Issue #4

Illuminate

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Sept. 23, 2011

Programming: Updating the Prototype

Our previous prototype for testing the physics engine was keyboard driven. We changed it into left mouse-click to move and arrow keys to rotate. Currently we have limited slots shown on the screen indicating which pieces are available to the player.

We are currently changing the prototype to meet the game design-we added a new inventory, mouse control, check points, and a goal. The goal is now working as a trigger, when you put a “Star Block” to reach the goal, it will take a “charging time” of 5 seconds, and light up the rest of the tower, and play a simple particle effect. The checkpoint basically works the same way, but will not disappear when you reach it. We also added some temporary art assets to the prototype, and have started to reconstruct and optimize the code.

Wiimotes

We’ve decided to develop two versions of the game, both for PCs, but with one using standard mouse and keyboard input and the other using Wiimotes. Wiimotes seemed apt for our game’s design because of the tactile nature of the interaction and the possibility for more than one child to play on the same PC simultaneously. Developing for both mouse/keyboard and Wiimotes may also present a research opportunity for HCII to assess the impact of those different interfaces on the kids’ engagement and learning.

Calendar

September 26th

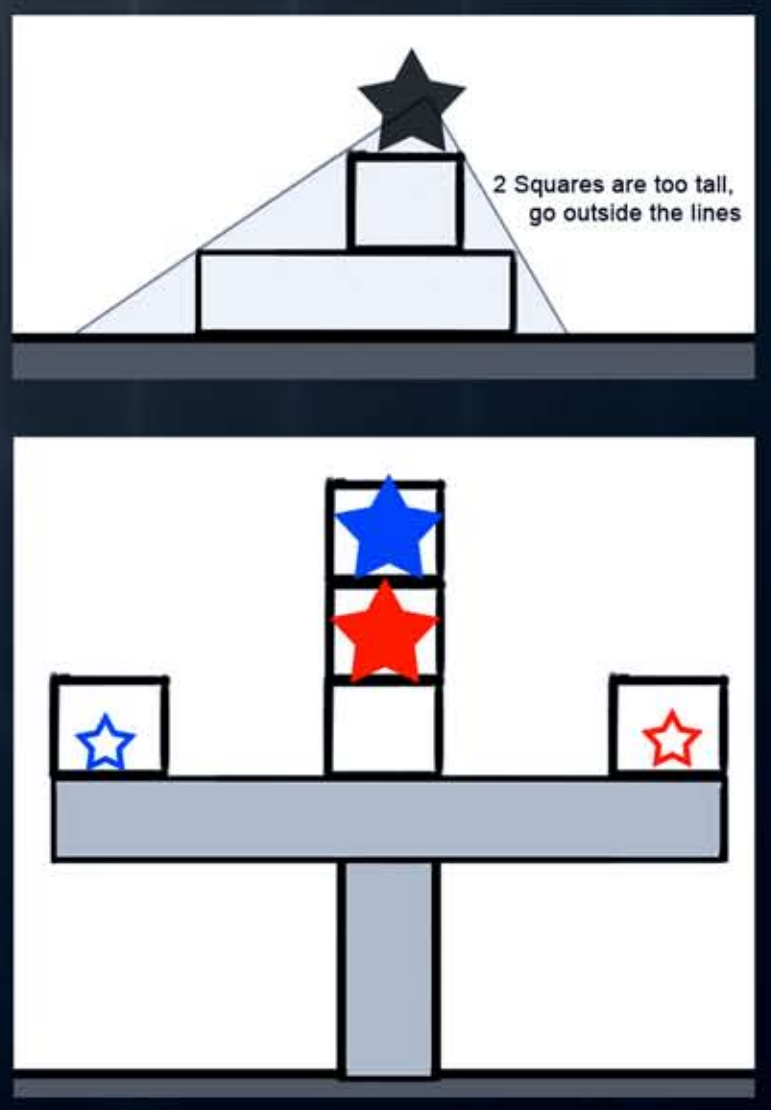
Quarters Walkarounds
-Faculty visit the project room and check on current progress.

October 24th, 26th, 28th

Half Presentations
-Mid-Semester Presentations.

Design: Feedback & Iteration

We’ve spent a good portion of the week in meeting with various people to get feedback on our game design. These meetings were very important as it allows us to nail the design early in development. Overall our feedback has been very positive, both with our theme (using light as the primary element) as well as our approach (a more exploratory experience for the user). We also created new level designs that allow for collaboration and communication between the players. We also decided to break the levels down into more of a gradual experience, exposing the students to each concept as the game progresses rather than combining them into a single level. Another suggestion that we have started to consider is an additional play mode that allows for completing and even improving a partially built structure.



Also from our feedback we’ve taken a few suggestions regarding possible narratives for our game to help drive our mechanic. One suggestion was to personify the stars: what if the stars were dancing around on the blocks? If they are moving around, the tower will have to be more stable to support the motion. Another possibility was having the objects be containing fireflies, and the objective is to create a structure that will connect them all together.

HCII
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