

Displays and framebuffers

1

Reading

Required

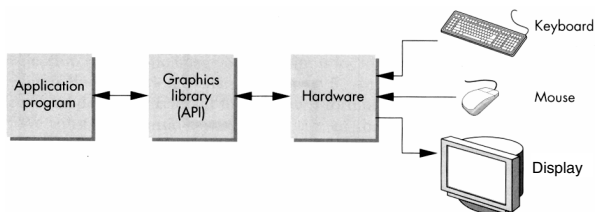
- ♦ Angel, section 1.2, chapter 2
- ♦ Hearn & Baker, handout

Optional

- ♦ OpenGL Programming Guide (the "red book" – available online):
 - First four sections of chapter 2
 - First section of chapter 6
- ♦ Foley et al., sections 1.5, 4.2-4.5
- ♦ I.E. Sutherland. Sketchpad: a man-machine graphics communication system. *Proceedings of the Spring Joint Computer Conference*, p. 329-346, 1963.
- ♦ T.H. Myer & I.E. Sutherland. On the design of display processors. *Communications of the ACM* 11(6): 410-414, 1968.

2

Modern graphics systems



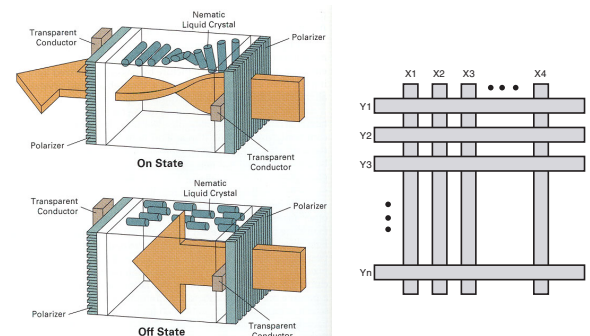
Current graphics systems consist of:

- An application, which talks to a...
- Graphics library (e.g., OpenGL or Direct3D), which talks to the...
- Graphics hardware

The graphics hardware can do a lot of fancy work these days. We'll take a brief tour, starting from the display...

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Liquid Crystal Display



Laptops typically use **liquid crystal displays (LCD's)**.

- ♦ Light enters a **vertical polarizer**
- ♦ **Nematic crystal** twists light based on applied voltage (more voltage, less twisting)
- ♦ Light passes through **horizontal polarizer**

Passive matrix displays use a matrix of electrodes to control the voltages. Problem: slow to switch, overflows.

Active matrix displays have a transistor at each cell. They use a faster switching crystal and transistors that hold charge and prevent overflow.

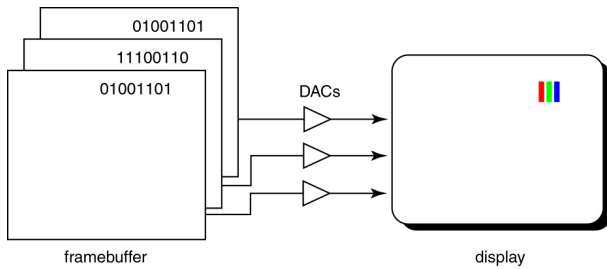
Color filters are used to get color display.

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RGB framebuffer

The brightness of each LCD element is controlled by a dedicated memory array called a **framebuffer**.

Each element of the framebuffer is associated with a single **pixel** on the screen.



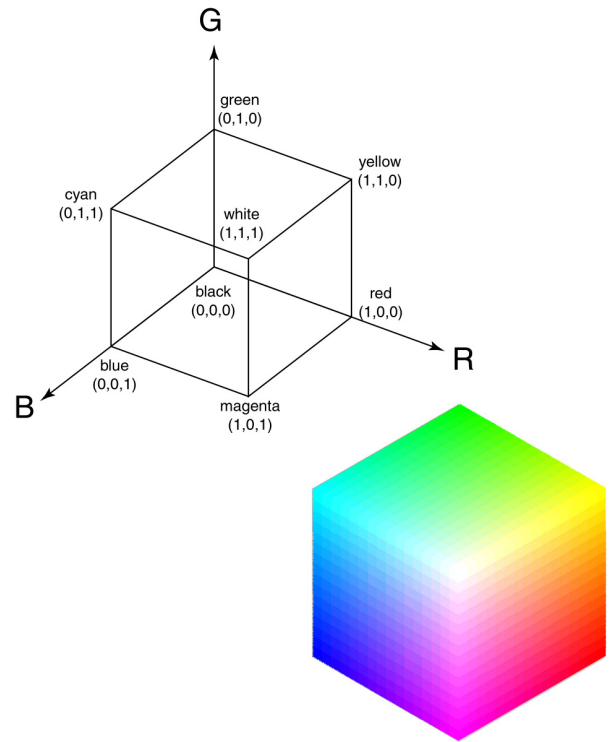
A display that allows 256 voltage settings for each of R, G, and B is known as a **full-color system**.

The description of each color in framebuffer memory is known as a **channel**.

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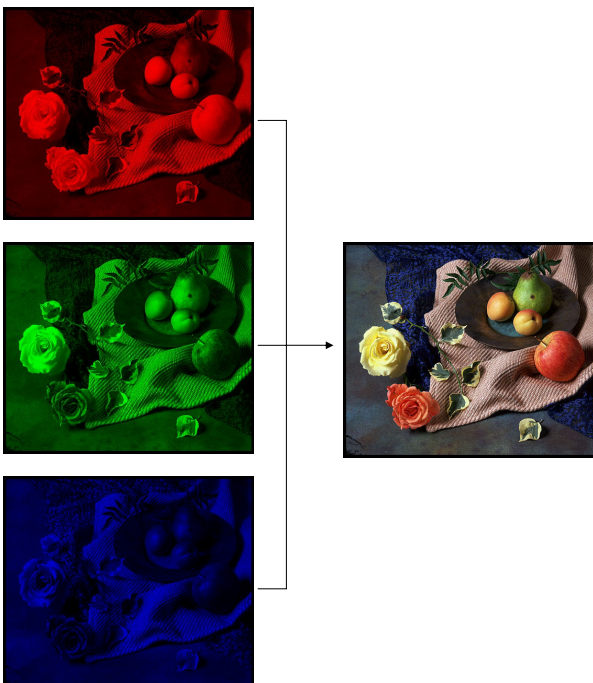
Additive color mixing

All colors on a display are produced using



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Anatomy of an RGB image

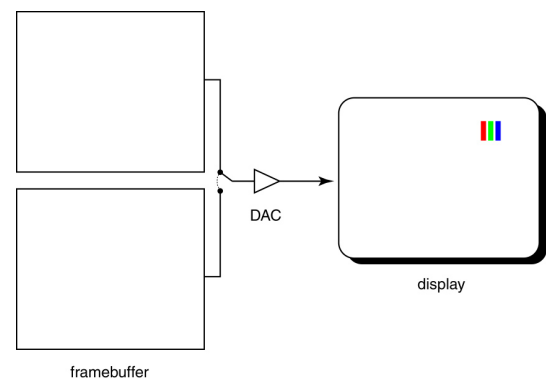


7

Double-buffering

Q: What happens when you write to the framebuffer while it is being displayed on the monitor?

Double-buffering provides a solution.



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OpenGL

The API we'll be using for drawing to the framebuffer is OpenGL.

For 2D graphics, OpenGL lets you specify colors of primitives and then draw them to the screen. Typical primitives include:

- ◆ Points
- ◆ Lines
- ◆ Unfilled polygons
- ◆ Filled polygons

You just name a color, declare the primitive type, and specify the vertices, and OpenGL does the rest.

OpenGL also supports "alpha" blending. A typical operation is a linear mixture that blends a new color into the framebuffer:

$$F_{new} = \alpha C + (1 - \alpha) F_{old}$$

Summary

Here's what you should take home from this lecture:

- ◆ All of the **boldfaced terms**.
- ◆ The principles of operation for an LCD display.
- ◆ The correspondence between elements of framebuffer memory and pixels on-screen.
- ◆ How double-buffering works.