GigaVoxels, Real-time Voxel-based Library to Render Large and Detailed Objects
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A voxel-based rendering pipeline for efficient exploration of large and detailed scenes

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R&D Engineer

Videos Games
Special Effects
Scientific Visualization

Between Research & Industry

http://gigavoxels.inrialpes.fr/
What is all about?

R&D project about real-time exploration of
- large and detailed objects/scenes
- eventually generated on the fly
- visually realistic

Target audience
- Video games
- Special effects
- Special case: scientific visualization
Goal

Present our implementation of the « GigaVoxels » technology


[ 2 ] - Show fonctionnalities through examples of the SDK

[ 3 ] - A survey : explain how to program
PART 1 - GigaVoxels

Exploratory Research phase
- PhD Thesis: « GigaVoxels: A Voxel-Based Rendering Pipeline For Efficient Exploration Of Large And Detailed Scenes »
- Team: INRIA/CNRS/LJK (Cyril Crassin, Fabrice Neyret)
- Based on an OpenGL / GLSL + CUDA prototype

Engineering phase
- Started in 2011: clean, maintain, add fonctionnalities, ...
- SDK (tutorials), doc, tools, ...

Partnership
- RSA Cosmos: planetariums [funded by French ANR, 4 years research project]
Website
- image gallery
- videos
- publications
- documentation
- source code (not yet)
- contact

GigaVoxels is a ray-guided streaming library used for efficient 3D real-time rendering of highly detailed volumetric scenes.

Software SDK
- Data Structure (N-tree) + User Defined Data (color, normal, density...)
- Cache Mechanism
- Renderer (ray casting with OpenGL interoperability)
- Producer Mechanism (on host and device)

Documentation
- Classes (doxygen)
- User / Developer Manual

Tutorials

Tools
- Viewer
- Voxelizer (pre-process)
Key Ideas

[x] Rendering only dependent on what is visible
  - ray-tracing approach

[x] Load only needed data, at the needed resolution
  - occlusion + LOD (level of details)
  - ray-guided streaming

[x] Reuse loaded data as much as possible
  - cache mechanism on GPU

[x] Minimize computation, minimize memory transfers
Key Features

- **Tree Data Management** (space partitioning) to store and organize data (octree or generalized N3-tree, + SDK example kd-tree)

- **Cache System on GPU** : LRU mechanism (least recently used) (to get temporal coherency)

- **Data Production Management** : on host, GPU, or hybrid mode
  Goal : produced data are kept in cache on GPU

- **Visit algorithm** : traverse your data (loaded in cache) as could be done for rendering

- **Renderer** (hierarchical volume ray-casting, cone tracing, emission of requests, brick marching)
**Data Structure**

**Generalized N₃-tree (octree)**
- Space partitioning
- Empty space compaction

**Bricks of voxels**
- Linked by octree nodes
- Store opacity, color, normal, …

“Node pointer based” data structure
GigaVoxels Pipeline

GPU
- Sparse Voxel Octree
- Voxel Ray-Tracer
  - Output image
  - Data usage + requests
  - Structure updates
- GPU Cache Manager
  - Voxel data fetch

CPU
- Central Memory Store
- Mass storage
GigaVoxels Pipeline + data structure

- unified data structure (geometry + texture)
- load only needed data at needed resolution
- smooth transitions and continuously reveals details
- Handle semi-transparent objects
- Alias free filtered images (cone tracing)
PART 2 - Fonctionnalités through SDK examples
**Data loading**

**Data streaming**
Load data « on demand ». Two modes :
- level by level (from coarse to fine) [speed trade-off]
- directly max level of resolution [quality before]

**File format**
By level of resolution and by data types
- 1 - nodes (spatial structure)
- 2 - bricks of voxels
no header, no meta-file…
Import your own data

**Custom file importer**

RAW data [scientific visualization]

- apply transfer function
- threshold data
- clipping plane [region of interest]
Procedural data generation

Mandelbulb

Goal: generate environments

Fractal object: 3D extension of Mandelbrot set

\[ (x, y, z)^n = r^n \langle \cos(n\theta) \cos(n\phi), \sin(n\theta) \cos(n\phi), \sin(n\phi) \rangle \]

 où
\[
\begin{cases}
  r &= \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + z^2} \\
  \theta &= \arctan(y/x) \\
  \phi &= \arctan(z/\sqrt{x^2 + y^2}) = \arcsin(z/r)
\end{cases}
\]

pour la nième puissance du nombre hypercomplexe 3D. Les points sont calculés par itération de \( z \mapsto z^n + c \) où \( z \) et \( c \) sont des nombres hypercomplexes dans un espace de dimension 3 et \( z \mapsto z^n \) l’application définie ci-dessus. Ici \( n = 8 \).
Procedural data generation

Mandelbulb
**Noise - Hypertextures**

**Goals**
Add details on 3D models
- smooth transitions and continuously reveals details
- alias free filtered images
- handle parallax effect

**Theory**
- Ken Perlin
- book: « Texturing and Modeling, a procedural approach », chapter 12
Noise

Input
3D model: Signed Distance Field
- Noise: applied on distance and normal
- Transfer Function: convert distance to RGBA color
Idea : (use cache)

Mimic the LOD mechanism that continuously add details :

⇒ Re-use noise computation at previous resolution level

- noise : sum of octaves (frequencies)
- compute only one octave by level of resolution
- store them in GPU cache
- reproduce the sum :

\[ F(\text{level } N) = \text{currentNoise}(\text{level } N) + \text{previousNoise}(\text{level } N-1) \]

Finally : replace “noise computation” by “data fetch in cache”
Hypertexture (shape + solid texturing)

- $F(x)=0$: outside the object
- $F(x)=1$: strictly inside the object
- $0<F(x)<1$: inside a fuzzy region

Idea: add details on armor soldier

- Distance function: sphere
- Thickness: fuzzy region (Perlin noise)
- Current work: optimizations
  - Stop adding noise components if density is outside
Depth of Field

Goal

Add more realism to images
- mimic camera lens (focus plane)
- double lens cone
Voxel data synthesis

**Goal**: Simulate environments

**Instanciation and recursion**
- node pointers based system

![Diagram showing instanciation and recursivity](image)
Voxel data synthesis

Menger/Serpinski Sponge
Mix triangles and voxels

- integration with traditional CG rasterized scenes (or compositing)
- renderer takes color and depth buffer as input and updates them with voxels
Voxel-based Instancing

**Goal** (not yet, in study/progress)

Have several GigaVoxels entities (forest)
- Need proxy geometry
- Render projected 2D BBox
- Use GLSL fragment shader
- (rays start + direction)
Goal

Environment to study, test, profile, debug...

- Kind of “generic” API: browsers, editors, etc...
- Tools: transfer function, performance monitor, etc...
- 3D models importer (+ GLSL shaders editor)
- Futur hope:
  - CUDA functions editor
  - “recompile on the fly”

Tools: Viewer

- Custom editors
- Custom data browser
- GPUs
- GigaVoxels
- OpenGL
Goal

Plugin « GigaVoxels Pipeline » : dynamic library (.dll, .so)

=> kind of « effect »

- Idea : plug this “node” in a scene graph à la OpenSceneGraph (see the “ppu” project) or Ogre3D
- Not yet finished : it has been “polluted” with Qt to have USER custom editors.
Pre-process step

Futur work:
- optimize code
- smooth resulting data
- idea: voxelize data

“on the fly” in the producers
Use events to record time between kernel functions
Special case: record “device” functions (1 thread per pixel)
Record device function for Rendering kernel (1 thread per pixel), then compute average time on all pixels

```c
#ifdef WIN32
    typedef unsigned __int64  uint64;
#else
    typedef unsigned long long  uint64;
#endif

__device__ uint64 getClock()
{
    uint64  result;
    // Using inline PTX assembly in CUDA.
    // Target ISA Notes : %clock64 requires sm_20 or higher.
    //
    // The constraint on output is "=l" :
    //  - '=' modifier specified that the register is written to
    //  - 'l' modifier refers to the register type ".u64 reg"
    asm volatile ("mov.u64 %0,%clock64;" : "=l"(result) : :);
    return  result;
}
```
**French ANR Research Project**

RSA Cosmos : planetariums [2010-2014]

- “Real-Time and Interactive Galaxy for Edutainment”
- I. Visualize static galaxies
- II. Data amplification (procedural generation)
- III. Animate galaxies

**Optimisations**

- use OpenGL billboards to stop rays (VBO)
- multi-GPUs ?
- time budget ?, priority on bricks ?
PART 3 - The library

- [ 1 ] - Core library
- [ 2 ] - User custom API
The library

Goal

- Capitalize on the knowledge of the team
- Continue research on the subject
- Hide the complexity of the underlying « core » library (cache mechanism, data structure management, etc...)
- Give USER access to customize the « data production » and the « shader »
The library

Technologies
- C++ (template)
- GPU Computing : CUDA + libraries (cudpp / thrust)
- CMake
- IHM : Qt
- Viewer : QGLViewer
- 3D : OpenGL (GLSL)
- Others : Loki, Assimp, CImg, ImageMagick
- OS : Windows (7), Linux (Ubuntu) + 32/64 bits
- Requirements : Cuda 4.x and Compute Capability SM at least 2.0
[1] - Common API: «hidden» generic mechanisms

- **Tree Data Management** (space partitioning) to store and organize data (octree or generalized N3-tree, + SDK example kd-tree)

- **Cache System on GPU**: LRU mechanism (least recently used) (to get temporal coherency)

- **Data Production Management**: on host, GPU, or hybrid mode
  Goal: produced data are kept in cache on GPU

- **Visit algorithm**: traverse your data (loaded in cache) as could be done for rendering

- **Renderer** (hierarchical volume ray-casting, cone tracing, emission of requests, brick marching)
[ 2 ] – USER access

USER Customizable API

- **Producer** (load or produce our own data)
  - used during Data Production Management

- **Shader** (write your custom shader)
  - used during Visit algorithm and Rendering
Data Production Management:
- Nodes subdivision (data refinement)
- Load or compute bricks of voxels (fill data)

USER has to write:
- a HOST producer
- and its associated GPU producer
Data Production Management

Sequence Diagram of a frame:

1. Visit Data
2. Handle Requests

KERNEL (2D) Ray-Casting
1 thread/pixel

Tree Traversal

CUSTOM shader

Ray Marching

Emit Requests (if needed)

A. Subdivide Nodes

HOST ➔ GPU

B. Fill Voxels Data

CUSTOM producer

HOST ➔ GPU
Sequence

Frame 1
Produce Nodes
Produce Bricks

Frame 2
Produce Nodes
Produce Bricks

... 

Frame N
Produce Nodes
Produce Bricks
Nodes subdivision:

- KERNEL: 1 bloc/node and 1 thread/child_node
- Each node has to say what’s inside each of its child
- INPUT: localization info of current node (LOD depth and spatial index pos)
- INPUT: address in “node cache” where to write new child nodes
- Test if it is in a sphere (analytically)
- Write nodes in cache
Nodes subdivision:

WORLD: sphere

Ex: sphere on GPU

FLAG Children
- EMPTY
- DATA inside
- MAX RESOLUTION reached

1st step
Retrieve 3D world position with help of INPUT localization info (depth, index position)

Write result in cache
- Next frame, renderer will ask for the node data production (brick of voxels)

Parent
Children
- what’s inside?

empty
2
3
empty
2
3
0
1
0
1
data
**Ex : sphere on GPU**

**Bricks of voxels production :**

(same principe as for nodes)

- **KERNEL :** 1 bloc/brick and thread is as you want
- **USER is in 1 brick and has to populate its voxels**
- **INPUT :** localization info of current node (LOD depth and spatial index pos)
- **INPUT :** address in “data cache” where to write new voxels
- **Write voxels in cache**
**Reminder**: SHADER management

1. **Visit Data**
   - KERNEL (2D) Ray-Casting
   - 1 thread/pixel

2. **Handle Requests**
   - Subdivide Nodes
   - Fill Voxels Data
   - Emit Requests (if needed)

   - HOST ➔ GPU
   - CUSTOM producer
**SHADER:**

- **INPUT:** “data sampler” and current position
- Sample data, retrieve USER defined channel (color, normal, etc...) and accumulate color along the current ray

```cpp
// Retrieve first channel element : color
__device__ void ShaderKernel::run( const SamplerType& brickSampler, ... )
{
    float4 color = brickSampler.getValue<0>( coneAperture );    // channel 0 is color

    if ( color.w > 0.0f ) {_accumulatedColor = _accumulatedColor + ( 1.0f - _accumulatedColor.w ) * color; }
}
```

Ex : sphere on GPU
SHADER:

- CUSTOM api provide “other entry points”:
  - `getConeAperture()` [modify cone aperture]
  - `getStopCitrion()` [ ex : `accumulatedColor.w >= 0.98f` ]
  - `getDescentCriterion()` [ used during “visit” traversal ]
  - ...

GigaVoxels Sequence Diagram
Tips and tricks:

- Template meta-programmation: curiously recursive template pattern (to avoid polymorphism on GPU)

  This technique achieves a similar effect to the use of virtual functions, without the costs (and some flexibility) of dynamic polymorphism.

- Data cache: 3D texture to read, and bind with surfaces to write data

- Loki: use to access different textures types

- Cudpp(/thrust): cache mechanism on GPU (stream compaction to get “used” and “non-used” elements at current frame)

- Write Z-buffer: slow => idea => use color and do conversion
OpenGL interoperability

Mix triangles and voxels:
- integration with traditional CG rasterized scenes (or compositing)
- renderer takes color and depth buffer as input and updates them with voxels
- Opaque objects rendered first (depth buffer) to skip occluded parts
- GigaVoxels registers « textures, renderBuffer, PBO, ... » with optimized flags

(see GTC 2013 : S3070 – « Part 1 – Configuring, Programming and Debugging Applications for Multi-GPUs » from Wil Braithwaite [NVidia]
cudaGraphicsRegisterFlagsReadOnly, cudaGraphicsRegisterFlagsWriteDiscard, ...)
OpenGL interoperability

Mix triangles and voxels

Simple mode: \[\text{no input} + \text{only write color}\]

// [1] - Init texture (with window size)
\[
\begin{align*}
glGenTextures & (1, &colorTex) ; \\
glBindTexture & (GL\_TEXTURE\_RECTANGLE\_EXT, colorTex) ; \\
glTexImage2D & (GL\_TEXTURE\_RECTANGLE\_EXT, 0, GL\_RGBA8, width, height, 0, GL\_RGBA, GL\_UNSIGNED\_BYTE, NULL) ;
\end{align*}
\]
// [2] - Register texture in WRITE ONLY slot in GigaVoxels
renderer->connect( Gv::eColorWriteSlot, colorTex, GL\_TEXTURE\_RECTANGLE\_EXT ) ;

// Launch GigaVoxels rendering engine
renderer->render( /*OpenGL matrices*/ ) ;
// Draw a full screen textured quad
glBindTexture( GL\_TEXTURE\_RECTANGLE\_EXT, colorTex ) ;
glBegin( GL\_QUADS ) ;
...
OpenGL interoperability

Current work

[1] - **Proxy geometry**

“rasterized (approximate) geometry” containing non-empty areas of volume, providing starting and exit point for each ray, speeding-up the skipping of empty spaces

- Help skip empty regions
- Can add volumetric details on a triangle mesh


- Would like to have demo with forest
OpenGL interoperability

Current work: based on a galaxy visualization research project
Number of stars represented by points (VBO) can be very huge:

[ 1 ] Sphere Ray-Tracing (change representation)
- When bricks are near empty, generate spheres coordinates in « producer »
- Replace brick-marching by Ray-Tracing at rendering phase (fetch positions)

[ 2 ] VBO generation
- add details by generating stars (OpenGL vbo points) in a GigaVoxels « producer »
- dump result in VBO dynamically (only visible nodes)
- => kind of view frustum culling
... the futur...

Ideas

- Working on performance (Visual Profiler, NSight)
  + Handle time budget for a frame, priority on bricks
- Use CUDA 5: linker (recompile USER functions on the fly ?)
- Store points inside voxel (VBO generation according to visibility)
  ✔ Geometry instancing (forest)
  ✔ Voxel animation (with shellmaps)

...
Library / SDK content

- Core library documented
- SDK tutorials fully documented
- Developer guide : soon
  - kind of “behind the scene”) : technical implementations detailed
Thanks

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Questions

http://gigavoxels.inrialpes.fr/

Thanks for your attention