



Topics for this newsletter:

- I) Save the Date
- II) Saving Alice worlds as a movie
- III) Alice upcoming events

I) Save the Date

Based on about a 2-1 preference, you have requested that we hold a single Alice meeting for folks who participated in last summer's workshops and for others. That workshop will be held immediately after Father's Day, June 18th (or 19th) through the 21st, 2006. It will be held in Raleigh-Durham, NC, at Duke. (Please note that this date is after the AP grading has been completed and before ITiCSE.) We are planning to have this meeting consist of two parts:

Part 1 (starting Sunday or Monday) will be a meeting for those who have already taught with Alice this past year.

Part 2 (starting on Tuesday) will be a repeat of our two-day Alice workshop from this past summer. We expect to have either two tracks (one for high school teachers and one for college teachers) or possibly three tracks (an additional track for community college teachers). This latter part will be intended for the many faculty who were either on our waiting lists from last summer, or who are new to Alice and would like a detailed workshop on how to use and teach with Alice.

In between the two parts (on Tuesday morning), we intend to have a couple of keynote speakers. We will announce further details in the next newsletter.

II) Saving Alice worlds as a movie

Many folks have asked about saving Alice worlds as movies. This is not directly supported in Alice. Victoria Webb wrote a lovely explanation as part of one of the www.alice.org/community forums. It is repeated here:

"The movie recording feature in Alice has been disabled for some time now as the videos it produced tended to be excessively large. As it stands, the team is looking at 3rd party software and will post a faq on how to install and run it sometime soon.

For the more adventuresome, here's the run down. Alice doesn't use the buffer on your video card so frame recording programs like Fraps won't work. However screen recording programs of the type used to create demos of the windows environment will. There are many options and it all depends on how much you are willing to pay for such a program and what kind of watermark you are willing to settle for if you are using the demo version.

A couple of weeks back I did a survey of possible screen recording programs. Hypercam was one of the many I looked at. However I settled on a different option as the one the Alice team would recommend.

Bulent's Screen Recorder has an unlimited trial period with a minor watermark. The program costs a mere \$17.99 for those who want to pay for the full version. There is also a shareware version of it for those who are willing to do a little bit of digging.

When using any screen recording software, I recommend using a click-to-start screen in your Alice world to give you more control over when your movie begins. An example of click-to-start can be found in the "Snow Love" demo that ships with Alice. Although using a black billboard is easier then dimming and raising the environmental lights as "Snow Love" does.

To record your movie you'll want to:

- 1) Run Alice and open the world you wish

to record.

2) Under Edit->Preferences, click on the rendering tab. Under "render window position and size:" you will see a box next to width and height. Put in a reasonable value for the size of the video to be played. The larger the video the bigger the file will be. If the values aren't taking then resize the run window manually.

3) Click play to run your Alice program.

4) Open your screen recording software (the rest of the instructions assumes you are using Bulent's Screen Recorder although the process is similar with all screen recording packages).

5) Click the Select Source button and click on the "A Window" option. A dialogue box will appear with instructions. Move your mouse cursor over the window your Alice world is running in and hit Enter or F4.

6) Click on the Configuration button. The screen recorder window will expand to include a new frame. This panel will control the quality of the recording and conversely affect the size of the file that is generated.

7) Click the Compression button to open up a new window. The default for is to use the Microsoft Video 1 codex at 80% quality.

That looks pretty bad. I recommend bumping the quality up to 100%. Click OK.

Note: Codex are the software algorithms used to encode videos. Each codex has varying strengths and weaknesses as they deal with the encoding process in different ways. The idea is to maintain a certain level of quality at the smallest possible file size. Raw or uncompressed video is the highest quality but eats up a lot of file space. It's a good option if you are planning on bringing the video into another program for further editing as there is no data loss from the initial grab. However the video needs to be compressed before it can be shared. One thing to remember about codex is that not everybody has the same codex you do. If you want to share your work to the largest

audience it is best to pick a common codex even if it is not the most efficient compression.

Now you are ready to record your Alice video.

8) Restart your Alice world (if it has been running) or click on it to start, and press the camcorder button. Right below the Select Source button is red text that tells you what the program is doing. Confirm that it is recording (if it isn't search through the options to figure out why it's not recording. It may be waiting for you to press a key).

9) When the world has finished playing click on the stop button and press the play button to see your video. If you are satisfied, click on the save button to save it to your hard drive.

Other screen recording programs include Hypercam, Camtasia, My Screen Recorder and Quick Screen recorder. Try them out and find one that's right for you.

The Alice team is still looking at options for a 3rd party Mac screen recording program. If you find any that work well for you, post about it and we'll go through them."

- Victoria Webb

Member of the Alice Team

III) Alice upcoming events

Please let us know about any Alice-related events, and we will publicize them here

November 11, 2005 (a couple of days from now), Steve will be giving a 3-hour Alice workshop at the CCSC-SE regional ACM conference at Lenoir-Rhyne College. Please see:

<http://cs.furman.edu/ccscse/conference.php?year=19th> for details.

Sometime during March 1-5 at SIGCSE, Wanda and Steve will be giving a 3-hour introductory Alice workshop and a 3-hour advanced Alice workshop. We are also intending to submit a BOF proposal for teaching with Alice.

We may be offering a week-long summer workshop for high school teacher in teaching with Alice -- details to follow in the next e-newsletter.

That's all for now. Please share with us interesting materials for for inclusion in this e-newsletter or topics you'd like us to be writing about.

Regards,
Wanda and Steve

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