

Creating a Nimble New Curriculum for Digital Media Artists

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1. Introduction

Emerging technologies, digital media environments, and mobile media are rapidly changing the landscape of learning required for digital media artists. The author will discuss the theory and practice of immersion applied in the undergraduate digital media arts program and in the Master of Arts in Learning and Emerging Technologies (MALET) at SUNY Empire State College. These new programs allow established and emergent digital media artists to collaborate on interdisciplinary, immersive media arts or design projects within virtual environments while pursuing individualized degrees. Our nimble approach to learning design includes mentoring intensive models, fully online courses, mobile learning, prior learning assessment, and totally individualized learning on subjects proposed by students.

2. Exposition

Students co-create at a distance in collaborative virtual environments as part of their learning. This immersion includes the integration of a complex set of skills – habituation to being within an avatar embodiment, habile navigation, communication etiquette, and orienting oneself to the environment. This develops a sense of community and team-building that provides essential skills for 21st Century artists. In immersive and mobile learning situations, students must also interact with, and create, a variety of digital media tools in interdisciplinary contexts.

3. Elaboration

Faculty teaching in the program are scholar/artists in multiple digital media arts, with strong training in media theory and research practice in immersive learning design. Participating students have advanced knowledge of one or more of the following areas: digital art and design, computer arts, video, electronic music, digital storytelling, filmmaking, game design, animation, visual effects, motion graphics, animation art and design, digital photography, 3D virtual worlds, digital performance, mobile media design, and audio production. Peers provide expertise from different artistic genres within the emerging digital media arts fields. In collaborative settings, they also coordinate the complex logistics of teamwork and content creation as they master the new environment. For example, in a Center for Distance Learning Media Arts course, students co-create interactive media works while working at a geographical distance. The work culminates in a juried Media Arts Festival hosted in a virtual world. Presentation of their piece for the festival requires a high level integration of immersive literacy while building a strong sense of community.

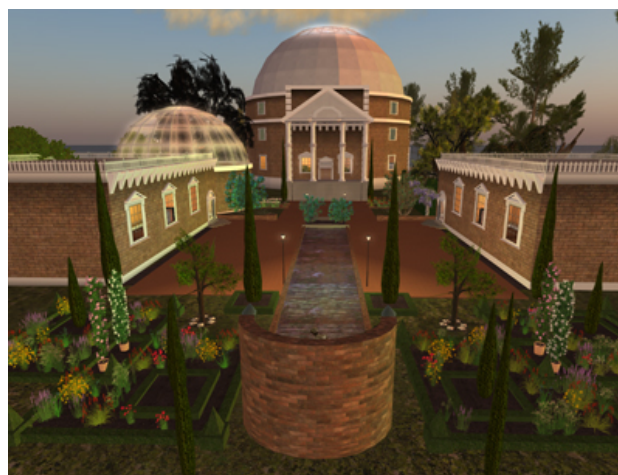


Figure 1. SUNY Empire State College Virtual Campus

4. Results

Digital media arts students have completed impressive short films created across time and distance. Graduate students are designing immersive learning experiences. Students in mobile media design mobile applications using mobile devices. Talented students have completed independent studies on creating worlds, games as interactive storytelling, writing for games, virtual worlds, and other creative topics. Degree plans have been approved in digital art and design, digital storytelling and media arts, and other areas reflecting new directions in the curriculum.

5. Conclusion

These studies engage highly skilled artists from different genres in the creation of digital stories, films, interactive web media, visual narratives, games, and mixed media. They come together in experimental environments to develop full-fledged projects in virtual “creative teams”, and showcase their work in immersive Media Arts Festivals or Design Showcases. Advanced students practice a deep analysis of artistic processes and possibilities while pursuing pathways in digital media arts genres. These nimble new approaches provide opportunities for “real life” learning and the sophisticated digital skills required of 21st Century digital media artists.

References

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