For many years, the use and growth of technology has facilitated animation’s development. From the early ages of the [phenakistoscope disk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenakistoscope" \t "_blank) (spindle viewer) or flipbook, to the invention of the[zoetrope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoetrope) and current creations of graphic animation, technology has helped animation evolve from two — to three-dimensional format and even on to stereoscopic 3D.

More recently, technology tools facilitating computer animation include for example the digital pen, tablet and digital sculpting tools. In addition, high-end 3D animation software enables most of what one would see in a conventional animated movie such as modelling, rendering, animation, and lightning. And for certain animated sequences requiring an extra edge, there is always the opportunity to develop custom-made proprietary software to add that extra element to the final product.

But be it video games, movies or television — all of them carry the tell-tale signs of modern animation techniques facilitated by the use of technology. Yet long before the invention of computers, animators made use of hand drawings to create their animated characters which brought with it the tedious task of keeping track of each and every physical drawing making up the animation sequence.

The advent of computer and graphic processing hardware has fundamentally changed this process. However, whereas the length of time it takes to make an animated movie has remained relatively the same, it is the quality of the end result which has significantly improved as a result of this technology.

It was during the 1980s, however, that the newer technologies became more widely used allowing the animation industry to evolve and change the manner in which traditional animation was created. The new technology meant that, much like with the use of robots in manufacturing, machines could do more of the work. With the introduction of computer animation, people were afraid that computers would take their jobs.

However, thanks to a short animated film produced by Brian Jennings and Bill Kroyer, entitled Technological Threat, this fear was reduced as it was clearly illustrated not only how computer animation integrates with traditional animation, but how there is a place for both. Not only can and does traditional and computer animation coexist, but often a combination of both is needed.

Traditional animation remains a prominent form of animation to this day and continues to grow with new animators joining the industry each year. Computer animation is not meant as a replacement for traditional hand-drawn characters, but rather viewed as another tool in an animator’s box of tricks. Just because one owns a drill, it does not make a screwdriver obsolete! Each has an important role to play, together with their unique pros and cons. After all, a tool is only as good as the person who is trained to use it and the same holds true for computer animation. In order for this technology to reach its full potential, a key starting point still needs to be the animator’s natural creative ability and learnt skill.

To date, traditional animation still continues to receive both nominations and awards. An example of this is [*The Princess & The Frog*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Princess_and_the_Frog) which has been nominated for “Best Animated Feature Film” at the Golden Globes. Other examples include the all-time epic [*Beauty and the Beast*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beauty_and_the_Beast), French animated film [*Triplets of Belleville*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triplets_of_Belleville) and *[Paperman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paperman" \t "_blank)* which recently received an Oscar for Best Animated Short Film. But traditional animation is not limited to the big screen only, with hit prime-time cartoon show [*The Simpsons*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Simpsons) being a very well-known and loved example.

But as mentioned earlier, technology has a definite role to play. It is creating a virtual 3D space for animation processes and together with the animator’s talent, producing results previously not possible. The Bengal Tiger in the latest blockbuster, [*Life of Pi*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_of_Pi_(film)) by Ang Lee being a perfect example. Technology enabled the art of animation to create and enable the tiger’s performance to be as life-like as possible without needing to stage a real animal.

Not only has this never been done before, and in that an animation feat, but as animators and animation studios continue to combine the latest technological advances with natural-born creative talent, they continue to push the envelope and raise the bar of possibilities. And it is this which keeps audiences spellbound and on the edge of their seats, but most importantly, coming back for more.