

ANNETTE WEINTRAUB,
CYNTHIA BETH RUBIN,
SIMON PENNY, PAUL BROWN,
HORIT-HERMAN PELED, TESSA ELLIOT

Running to Stay in Place: Faculty Burnout in the Electronic Arts Proposed Guidelines for Faculty in Computer-based Media in Art and Design

Cynthia Beth Rubin & Annette Weintraub:

The computer age has brought many changes in how we think about images, construct images, and share them with audiences. It has even brought into question how we relate fine arts to other disciplines, including the other more established visual arts. What remains largely unexamined, however, is the role of the artist/professor in the academic world.

Most academic institutions appear to have assumed that although the basic tool of computer based art may be very different from that of other media, the teaching of it is not. They assumed that faculty could easily slip into the same structures that have long been established for the teaching of studio art. Requirements governing teaching loads and class preparation, and allocations for technical support services and budgetary allotments have not been reexamined. The assumption that computer art is just like other media is even applied to research, which includes exhibition and the demands of keeping current. While it may be logical for administrators to think of the computer-based arts as just another medium, for those of us in the field, the traditional structures just do not fit. This has led to a large discrepancy in the responsibilities of and expectations for faculty in this area as compared with colleagues in other studio art areas.

Anecdotal evidence from computer media faculty from a wide range of higher education institutions indicates that they are burning out under

the pressure to perform at unrealistic levels. Tasks that appear to be the same on paper are simply more demanding for the computer-based artist, ranging from the ordering of supplies to the maintenance of studio facilities. As in any rapidly changing discipline, the work load of simply keeping current is enormous, and frequently no provision is made for professional development. This disparity in the demands made upon computer media faculty and their studio arts colleagues grows ever wider as the technology continues to evolve and is incorporated in more aspects of art and design curricula.

Frequently, colleagues and administrators outside of the electronic arts are unaware of many of these critical issues, and, as a result individual faculty in this area are often isolated and have little support. This panel presents a document which describes the problems and offers guidelines for the administrative and financial support which are necessary to sustain programs using computer technology and provides information about faculty working in this area that could be used in making evaluations in hiring, promotion and tenure. Topics addressed in this paper include: Descriptions of Typical Responsibilities Program Concerns: Curriculum Design; Keeping Current; Evaluation of Research/Exhibitions. Program Management Concerns: Administration; Budget; Program Promotion. Program Support Concerns: The Lab; Student/Faculty Relationship; Health Hazards; Other Support Issues. Recommendations.

This panel will open a larger dialogue with our international colleagues on these issues and formulate strategies for support of faculty in the areas of technology acquisition, performance evaluation, and the recognition of new venues for electronic arts. The guidelines document developed out of conversations between the

moderators, who called a meeting at SIGGRAPH 93 in Anaheim under the auspices of the SIGGRAPH Education Committee. Attended by about fifteen individuals representing electronic arts faculties in the USA and internationally, the meeting addressed the document outline prepared by Annette Weintraub, and resulted in an Internet listserv group moderated by Cynthia Beth Rubin. Over the following nine months, the document was developed on the listserv, with significant participation from Dave Poindexter. The final document, which incorporated comments and discussion from the listserv was written by Cynthia Beth Rubin and Annette Weintraub. It is being distributed for endorsements, and is being presented to ISEA as well as to SIGGRAPH and the College Art Association of America(CAA).

Simon Penny

Electronic media arts in university and college contexts face new and demanding environmental conditions, both within and outside the college context. The most significant of these from a teaching and administration point of view is the rapid change of the technology. This is due to the fact that the rate of change and direction of change of the technology is controlled not by artists or the art community, but by the need for continued profits by the computer industry. This induces a false, technologically determined criteria on art works and art pedagogy.

This results in heavy pressures upon faculty to continually retrain, and the spectre of students being trained on hardware and software that will be obsolete by the time they graduate. It also puts a financial strain that many schools cannot bear. Funding often occurs in large one time lump sum grants for hardware with no infrastructure, technical support or ongoing upgrade and maintenance