KEYNOTE TALK
Wednesday, September 28, 2011
1:30PM – 2:30 PM / Ballroom 1-2

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Can Interacting with a Virtual Human Make You a Better Person?

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Abstract

Virtual environments have made impressive strides in user interfaces, rendering, audio, and commercialization, and in this context we will cover the next frontier in virtual environments, virtual humans. Virtual humans are the digital citizens that populate virtual environments. Virtual humans have the potential to revolutionize the way we learn, interact, and train. In this talk, we will cover example real-world applications, affective capabilities, and propose research questions of virtual humans. My goal is to inspire the audience 1) on the transformative nature of virtual humans, 2) to participate in the research and application of virtual humans, and 3) explore the research and design space of virtual human populated virtual environments.

Speaker Bio-Sketch: Benjamin C. Lok is an Associate Professor in the Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering Department at the University of Florida. He is also an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Surgery Department at Georgia Health Sciences University. His research focuses on virtual humans and mixed reality in the areas of computer graphics, virtual environments, and human-computer interaction. Professor Lok received a Ph.D. (2002, advisor: Dr. Frederick P. Brooks, Jr.) and M.S. (1999) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a B.S. in Computer Science (1997) from the University of Tulsa. He did a post-doc fellowship (2003) under Dr. Larry F. Hodges at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Professor Lok received a NSF Career Award (2007-2012) and the UF ACM CISE Teacher of the Year Award in 2005-2006. He and his students in the Virtual Experiences Research Group have received best paper awards at ACM I3D (Top 3, 2003) and IEEE VR (2008). His work is primarily supported by the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. He currently serves on the Steering Committee of the IEEE Virtual Reality conference, program co-chair of the ACM VRST 2009, IEEE Virtual Reality 2010, and IEEE Virtual Reality 2011. Professor Lok is on the editorial board of the International Journal of Human-Computer Studies and Simulation: Transactions of the Society for Modeling and Simulation.