students, as well as appealing to people in the industry. This means that the project has to be both technical, for the industry, and interesting, for the prospective students.

To make it technical enough for the people in the industry features have been added that are not trivial to implement in Unreal Engine 4.

To make it interesting for the prospective students, the demo has to have good gameplay and an interesting concept behind it.

1.5 Possible Demo Idea

One possible idea for the demo would be to combine the Towers of Hanoi with graph flow. These could be combined by having a generated landscape with a randomly generated graph on it, matching the flow of the terrain. This graph's edges would be rivers, or ditches with water running through them, and the nodes would be either river intersections or pools of water. This would be merged with the Towers of Hanoi by using the Towers of Hanoi system as a dam, to block off flow to a certain river, or by moving the disks you could control the amount of flow. This would work by having the disks stack upside down, with the smallest disk at the bottom. This is done in order to accommodate the shape of the ditch. The less disks that are blocking the river, then the more flow it would have.

The goal of this demo would be to keep all the plants at each node alive. The plants would be considered alive if they got the right amount of water. Too much water they would die and too little water they would die too.

This would be a possible demo idea as it implements several features that are non-trivial in Unreal Engine. Tasks are classified as non-trivial if they cannot be done in engine. It also demonstrates two aspects that are covered in the computer science course, which are the Towers of Hanoi, and Graph Flow.

These features are:

- Running water
- Water Collision
- Having the plants be affected by the amount of water
- Randomly generated river "graphs"
- Towers of Hanoi logic for flow control

The trivial tasks, that are done in-engine, would be:

- Generating terrain and landscapes
- Simple Gesture Controls
- Simple virtual reality gameplay (including teleport mechanic)
- Physics
- Flowers on the terrain

1.6 Deliverables

1. A link to the full code repository on GitHub
2. An instruction manual, detailing how to compile the code, the objectives of the technical demo, and how to control the technical demo
3. Project Report

The reasoning behind these deliverables are:

The code is needed so that the assessors can see what has been for the project, and this will show all the progress that has been made on the software over the course of the project, and how each feature was implemented. This will be on the version control site that is being used for the project, which is GitHub. The Version Control page will be delivered so that the software engineering project management side of the project can be assessed.

An instruction manual was decided on so that the assessors know how to compile the code properly, so that they can test the software, and it will also detail the controls and the objective behind the game. The project report should be delivered as it provides insight into the inner workings of the project. It also shows the knowledge that the authors gained from doing the project.

These will be the only deliverables as they fully encompass all the work done during the project.

Chapter 2

Background Research

2.1 Virtual Reality

Virtual Reality is a technology that has been around since the early 19th century, although in a primitive form through the use of stereoscopic photos [8]. Stereoscopic photos work by using two photos that are taken of the same place but are slightly offset from each other, as can be seen in 2.1. This creates an illusion of depth for the person viewing the images, when viewed through a stereoscope. A stereoscope is a viewing device that only allows one eye to see one of the two images, so each eye sees a similar, yet different image, and this gives the illusion of depth. Stereoscopic vision is the same technology used in current Virtual Reality headsets although now the images are moving.



Figure 2.1: Example of a stereoscopic image.

Virtual reality platforms have been released aiming to provide an immersive experience to consumers. There are many varieties currently available and they can be simply separated into the two categories: mobile and desktop. Mobile experiences such as the Google Cardboard and Samsung's Gear VR target the audience which already own a compatible mobile device thus eliminating the cost of hardware found in higher end platforms. Through the use of the phone's built-in gyroscope and accelerometer, crude head tracking can be achieved to emulate a virtual world.

High end virtual reality platforms target enthusiasts and early adopters of cutting edge technology due to its premium price and high computer hardware requirements in order to run it. Currently there are two virtual reality headsets that are seen as the devices that give highest immersion and these are Facebook's Oculus Rift and HTC's Vive. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

2.1.1 Mobile VR

On the market right now there are two different Mobile Virtual Reality hardware. There is the Samsung Gear VR and the Google Cardboard.

Google Cardboard

The Google Cardboard is the cheapest Virtual Reality headset out on the market right now, but it does come with the least features out of them. The cardboard viewer is a stereoscope made out of cardboard. It contains two 40mm focal lenses that are designed to give a distortion when looking through them, which is counter-acted by the distortion from the application[3].

To use the Google cardboard you would need to install the cardboard application on your compatible phone and then place your phone inside of the Google Cardboard. Once the phone is inside the Cardboard it uses the phone's inertial measurement unit to track head movement. This does have limitations however as the Google Cardboard does not track displacement if the user was to walk in any direction.

The Google Cardboard still uses the technology of stereoscopic images, as can be seen in 2.2. Although it now does it with moving images, which creates a more immersive experience.



Figure 2.2: Image showing the Cardboard demo application

The Google Cardboard was not chosen to the virtual reality device for this project as there are many drawbacks to it, and as such it does not fully demonstrate all the features present in modern technology for virtual reality. The drawbacks to the Google Cardboard are:

- No displacement tracking, making it less immersive than the other options
- Only one input method, a button on the cardboard which acts as a screen press.

Samsung Gear VR

The other mobile Virtual Reality headset on the market is the Samsung Gear VR. The Samsung Gear VR is slightly more expensive than the Google Cardboard, and as expected with the price increase, it

comes with more features compared to the Google Cardboard.

The Samsung Gear VR uses the same technology as the Google Cardboard in the sense that it uses stereoscopic imaging to create the illusion of depth. This is done in the same way for both VR devices, by inserting a compatible phone into the phone holder in the headset, and then showing the stereoscopic images on the phone screen. As seen in 2.3 the Samsung gear VR uses the same stereoscopic technology as the Cardboard uses, as seen in 2.2.

The Samsung Gear VR also uses an inertial measurement unit to detect head movement, similar to the Google Cardboard. The Samsung Gear VR uses an inertial measurement unit contained in the headset, rather than using the attached phone's inertial measurement unit. The inertial measurement unit contained in the headset is more accurate, has lower latency, and is better calibrated than standard phone inertial measurement units, as it uses the same I.M.U. as the Oculus Rift. This I.M.U. is more accurate as it has a higher sample rate than internal phone I.M.U.s and therefore gives it more values to use, so that it can more accurately detect erroneous values.



Figure 2.3: Image showing the Samsung Gear VR menu

The Samsung Gear VR has a few extra features compared to the Google Cardboard, for example when a phone is placed inside the Galaxy Gear VR it needs to be connected by a micro-usb connection, which allows the headset to have more input methods to the phone, as well as giving access to the headset's I.M.U. The extra input methods that the Gear VR has access to are:

- A home button, which works the same as the home button on Android phones.
- A back button, which works the same as the back button on Android phones.
- A touch pad, which works by swiping to move across menus, and tapping clicks the highlighted item in a menu.



Figure 2.4: Image showing the hardware controls on the Samsung Gear VR

The Samsung Gear VR will not be used for this project as again it has several drawbacks, which are:

- It only tracks rotational movement, not displacement, which makes it less immersive than the other options
- The Samsung Gear VR has very primitive control, which are only the buttons and touchpad on the side of the headset

2.1.2 Oculus Rift

The Oculus Rift was the first of the two to be released and is inferior in terms of the level of immersion that can be achieved, as currently Oculus only supports interfacing with the virtual world through a third party traditional controller that simply uses buttons and joysticks. The Oculus Rift tracks by using the single camera to pick up infrared light that is emitted by points on the headset. These can be used to track the headset as they blink in a specific pattern, which the sensor knows, and it then uses that to determine the position the headset is in.

2.1.3 HTC Vive

The HTC Vive works using two base-stations. These emit lasers in an alternating pattern, between vertical and horizontal. If these lasers hit a sensor on the headset or controllers, they emit a pulse. By tracking the timings of the laser sweeps and the emitted pulses, the tracking system can use trigonometry to find the position of the location of every sensor on the devices [7]. The HTC Vive has two settings, either a sitting or a standing mode. In the sitting mode, it works similar to the Oculus Rift, in that a console controller is used to control the game, whereas in the standing mode, it uses its own controllers, which are tracked by the base stations and provide a more immersive experience as you can interact with objects in the game by using these controllers to pick things up by moving your hands to where the object is in game.

2.2 Development Environments

To develop on the HTC Vive there are two options which are currently supported and these are the Unity engine and the Unreal 4 engine. These game engines has native support for SteamVR which is the platform developed by Valve that powers the Vive. Both are free to be installed and just requires a simple registration to their respective websites.

Unity supports the C# programming language for development whereas Unreal Engine uses C++ on its current version of the software. Another aspect where it differs is Unity is mainly used to develop games for mobile devices such 2D platformer games. Unreal Engine is mainly used for desktop, AAA games which makes it more suitable for virtual reality with games running on Unreal generally looking better. Unreal Engine includes many features built in such as particle effects simulation, terrain, lighting and shading [1]. With SteamVR being natively supported, simple virtual reality features such as gesture recognition and teleportation movement mechanic can be easily implemented in to a game.

For this project Unreal Engine will be used as the development environment. This is because the group is more comfortable with using C++ so development will be quicker with Unreal rather than trying to use a language with little familiarity.

2.2.1 Unreal Engine 4

The Unreal Engine offers many features for people with little to no programming experience, these will not be used however, as they do not demonstrate any Computer Science expertise, one of the many features that will not be used is the drag and drop interface that is packaged in Unreal Engine to develop simple software quickly, along with the basic templates for various types of games. These are templates for popular genres, for example First Person Shooter and Sidescroller. For this project the group will implement their own features and backend for the genre that is picked, in order to demonstrate their ability to code for the HTC Vive. A select list of the features that Unreal Engine implements already are as follows:

Unreal Engine 4 Features

- Particle Effects Simulation (Visual Effects)
- Procedural Foliage
- Landscaping/Terrain
- Lighting
 - Directional
 - Point
 - Spot
 - Sky
 - Shadow Casting
- Shading
- Post Process Effects
 - Bloom
 - Ambient Occlusion

-
- Colour Grading
 - Depth of Field
 - Lens Flares
 - Material Effects
 - Fog Effects
 - View Distance Culling
 - Distance Dependent Level of Detail Models
 - Physics Simulation
 - Level Streaming (Ability load and unload map files into memory and toggle their visibility)
 - Basic Templates
 - First-Person
 - Third Person
 - Side Scroller
 - Vehicle
 - Artificial Intelligence System
 - Audio System
 - DirectX 11 & 12 Features
 - Full-scene HDR reflections
 - Per Scene Dynamic Lights
 - Physically Based Shading

Unreal Engine's full list of features can be found on their documentation site [2]

Chapter 3

Requirements

3.1 Client Requirements

The client has asked us to produce this technology demonstration in order to have a piece of software for the HTC Vive to demonstrate to students and has been developed by a University of Leeds student. The requirements that were given by the client were to appeal to the target audiences (who will be discussed in the next subsection), and to fully utilise the functionality of the HTC Vive in order to properly demonstrate its capabilities.

3.1.1 Target Audience

The demo would be targeted towards potential students looking to apply to the University of Leeds, as it will be shown to the students on Open days in order to gain interest from them. It would also have to appeal to people and companies in the gaming industry. As the more interest the School of Computing can gain from them, the more potential projects they may have for the school. With these target audiences in mind the demo should be technical to impress the gaming industry, while balancing it with being interesting for the potential students.

3.2 Feasibility Assessment

3.2.1 Feasibility

To support the development of the project, a reserved space where the HTC Vive can be permanently set up for the duration of the project is required. This reserved space would ideally be a room that meets the space requirements stated above for room-scale experiences, so that all the capabilities of the Virtual Reality hardware can be used. A computer which meets the hardware requirements is also needed in order to run the HTC Vive software, This computer must be running Windows since HTC Vive currently only supports this operating system [4]. Also, a copy of Unreal Engine 4 game engine must be installed which is free to be downloaded. Unreal Engine 4 is chosen over Unity since the members of the group are more familiar with developing in C++ which Unreal Engine supports rather than C# which Unity supports, although both of these game engines provide native support for virtual reality developments.

A possible solution for meeting the hardware requirements is to use a personal machine. A laptop is available with the specifications below which just meets the requirements for the graphical power. Development can be done on our own personal Windows machines and can be tested with the Vive using the laptop in the reserved room. The Vive is not required for conducting simple tests, but it is needed for identifying issues such as scaling and user input with motion controllers.

3.2.2 Technical Specifications

Hardware Requirements

- Graphics card: NVIDIA GeForce GTX 970 /Radeon R9 280 equivalent or greater
- Processor: Intel Core i5-4590 equivalent or greater

-
- RAM: 4GB+
 - Video Ports: HDMI 1.4, DisplayPort 1.2 or newer
 - 1x USB 2.0 port
 - Room-Scale Space: 2 meters by 1.5 meters

These requirements can be found on the official HTC Vive page on the Steam Store [6]

Chapter 4

Project Management

4.1 Methodology

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4.2 Schedule

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4.3 Version Control

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4.4 Risk Assessment

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Chapter 5

Planning and Design

5.1 Game Design Process

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5.2 Virtual Reality Features

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5.3 Random Generation of River Graphs

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5.4 Towers of Hanoi

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5.5 Plant Survival

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Chapter 6

Implementation

6.1 Development Environment

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6.1.1 Vive Hardware

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6.1.2 Game Engine

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6.1.3 Out of Engine Development

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6.2 Random Generation of Rivers and Terrain

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6.3 User Interactive Reverse Towers Of Hanoi

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6.4 Flow Dependant Flora

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Chapter 7

Testing and Evaluation

7.1 Testing Against Requirements

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7.2 Client Evaluation

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7.3 Result Evalutaion

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7.4 Project Evalutaion

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Chapter 8

Conclusion

8.1 Conclusion

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8.2 Future Work

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8.3 Personal Reflection

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Appendices

Appendix A

External Material

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Appendix B

Ethical Issues Addressed