METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROGRESSIVE MESH STORAGE AND RECONSTRUCTION USING WAVELET-ENCODED HEIGHT FIELDS

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U.S. CL. ........................................ 382/248; 345/419

Field of Classification Search .................. 382/248, 382/249, 250; 345/419-427
See application file for complete search history.

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ABSTRACT
Systems and methods are provided for progressive mesh storage and reconstruction using wavelet-encoded height fields. A method for progressive mesh storage includes reading raster height field data, and processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded height fields. In another embodiment, a method for progressive mesh storage includes reading texture map data, and processing the texture map data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded texture map fields. A method for reconstructing a progressive mesh from wavelet-encoded height field data includes determining terrain blocks, and a level of detail required for each terrain block, based upon a viewpoint. Triangle strip constructs are generated from vertices of the terrain blocks, and an image is rendered utilizing the triangle strip constructs. Software products that implement these methods are provided.

14 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>
COMPUTER 12

MEMORY 14
- LOADED DATA ENCODER SOFTWARE 20
- WORKING SET 26

PROCESSOR 18

STORAGE DEVICE 16
- DATA ENCODER SOFTWARE 20
- RASTER HEIGHT FIELD DATA 22
- WAVELET-ENCODED HEIGHT FIELD DATA 24
  - LOD 0 25(1)
  - LOD 1 25(2)
  - LOD 1 25(3)
  - LOD 1 25(4)
  - LOD 2 25(5)
  - LOD 2 25(6)
  - LOD 2 25(7)

FIG. 1A
PREPROCESSING AND STORAGE OF TERRAIN DATA

RASTER HEIGHT FIELD DATA

DISCRETE WAVELET TRANSFORM

WAVELET ENCODED HEIGHT FIELD DATA

IDENTIFY TERRAIN BLOCKS REQUIRED AT EACH LOD

LOCATION/orientation/FOV DATA

LOAD IDENTIFIED BLOCKS

RENDER 3D TERRAIN

OUTPUT

FIG. 2A
FIG. 2B

WAVELET ENCODED HEIGHT FIELD DATA

LOAD TERRAIN BLOCKS AT DETERMINED LOD

GEOMORPH TERRAIN BLOCKS

JOIN TERRAIN BLOCK EDGES

GENERATE TERRAIN BLOCK TRIANGLE STRIP CONSTRUCT

OUTPUT TRIANGLE STRIP CONSTRUCT TO DISPLAY PROCESSOR

RENDER 3D IMAGE

OUTPUT
FIG. 2C
FIG. 7A

510 LOAD BLOCK AT LOD n

520 CREATE EXPANDED BLOCK; INTERPOLATE
HEIGHT VALUES BETWEEN ADJACENT POINTS OF
ORIGINAL LOD n BLOCK

530 LOAD BLOCK AT LOD n+1

540 CREATE n+1 DELTA BLOCK BY SUBTRACTING
LOD n POINTS IN EXPANDED BLOCK
FROM CORRESPONDING LOD n+1 POINTS

FIG. 7B

550

540 CREATE n+1 DELTA BLOCK

560 DETERMINE \( \alpha \)

570 SCALE EACH POINT OF n+1 DELTA BLOCK BY \( \alpha \)

580 CREATE RENDERED HEIGHT BLOCK BY
SUBTRACTING SCALED DELTA BLOCK POINTS
FROM LOD n+1 POINTS
FIG. 8
METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROGRESSIVE MESH STORAGE AND RECONSTRUCTION USING WAVELET-ENCODED HEIGHT FIELDS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/569,332, filed 7 May 2004 and incorporated herein by reference.

U.S. GOVERNMENT RIGHTS

This invention was made with Government support under contracts NAG-01196 and NNL04AC32P awarded by NASA. The Government has certain rights in this invention.

BACKGROUND

The following patents provide useful background information and are incorporated herein by reference: U.S. Pat. No. 6,426,750; U.S. Pat. No. 6,208,997; U.S. Pat. No. 5,929,860; and U.S. Pat. No. 5,831,625.


SUMMARY

A method and system are provided for progressive mesh storage and reconstruction using wavelet-encoded height fields. A system so constructed may provide for full-mesh storage of terrain elevation height field datasets, such as Digital Terrain Elevation Data (“DTED”), using wavelet-encoded terrain height fields. The system may then retrieve, prepare and render spatially-filtered, smoothly-continuous, level-of-detail 3D terrain geometry.

In one embodiment, a method for progressive mesh storage includes reading raster height field data, and processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded height fields. Processing may include processing the raster height field data into a quadtree structure, and may include utilizing a wavelet subband filter that may be one of the integer biorthogonal 5/3 Daubechies form and the biorthogonal 9/7 Daubechies form.

In another embodiment, a method for reconstructing a progressive mesh from wavelet-encoded height field data includes determining terrain blocks, and a level of detail required for each terrain block, based upon a viewpoint. Triangle strip constructs are generated from vertices of the terrain blocks, and an image is rendered utilizing the triangle strip constructs. Determining terrain blocks and/or the level of detail required may include (a) evaluating distance of the terrain blocks from the viewpoint, and/or (b) evaluating orientation of the viewpoint with respect to the terrain blocks. The method may include redetermining terrain blocks, and a level of detail required for each terrain block, based upon a change of the viewpoint. The method may include determining and unloading one or more unnecessary terrain blocks, based upon a change of the viewpoint. The method may include evaluating a distance parameter α for each terrain block; and performing a geomorph, utilizing distance parameter α, on each terrain block. The method may include determining texture map blocks and a level of detail for each texture map block, wherein the step of rendering comprises utilizing the texture map blocks. The method may include performing an edge-join operation to eliminate T-junctions where terrain blocks of differing levels of detail meet. The image may include ancillary scene data. Each terrain block may be divided into a field region and a trim region, so that vertices of the field region may be transmitted as one triangle strip construct and vertices of the trim region may be transmitted as one or more additional triangle strip constructs. Original height field minima and maxima may be preserved in the wavelet-encoded height fields and the rendered image at all levels of detail.

In another embodiment, a software product includes instructions for progressive mesh storage, including instructions for (a) reading one of raster height field data and texture map data as input data, and for (b) processing the input data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded data. In another embodiment, a software product includes instructions for reconstructing a progressive mesh from wavelet-encoded height field data, including instructions for (a) determining terrain blocks, and a level of detail required for each terrain block, based upon a viewpoint; for (b) generating one or more triangle strip constructs from vertices of the terrain blocks; and for (c) rendering an image utilizing the triangle strip constructs.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIG. 1A shows one exemplary system for progressive mesh storage that processes raster height field data into wavelet-encoded height fields.

FIG. 1B shows one exemplary system for reconstruction using wavelet-encoded height fields.
progressive mesh storage that processes raster height field 
processed using a discrete wavelet transform ("DWT") and 
portion of the terrain block of FIG. 9A.

processing terrain blocks and location/orientation/field-of- 
view data to produce output.

FIG. 2C shows a flowchart illustrating one exemplary process 
that uses wavelet-encoded height field data, wavelet 
encoded texture map data, ancillary scene data and location/ 
orientation/field-of-view data to produce output

FIG. 3 shows one flight-based 3D terrain rendering soft-
ware system, illustrating functional software blocks suitable 
for progressive mesh storage and reconstruction using wave-
let-encoded height fields.

FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B illustrate relationships among wave-
let-encoded terrain blocks at various levels of detail ("LOD").

FIG. 5A and FIG. 5B illustrate view frustum focused deter-
mination of wavelet-encoded terrain blocks containing height 
data of an area for rendering a scene.

FIG. 6 illustrates omni-directional determination of wave-
let-encoded terrain blocks containing height data of an area 
for rendering a scene.

FIG. 7A illustrates a data preparation process for recon-
struction using terrain height fields.

FIG. 7B illustrates a geomorphing process for reconstruc-
tion using terrain height fields.

FIG. 8 illustrates the steps performed in the processes of 
FIG. 7A and FIG. 7B from a terrain block data perspective.

FIG. 9A illustrates generation of triangle strips from a 
terrain block.

FIG. 9B illustrates initiation of a triangle strip from a 
portion of the terrain block of FIG. 9A.

FIG. 10A illustrates a process of joining terrain blocks that 
have differing LOD.

FIG. 10B illustrates a composite terrain block that forms 
when the terrain blocks of FIG. 10A are joined.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In certain of the progressive mesh storage and processing 
systems and methods disclosed herein, particularly in con-
nection with reconstruction using wavelet-encoded height 
fields for three-dimensional (3D) computer graphics and 3D 
terrain rendering, two general constructs may be employed. 
First, regular x, y-matrix terrain height fields and texture 
data may be processed and stored in wavelet-encoded forms (i.e., 
a terrain height field matrix and/or texture map data may be 
processed using a discrete wavelet transform ("DWT") and the 
resulting data may be retained as source data for a 3D 
terrain renderer). Second, a terrain block-based 3D terrain 
rendering (1) manages scene level-of-detail data requirements 
depending on point of view, (2) reconstructs output from the 
wavelet-encoded source data, scene requirements and regions 
of interest (current and/or projected), and optionally (3) pro-
cesses ancillary scene data to perform a complete 3D render-
ing of the resulting scene.

For example, FIG. 1A shows one exemplary system 10 for 
progressive mesh storage that processes raster height field 
data into wavelet-encoded height fields, in accord with an 
embodiment. System 10 includes a computer 52 and an 
output device 65; location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 is 
shown being input to computer 52. Computer 52 is addition-
ally shown to include memory 54, a storage device 56, a 
processor 58 and a display processor 60. Storage device 56 is, 
for example, a hard disk drive. Storage device 56 is shown 
with 3D run-time terrain render software 62 and wavelet-
encoded height field data 24 (which may be created by system 
10, FIG. 1A, for example). Wavelet-encoded height field data 
24 includes terrain blocks 25. Processor 58 operates to load 
3D run-time terrain render software 62 into memory 54, as 
illustrated by dashed lines of loaded 3D run-time terrain 
render software 62. 3D run-time terrain render software 62 
contains a scene manager 64 that loads into memory 54 as 
loaded scene manager 64. Processor 58 then executes loaded 
3D run-time terrain render software 62 to process location/ 
orientation/field-of-view data 70, load selected terrain blocks 
25 as loaded terrain blocks 25 in a working set 66, and 
process loaded terrain blocks 25 to produce an output display 
signal 68 via display processor 60 (where terrain blocks 25 
and 25' denote general cases of terrain blocks 25(1), 25(2), 
and 25(1)', 25(2)', respectively, as shown in FIG. 1B). Not
every terrain block 25 of wavelet-encoded height field data 24 typically loads into working set 66 (e.g., FIG. 1B shows terrain blocks 25(1)', 25(2)', 25(4)', 25(6)', 25(10)', and others denoted by ellipsis, but not terrain blocks 25(3)', 25(5)' or 25(7)'-25(9)', for example). Working set 66 may also contain other kinds of data (see FIG. 2C). Display processor 60 may be, for example, a Graphics Processing Unit ("GPU"). Output 68 may be utilized by an output device 65 that may be, for example, a visual display, a printer, a plotter or a Web client. Location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 may be, for example, (1) received from an aircraft navigation computer, (2) received from a Web client, defining a view desired on output device 65, or (3) received from an input device or devices.

FIG. 2A shows a flowchart illustrating (1) an exemplary process 100 that creates wavelet-encoded height field data 24 from raster height field data 22 and (2) an exemplary process 106 that uses wavelet-encoded height field data 24 and location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 to produce output 68, in accord with an embodiment. Discrete wavelet transform 104 of process 100 converts raster height field data 22 (which is, for example, raw terrain elevation data) into wavelet encoded height field data 24, utilizing sub-band decomposition. Process 100 is, for example, a pre-processing step to produce data 24, and may occur only once.

Process 106 is for example performed by computer 52 under the control of loaded 3D run-time terrain renderer software 62'. FIG. 1B. In step 108, loaded scene manager 64' directs computer 52 utilizing location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 to identify, within wavelet-encoded height field data 24, terrain blocks 25 utilized at each LOD to produce output 68. In step 110, process 106 loads identified terrain blocks 25 from wavelet-encoded height field data 24 as loaded terrain blocks 25' of working set 66, FIG. 1B. In step 112, process 106 renders output 68 utilizing loaded terrain blocks 25' and location/orientation/field-of-view data 70, as directed by loaded scene manager 64'.

FIG. 2B shows a flowchart illustrating one exemplary process 150 suitable for use as step 112 of process 106, FIG. 2A, for processing terrain blocks (e.g., loaded terrain blocks 25') and location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 to produce output 68. Process 150 may be performed by computer 52 under control of loaded 3D run-time terrain renderer software 62', for example. Wavelet-encoded height field data 24, step 110 of process 106, and display output 68 are shown with dashed lines to illustrate processing context of process 150.

In step 156, process 150 performs a geomorph on terrain-blocks loaded in step 108 of process 106. The geomorph eliminates vertex ‘popping’ artifacts on display output 68 by smoothly interpolating geometries of terrain-blocks loaded in step 108 (see also FIG. 7A, FIG. 7B and FIG. 8). In step 158, process 150 performs an edge-join operation to correct anomalies where terrain blocks of differing LOD join. In step 160, process 150 organizes working set 26 into a triangle strip construct for rendering. In step 162, process 150 outputs the triangle strip construct to display processor 20, FIG. 1. In step 164, display processor 20 utilizes the triangle strip construct to render a 3D image, to produce output 68. It will be appreciated that certain steps of process 150 may be performed in a different order than the order listed; for example, step 160 may precede step 158, or steps 160 and steps 162 may be performed concurrently, in certain applications.

FIG. 2C shows a flowchart illustrating one exemplary process 206 that uses wavelet-encoded height field data 24, wavelet encoded texture map data 170, ancillary scene data 174 and location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 to produce output 68, in accord with an embodiment. Like process 106, process 206 is for example performed by computer 52 under the control of loaded 3D run-time terrain renderer software 62', FIG. 1B. While process 106 renders a 3D terrain height image, process 206 adds texture information and ancillary scene data for increased realism and usefulness of output 68.

Raw texture map data is analogous to raster height field data 22, FIG. 1A; a process that produces wavelet encoded texture map data 170 is analogous to process 100, FIG. 2A; wavelet-encoded texture map data 170 is analogous to wavelet-encoded height field data 24, FIG. 1B. Ancillary scene data may include flight-aid graphical elements and/or icons that may provide additional flight situational awareness when depicted within a rendered scene context in output 68 (see also FIG. 3).

In step 208, loaded scene manager 64' directs computer 52 utilizing location/orientation/field-of-view data 70 to identify (a) specific terrain blocks 25 within wavelet-encoded height field data 24 and (b) texture blocks within wavelet encoded texture map data 170, that are required at each LOD to produce output 68. In step 210, process 206 loads identified terrain blocks 25 and identified terrain blocks into working set 66, FIG. 1B. In step 212, process 206 renders output 68 utilizing loaded terrain blocks 25', loaded texture blocks, ancillary scene data 174, and location/orientation/field-of-view data 70, as directed by loaded scene manager 64'.

Wavelet-Encoded, Multiple-Level-of-Detail Terrain Data Storage

Typically, raster height field data 22, FIG. 1A, originates as a raster-ordered, regular matrix of values where each value represents the height of terrain at a particular x, y location; it is thus a parametric surface whereby height is a function of the x and y coordinates. Height values are typically formatted as a signed 16-bit integer, although, alternatively, larger integer or floating point formats may be used as required by a particular application. In one embodiment, system 10 processes raster height field data 22 into a wavelet-encoded form using a DWT yielding a resulting dataset (e.g., wavelet-encoded height field data 24) as source data for loaded 3D run-time terrain renderer software 62'. Texture map data typically originates as a raster-ordered regular matrix of pixels (e.g., an image). Each pixel of the texture map image may be, for example, composed of an 8-bit red value, an 8-bit green value, and an 8-bit blue value (i.e., a 24-bit Red-Green Blue "RGB" color pixel). Texture map data typically originates as raster image data at a higher level of detail than terrain data 22, but it may originate at the same, or a lower, level of detail than terrain data 22. In one embodiment, system 10 processes raster texture map data into a wavelet-encoded form using a DWT yielding a resulting dataset (e.g., wavelet-encoded texture map data 170) as source data for loaded 3D run-time terrain renderer software 62'. Ancillary scene data 174 may be stored as an arbitrary list of numeric geometric object descriptions that may include x, y, z vertices, may be associated with x, y, z object points, areas, or volumes in space, and may represent general cartographic features and fixed items (e.g., towers, buildings, runways), movable items (e.g., vehicles, aircraft) or flight-path or vehicle passage corridor representations (e.g., indications of the intended paths of aircraft and/or land vehicles). Loaded scene manager 64' may determine when a specific item of ancillary scene data 174 should be included in output 68.

FIG. 3 shows one flight-based 3D terrain rendering software system 300, illustrating functional software blocks suitable for progressive mesh storage and reconstruction using wavelet-encoded height fields, in accord with an embodiment. System 300 includes a synthetic vision ("SV") flight application 310 that may be, for example, software that...
One advantage of using a wavelet-encoded form of terrain data may be to provide a compact, multiple-level-of-detail representation of the original data (see, e.g., FIG. 4). Wavelet encoding of raster height field data 22 to produce wavelet-encoded terrain height field data 24 generates a plurality of spatially-filtered levels of detail, similar to texture mipmaping. The DWT uses digital sub-band filters to decompose raster height field data 22 into groups of components, namely a low-frequency component and high-frequency components in the x-, y-, and xy-directions.

FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B illustrate relationships among wavelet-encoded terrain blocks 25 at various LOD, in accord with an embodiment. The DWT process breaks the original data into powers-of-2-sized blocks containing spatial detail to a given LOD, where each block at a higher LOD contains high-frequency components to increase LOD of a reconstructed image, compared to blocks of lower LOD. In FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B, a data set 300 includes only terrain block 25(1) at LOD 0. Data set 305 includes data set 300 and additional terrain blocks 25(2), 25(3), and 25(4) that contain y-direction, x-direction, and xy-direction information, respectively, at LOD 1 for the terrain represented by terrain block 25(1). Data set 310 includes data set 305 and additional terrain blocks 25(5), 25(6), and 25(7) that contain y-direction, x-direction, and xy-direction information, respectively, at LOD 2 for the terrain represented by terrain block 25(1). Data set 315 includes data set 310 and additional terrain blocks 25(8), 25(9), and 25(10) at LOD 3.

Only four LOD levels are shown in FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B, for clarity of illustration; though additional possible LOD levels are suggested by ellipses 316. The number of levels used in a DWT process may be arbitrary, though they may depend upon source image size and a smallest reconstructable block size. Each level may create, for example, x-direction, y-direction, and xy-direction detail for a ½-size (in each axis) LOD-1 block of the preceding level (e.g., LODn is the full-size image, LODn-1 is ½-size, LODn-2 is ¼-size, and so on, down to LOD0 that represents the lowest level of detail representation of the original source data). The number of levels used in wavelet decomposition may therefore be described as a function of source height field size and the smallest desired reconstructable terrain block size, as follows:

\[ \text{DWT levels} = \log_2(2 \cdot \text{Height Field Edge Length}) - \log_2(2 \cdot \text{Terrain Block Edge Length}) + 1 \]

As wavelet decomposition stores data as the smallest size image (sometimes denoted herein as a “DC component”), with each ascending level’s high-frequency information (sometimes denoted herein as “AC components”), the next-highest LOD may be generated. For instance, a 6-level wavelet decomposition has a 1/64, or 1/64 size image as its lowest LOD0 form along with the successive high-frequency components for the 1/6, 1/4, 1/2, and full-size image LODs. See, e.g., FIG. 4A and FIG. 4B. The wavelet subband filters used are those of the reversible (lossless) integer biorthogonal 5/3 and 9/7 Daubechies form and the irreversible (lossy) biorthogonal 9/7 Daubechies form, although the use of other wavelet subband filters, such as those with minima- and maxima-preserving characteristics, is contemplated and may be more appropriate for some applications. The wavelet-transformed height field is partitioned and indexed into spatially-contiguous blocks providing for efficient access to arbitrary LODs and spatial regions of interest.

A further illustration showing a 3-level wavelet decomposition of a 16-bit terrain height field into three resolution levels may be seen in FIGS. 5, 6, 7 of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/569,332, which is incorporated herein by reference.

The wavelet-encoding process efficiently stores multi-LOD forms of an image, for example using the encoded “image” as the 16-bit-per-height raster height field. When levels at one LOD are each one-half the size in each axis of a next higher LOD, the data may form an LOD quadtree data structure; each height field block at one LOD corresponding with four height field blocks in the next highest LOD.

For an 8-level, wavelet-encoded height field with a 64×64 minimum terrain-block size, the following number of terrain-block grids and total height field size for the LOD may be given:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOD level</th>
<th>Grid of 64 x 64 terrain blocks</th>
<th>Total LOD height field size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LOD0</td>
<td>1 x 1</td>
<td>64 x 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD1</td>
<td>2 x 2</td>
<td>128 x 128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD2</td>
<td>4 x 4</td>
<td>256 x 256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD3</td>
<td>8 x 8</td>
<td>512 x 512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD4</td>
<td>16 x 16</td>
<td>1024 x 1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD5</td>
<td>32 x 32</td>
<td>2048 x 2048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD6</td>
<td>64 x 64</td>
<td>4096 x 4096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOD7</td>
<td>128 x 128</td>
<td>8096 x 8092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the resulting wavelet-encoded data may include only height values, the sequence of the height values within the wavelet-encoded data allows for efficient reconstruction of a complete 3D x, y, z height vertex representation, eliminating the need to store full x, y, and z coordinates for each height value.

3D Terrain Block Renderer

In one embodiment, terrain rendering by system 50, FIG. 1B, processes terrain data primarily as blocks of data, rather than as individual terrain vertices. The wavelet-encoded format of terrain data (e.g., wavelet-encoded height field data 24 as discussed in the preceding section) provides needed terrain blocks at needed LOD at run time. Under the control of loaded scene manager 64, system 50 sets up a scene and determines which terrain blocks are necessary to provide detail at various depths in the scene relative to a viewpoint. For instance, foreground terrain may be rendered using high-LOD blocks, whereas background terrain may utilize low-LOD blocks of terrain data. Regardless of LOD, all blocks may have the same number of vertices; because of the quadtree data structure of...
the wavelet-encoded terrain data, the spatial dimensions of a block may be one-half (in each axis) the size of a block at a lower LOD. Thus, a number of vertices in a scene is a LOD-structured block by block rather than vertex by vertex, conserving considerable central processor unit (CPU) effort. Certain processing may be performed vertex by vertex, such as geomorphing and generation of triangle strips, as discussed below.

FIG. 5A illustrates view frustum focused determination of wavelet-encoded terrain blocks containing height data of an area for rendering a scene, in accord with an embodiment. A desired viewpoint provided as part of location/orientation/FOV data uses data to generate a view frustum, in this example, to identify terrain blocks with varying LOD based on distance of each terrain block from viewpoint. Only some terrain blocks are labeled within FIG. 5 for clarity of illustration. Terrain blocks (20) at a distance from viewpoint, or significantly outside view frustum, are at a low LOD (here denoted LOD a). Terrain blocks (21) that are closer to viewpoint (e.g., closer to viewpoint than about line 422) are at LOD n+1. Terrain blocks (22) that are still closer to viewpoint and terrain blocks (23) that are still closer to viewpoint are not labeled within FIG. 5B for clarity of illustration; a region labeled 5B is shown in FIG. 5B, showing terrain blocks (22) and (23). The use of four LODs in FIG. 5A is illustrative only; more or fewer LODs may be used, with the distances utilized to determine loading of each LOD demarked by a correspondingly larger set of lines (e.g., lines 422, 424, and 426). It should be apparent that the number of LODs may be arbitrarily large, limited only by a density of the raster data that is processed to form wavelet encoded terrain blocks. At a highest level of detail, wavelet-encoded height field data may include information that enables exact reconstruction of a scene to the level of detail stored in raster height field data.

The example shown in FIG. 5A and FIG. 5B illustrates only one way that terrain blocks of specific spatial areas and LOD may be identified. In FIG. 5A and FIG. 5B blocks in or near view frustum are preferentially loaded, or loaded at higher LOD, as compared to blocks that are significantly outside view frustum. Other embodiments may utilize different methods of identifying terrain blocks corresponding with specific spatial areas and LOD.

FIG. 6 illustrates omni-directional determination of wavelet-encoded terrain blocks containing height data of an area for rendering a scene, in accord with an embodiment. The example of FIG. 6 loads an omni-directional (“bomb blast”) pattern of blocks based on a location of a viewpoint. The “bomb blast” pattern utilizes only distance from viewpoint to determine an LOD at which a given terrain block is loaded. For example, in FIG. 6, terrain blocks that correspond to locations with a small distance from viewpoint are loaded at LOD n+2 as terrain blocks (22). Terrain blocks that correspond to locations with a larger distance from viewpoint are loaded at LOD n+1 as terrain blocks (21). Terrain blocks that correspond with locations within about a still larger distance from viewpoint are loaded at LOD n as terrain blocks (20).

While the pattern illustrated in FIG. 5 loads spatial areas within or near view frustum at higher LOD than areas that are not within or near view frustum, the “bomb blast” pattern illustrated in FIG. 6 may load data at a given LOD in all directions from viewpoint. Loading at least some data, or loading data at a higher LOD, in directions that are not within a current view frustum may facilitate transitions wherein the view frustum moves (e.g., because an aircraft changes course, or because a user looks in a different direction). Other schemes for identifying terrain blocks at specific spatial locations and/or LOD for loading may be used. One such scheme identifies terrain blocks based on recent aircraft movements; for example, if an aircraft has been turning right, terrain blocks to the right of the center of the current view frustum may be loaded at higher LOD. In another example, a scheme identifies terrain blocks based on a predetermined flight plan.

In one embodiment, system accesses terrain blocks at varied levels of detail from wavelet-encoded source data, depending on viewpoint location and/or orientation; but it does not cut out individual vertices based on the viewpoint. Reconstructed terrain blocks are LOD-filtered and scaled by the wavelet decomposition process to eliminate further vertex-by-vertex processing. Such terrain rendering may therefore represent a hybrid between a View Independent Progressive Mesh (VIPM) and a View Dependent Progressive Mesh (VDPM) methodology; except run-time processing performance of a VDPM approach (minimized triangle count at run-time based on viewpoint) is achieved without the vertex-by-vertex CPU processing overhead required by other VDPM approaches.

System of FIG. 1B may for example utilize wavelet-encoded height field data that forms a quadtree structure to facilitate tracking of terrain block levels of detail and to determine, based on viewpoint distance to each block, for example, a required terrain block LOD per a view-space error metric. A quadtree structure may facilitate identification of terrain blocks used for a current scene. Only identified terrain blocks are loaded into system memory (e.g., into working set). FIG. 1B for rendering. As additional detail is required for a particular spatial area within a scene, the associated terrain block may be loaded successively into higher LOD blocks (e.g., referring to FIG. 4, additional x-direction, y-direction and xy-direction data, that corresponds with an existing lower LOD block, is loaded). Also, blocks deemed unnecessary for the current scene are unloaded from memory in a data culling process, to eliminate unnecessary wavelet-encoded terrain-block data accesses and terrain-block rendering processes outside of the view angle. A quadtree structure may also facilitate data culling.

Terrain blocks may form a wavelet-encoded height field such that x and y locations of each data point may be implicit, based on sequence of data points within a block, providing a compact height field format for terrain geometry storage and vertex processing. Processes may be used, for example, to convert a scene’s terrain block height fields to a smoothly-continuous and efficiently-renderable form. Such processes may be: (a) geomorphing of terrain block height values to provide smooth switching between LOD levels, (b) appending x- and y-axis values to each height value to create a true 3D vertex, (c) arranging the vertices of each terrain block into triangle strips for efficient processing by a hardware Graphics Processor Unit (GPU) while (d) tying edge vertices between adjacent terrain blocks with differing LOD. See also FIG. 28.

In process (a), the height values of each terrain block are geomorphed to provide smooth height transitions between
terrain block levels of detail. Since wavelet decomposition process removes spatial components as LOD decreases, height values of blocks at varying LODs may vary, representing the actual spatially filtered height value at each LOD. Geomorphing linearly varies height values of an entire terrain block 25 based on a distance of a viewpoint from the block. A “lifespan” may be attributed to a spatial area at a particular LOD: additional terrain blocks 25 must be loaded to add detail for the area (corresponding to an increasing LOD) for an approaching viewpoint; terrain blocks may be deleted (corresponding to lower LOD) for a receding viewpoint. Geomorphing varies height values of terrain blocks 25 smoothly; accordingly, displayed output does not abruptly change, which can cause “vertex popping” artifacts, when a spatial area switches from one LOD to another.

FIG. 7A illustrates a data preparation process 500 for reconstruction using terrain height fields. Process 500 may be used, for example, as part of process 110 of FIG. 2A and FIG. 2B, and is for example performed by computer 52 under the control of loaded 3D run-time terrain render software 62, FIG. 1B. Process 500 creates a delta block 535 of data (see also FIG. 8) to hold differences between height values between a terrain block 25(25) at one LOD (LOD n) and another terrain block 25(26) at a higher LOD (LOD n+1). Process 500 begins with terrain block 25(25) already loaded into memory (e.g., memory 54, FIG. 1B) in step 510. Step 520 creates an expanded terrain block 25(25) that includes each data point 515 of terrain block 25(25), and includes data points 517 that correspond to positions between each pair of data points in terrain block 25(25). Data points 517 are created by interpolating data points 515. Expanded terrain block 25(25) thus includes the number of data points that are included in a terrain block at LOD n+1. Step 530 loads terrain block 25(26) into memory. Step 540 creates delta block 535; each data point 545 of delta block 535 corresponds to a difference between each data point 525 in terrain block 25(26) and the corresponding data point 515 or 517 of expanded terrain block 25(25). Process 500 may be used each time a block of higher LOD data is loaded into memory, to create delta blocks that are used during geomorphing, as described below.

FIG. 7B illustrates a geomorphing process 550 for reconstruction using terrain height fields. Because the terrain rendering process is block based, a computer (e.g., computer 52) may evaluate a viewpoint-to-block distance parameter α for each terrain block 25—rather than for each height value (vertex)—for LOD determination, reducing CPU involvement in the rendering process. Process 550 is a linear height adjustment utilizing distance parameter α that is scaled to a value between 0.0 and 1.0 depending on distance of a viewpoint 410 (e.g., viewpoint 410 or viewpoint 460, see FIG. 5 and FIG. 6) relative to terrain blocks 25 of a greater or lesser LOD.

For example, in FIG. 5B, terrain blocks 25(23) that are adjacent to terrain blocks 25(22) near line 426 should be scaled the same. This may be accomplished by assigning an α of about 1.0 to terrain blocks 25(3) near line 426, and assigning an α of about 0.0 to terrain blocks 25(3) near line 426. Likewise, terrain blocks 25(22) that are adjacent to terrain blocks 25(21) near line 424 may be scaled the same, so an α of about 1.0 is assigned to terrain blocks 25(2) near line 424, and an α of about 0.0 is assigned to terrain blocks 25(1) near line 426. The exact value of α assigned to each block is determined from the average distance of the block from viewpoint 410.

Process 550 begins with delta block 535 having been created (e.g., by step 540 process 500) and with a determined in step 560. Step 570 scales each data point 545 of delta block 535 by multiplying it by α. Step 580 subtracts the scaled values from the corresponding data points 525 of terrain block 25(26), to create a rendered block 575. Thus, geomorphing process 550 provides linear height value interpolation between reconstructed terrain block LODs, yielding continuous and spatially-filtered terrain heights as seen from viewpoint 410. Process 550 may be repeated each time viewpoint 410 moves within scene 400 (because the movement of viewpoint 410 changes α).

FIG. 8 illustrates the steps performed in processes 500 and 550 from a terrain block data perspective. Terrain block 25(25) is created from LOD n terrain block 25(25) in step 520 by adding interpolated data points 517 to the original data points 515 of terrain block 25(25). After LOD n+1 terrain block 25(26) is loaded in step 530, delta block 535 is created in step 540 by subtracting each data point 515 or 517 of terrain block 25(25) from a corresponding data point 525 of terrain block 25(26). After a for a specific scene is determined for block 25(26), each data point 545 of delta block 535 is first multiplied by a in step 570, then subtracted from a corresponding data point 525 of terrain block 25(26) to create rendered block 575 in step 580.

In process (b), height values with implicit x and y locations within the terrain block are converted to explicit 3D vertices having floating point x, y, and z coordinate values. The raster x and y coordinates become the 3D vertex x and z coordinates, respectively. The corresponding height value becomes the y coordinate. Since location of a terrain block 25 within a scene (e.g., scene 400) is known, offset values may be added to convert x and y coordinates of each height value within terrain block 25 to 3D x and z coordinates.

In process (c), vertices are transmitted to a GPU as a set of one or more packed triangle strip constructs. FIG. 9A illustrates generation of triangle strips from a terrain block 25(30). A triangle strip may be, for example, a list of vertices wherein it is understood by a GPU that each of the last three vertices in the list at any time represents a triangle to be rendered; each new vertex added to the list forms a triangle with the two vertices that preceded it. Terrain block 25(30) may be divided into a field area 600 that contains all internal vertices 620 of block 25(30), and a trim area 610 that contains external vertices 630 (for example, external vertices 630 may be single rows and columns of vertices on the perimeter of block 25(30)). Dashed line 605 illustratively separates field area 600 from trim area 610 in FIG. 9A. Arrows 602 indicate the general progression of triangle strip formation through field area 600; arrows 612 indicate the general progression of triangle strip formation through trim area 610. Not all vertices 620, 630 of terrain block 25(30) or all arrows 602, 612 are labeled, for clarity of illustration.

Vertices 620 of field area 600 may be transmitted to a GPU as a single triangle strip. FIG. 9B illustrates initiation of a triangle strip from a portion of terrain block 25(30). The vertices that form the beginning of the triangle strip are numbered in the order that they are transmitted. Vertices V1, V2 and V3 form the first triangle in the strip; vertices V2, V3 and V4 form the second triangle, and so forth until vertex V12 is transmitted. After vertex V12, the triangle strip cannot continue with the vertices labeled V14, V15 and V16, because transmitting vertex V14 after vertex V12 would result in the rendering of a triangle consisting of vertices V11, V12 and V14, which is not desired. Instead, vertex V12 is transmitted again as vertex V13, forming a degenerate triangle composed of vertices V11, V12 and V13. Next, vertex V14 is transmitted, forming a degenerate triangle composed of vertices V12, V13 and V14. Next, vertex V14 is transmitted again as vertex...
V15, forming a degenerate triangle composed of vertices V13, V14 and V15. Next, vertex V16 is transmitted, forming a degenerate triangle composed of vertices V14, V15 and V16. The degenerate triangles may be rendered by the graphics processor, but have zero size, so they do not appear as output. Vertex V17 is transmitted after vertex V16, to form a triangle composed of vertices V15, V16 and V17, to restart the regular formation of triangles across terrain block 25(30) in the direction of arrows 602, continuing with vertices V18 and V19, as shown.

Other sequences of vertex output may be used in place of the specific sequence listed above, depending for example on specific GPU or GPU driver requirements. Vertex sequencing may occur in a different order, or differing sequences of vertex output may form degenerate triangles in a different number or position than those described above. Transmission of the last vertex in field area 600 may terminate a triangle strip.

Trim areas are converted to triangle strips in a similar manner as field edges; however, triangle stripping of trim areas may involve reconciliation of edge effects that may form when, for example, a terrain block is adjacent to a terrain block of a differing LOD. Terrain blocks 25 of one LOD that adjoin terrain blocks 25 of a lower LOD may form T-junctions in the terrain mesh, leaving visual gaps in the subsequent rendering process. To provide a continuous terrain mesh, T-junctions are removed using a vertex-collapse technique.

FIG. 10A illustrates a process of joining terrain blocks 25(31) and 25(32) that have differing LOD. Vertices V20 and V21 of terrain block 25(31) are removed to eliminate T-junctions. FIG. 10B illustrates a composite terrain block 650 that forms when terrain blocks 25(31) and 25(32) are joined. Field areas 655 and 660 are converted to triangle strips as described above, and trim areas are converted to triangle strips along the paths of arrows 665 and 670. Specific vertices may be transmitted so that the triangles indicated by solid lines in FIG. 10B are rendered, with certain vertices transmitted multiple times so that degenerate triangles form, to prevent unintended triangles from rendering.

Changes may be made in the above methods and systems without departing from the scope hereof. It should thus be noted that the matter contained in the above description or shown in the accompanying drawings should be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense. The following claims are intended to cover all generic and specific features described herein, as well as all statements of the scope of the claims are intended to cover all generic and specific features described herein, as well as all statements of the following claims. Such alterations may for example include:

The discrete wavelet transform used to process the original height field data may be operated in either a lossless or lossy mode.

The wavelet encoding process used to reconstruct terrain blocks from the wavelet-encoded data may be such that original height field minima and maxima are preserved in the reconstructed data at all levels of detail.

A sparse height field reconstruction approach may be used wherein high-frequency wavelet coefficients are examined at run time, and coefficients indicating low energy content are used as an indicator for removing certain vertices from a reconstructed terrain block. Removing vertices reduces the terrain block vertex count, and remaining vertices are triangulated in the triangle stripping process.

The wavelet-encoded terrain data may be physically separated from the 3D terrain-block renderer and interconnected via a networked interface.

Any mesh structure describable by a height field may be processed by the systems and methods above.

Terrain block size is not limited to a 64x64 size but may be optimized to GPU hardware capabilities.

The discrete wavelet transform used to process the original height field data may use other wavelet subband filters.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for progressive mesh storage, comprising the steps of:
   - reading raster height field data;
   - processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded height fields;
   - selecting a terrain data block from the processed raster height field data at a power-of-two level of detail, where each block at a higher level of detail contains higher frequency components with respect to a block at a lower level of detail; and
   - using the selected data block to reconstruct original source terrain mesh data.

2. The method of claim 1, the step of processing comprising processing the raster height field data into a quadtree structure.

3. The method of claim 1, the step of processing comprising utilizing a wavelet subband filter.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein the wavelet subband filter is one of the integer biorthogonal 5/3 Daubechies form and the biorthogonal 9/7 Daubechies form.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising storing the wavelet-encoded height fields.

6. A method for progressive mesh storage, comprising the steps of:
   - reading raster height field data;
   - reading raster texture map data;
   - processing the raster height field data and texture map data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded terrain fields and texture map fields respectively, the wavelet-encoded fields each having a quadtree structure, at least one section of one of the quadtree structures having at least one different level of detail than another section; and
   - storing the wavelet-encoded terrain fields to correspond to related stored texture map fields in a respective manner.

7. The method of claim 6, the step of processing comprising utilizing a wavelet subband filter.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the wavelet subband filter is one of the integer biorthogonal 5/3 Daubechies form and the biorthogonal 9/7 Daubechies form.

9. A software product comprising instructions, stored on computer-readable media, wherein the instructions, when executed by a computer, perform steps for progressive mesh storage, comprising:
   - instructions for reading one of raster height field data and texture map data as input data;
   - instructions for processing the input data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded data;
   - instructions for selecting a terrain data block from the processed raster height field data at a power-of-two level of detail, where each block at a higher level of detail contains higher frequency components with respect to a block at a lower level of detail; and
   - instructions for using the selected data block to reconstruct original source terrain mesh data.
10. A method for progressive mesh storage, comprising the steps of:

reading raster height field data;

processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform into a quadtree structure to generate wavelet-encoded height fields, at least one section of the quadtree structure having a different level of detail than another section of the quadtree structure;

selecting a terrain data block from the processed quadtree structure at a power-of-two level of detail particular to a selected section of the quadtree structure; and

using the selected data block to reconstruct original source terrain mesh data.

11. The method of claim 6, the step of storing includes indexing the wavelet-encoded fields by level of detail and spatial location.

12. A method for progressive mesh storage, comprising the steps of:

reading raster height field data;

processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded height fields;

selecting terrain data blocks from the processed raster height field data at a power-of-two level of detail; and

reconstructing original source terrain data into a continuous terrain mesh from the selected terrain data blocks, the continuous terrain mesh having a regular, grid-shape comprising rows and columns of equally-sized data fields.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the selected terrain data blocks are formed of an equal number of columns and rows of the data fields.

14. A method for progressive mesh storage, comprising the steps of:

reading original raster height field data as a first regular grid of contiguous rows and columns;

processing the raster height field data with a discrete wavelet transform to generate wavelet-encoded height fields;

selecting terrain data blocks from the processed raster height field data at a power-of-two level of detail; and

reconstructing the selected terrain data blocks into second regular grid that matches the first grid identically, or by a reduced power-of-two for corresponding rows and columns.

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