

Importance Sampling in Many Lights Trees

Bachelor's Thesis of

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I declare that I have developed and written the enclosed thesis completely by myself, and have not used sources or means without declaration in the text.

Karlsruhe, 23. August 2018

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(Beini Ma)

Abstract

English abstract.

Zusammenfassung

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Contents

Abstract	i
Zusammenfassung	iii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Problem/Motivation	1
1.2 Content	1
2 Preliminaries	3
2.1 Probability Theory Basics	3
2.1.1 Random Variable	3
2.1.2 Probability Density Function	3
2.2 Monte Carlo Integration	4
2.3 Importance Sampling	4
2.4 Multiple Importance Sampling	4
2.5 Bounding Volume Hierarchies	4
2.6 Surface Area Heuristics	4
2.7 The algorithms for comparison	4
3 Own Data Structures	5
3.1 Node	5
3.2 Light Bounding Volume Hierarchy	5
4 Our Algorithm	7
4.1 General Idea	7
4.2 Tree Construction	7
4.3 Tree Traversal	7
5 Evaluation	9
6 Conclusion	11
Bibliography	11
Bibliography	13

List of Figures

List of Tables

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem/Motivation

Ray tracing is one of the most important rendering techniques when the aim is to create highly realistic pictures. It allows us to render the scene much closer to reality compared to typical scanline rendering methods at the cost of more computations. In situations where the images can be rendered ahead of time, such as for visual effects or films, we can take advantage of the better results of ray tracing. Then again, ray tracing is not useful for real-time applications like video games where the rendering speed is critical. But even when it comes to ray tracing, we cannot completely ignore the rendering time. Too long rendering times are becoming a problem in scenes with many lights. For instance a scene of big city with skyscrapers at night could have hundreds or thousands of lights that could potentially all affect a single point in the scene. Typical light sampling methods would be too slow to deal with these situations, since we cannot calculate the effect of every single light on the sampled point.[PJH16][CK17a][CK17b][Wal+05]

There are sampling approaches that try to limit the time required to render these scenes with a big amount of lights. For instance, we could say that the probability of a point of the scene being sampled by a certain light is only dependent on the emission power of said light. We would make a distribution that only takes into account the emission power of the lights. To light a point we would then pick out a single light with a random number generator and sample the point with that light. Obviously there are a lot of problems with this approach. An area light source or a spotlight could be facing towards a completely different direction and not have any effect on the point. Or the light could be potentially too far away to have a noticeable effect on the point. This sampling technique asserts a fast sampling speed but can lead to very noisy images that we try to avoid.

For this bachelor thesis I have implemented a light sampling technique that optimizes the rendering speed without making the rendered image too noisy.

1.2 Content

2 Preliminaries

2.1 Probability Theory Basics

In this section we will be discussing basic ideas and define certain terms from the probability theory. We will assume that the reader is already familiar with most of the concepts and therefore will only give a short introduction. If the reader struggles following the key parts of this section, he is heavily advised to read more extensive literature about this subject. We suggest E. T. Jaynes *Probability Theory: The Logic of Science* for this matter. [Jay03]

2.1.1 Random Variable

A random variable X is a variable whose values are numerical outcomes chosen by a random process. There are discrete random variables, which can only take a countable set of possible outcomes and continuous random variables with an uncountable number of possible results. For instance, flipping a coin would be a random variable drawn from a discrete domain which can only result to heads or tails, while sampling a random direction over a unit sphere can produce infinite different directions. In rendering and particularly in ray tracing, we are often sampling certain directions or light sources in order to illuminate the scene, therefore we will be handling both discrete and continuous random variables, albeit with the latter in the most cases.

The so-called canonical uniform random variable ξ is a special continuous random variable that is especially important for us. Every interval in its domain $[0, 1)$ with equal length are assigned the same probability. This random variable makes it very easy to generate samples from arbitrary distributions. For example, if we would need to sample a direction to estimate the incident lighting on a point, we could draw two samples from ξ and scale these two values with appropriate transformations so they reflect the polar coordinates of direction to sample.

2.1.2 Probability Density Function

For continuous random variables, probability density functions (PDF) illustrate how the possible outcomes of the random experiment are distributed across the domain. They must be nonnegative and integrate to 1 over the domain. $p : \zeta \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is a pdf when

$$\int_{\zeta} p(x) dx = 1. \quad (2.1)$$

Integrating over a certain interval $[a, b]$ gives the possibility that the random experiment returns a result that lies inside of given interval:

$$\int_a^b p(x)dx = P(x \in [a, b]) \quad (2.2)$$

It is evident, that $P(x \in [a, a]) = 0$ which reflects the fundamental idea of continuous random variables: The possibility of getting a sample that exactly equals a certain number is zero. Therefore, PDFs are only meaningful when regarded over a interval and not over a single point.

2.2 Monte Carlo Integration

2.3 Importance Sampling

2.4 Multiple Importance Sampling

2.5 Bounding Volume Hierarchies

2.6 Surface Area Heuristics

2.7 The algorithms for comparison

3 Own Data Structures

3.1 Node

3.2 Light Bounding Volume Hierarchy

4 Our Algorithm

4.1 General Idea

4.2 Tree Construction

4.3 Tree Traversal

5 Evaluation

6 Conclusion

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