Reminder: Color Scale Transfer Functions

The biggest rule here is to design something that is intuitive. The “snapshot rule” definitely applies!

Sometimes elevation is represented by a color transfer function, like one of these. Sometimes elevation is represented by the color of what exists at that elevation (sand, dirt, grass, trees, snow, etc.) Remember Tufte’s Do No Harm admonition.

A Possible Color Scale Transfer Function for Oregon

Assume snow level is at 1.5 miles

Sculpting the transfer function in HSV:
Full value, no saturation above 1.5 miles, full saturation hue change below 1.5 miles.

Height Exaggeration

Most terrain visualization applications require height exaggeration to see any elevation changes. Why? Consider Oregon for example. Oregon is about 360 x 260 miles horizontally, and has an elevation range of about 2.5 miles vertically. This makes the elevation range less than 1% of the horizontal dimensions – hardly noticeable. However, be careful of going overboard.

Different Contour Lines

Multiple Contour Lines
To do effective lighting of terrain surfaces, you need a surface normal for each triangle. You can get this with the cross product and unitizing:

\[ \hat{n} \hat{A} \hat{B} \hat{C} \]

You can use this unitized normal directly in the OpenGL `glNormal3f()` call to do dynamic OpenGL lighting.

You can also do pseudo-lighting, where you assume that the sun is in a fixed direction from the scene. The diffuse portion of the lighting model is then:

\[ I_d = \hat{n} \hat{L} \]

If you assume that the sun is directly overhead, then this reduces to just the vertical component of the unit surface normal.

At times it is helpful to exaggerate the height for the lighting computations, but not for the height display. This ends up exaggerating the lighting effects, which is usually a good thing.

If the Texture doesn't occupy the entire Image?

OpenGL Texture Environments

USGS National Elevation Database Program

Continental US Data available free at 10m resolution.

http://ned.usgs.gov/
Terrain Height Bump-mapping: Coloring by Height

Terrain Height Bump-mapping: Zooming In

Map Projections
- Mercator
- Transverse Mercator
