



Gary Chapman International School on Digital Transformation Gathers in Porto

Researchers and practitioners from 11 nations descended on Porto in July for the Gary Chapman International School on Digital Transformation. This was the third edition of the School, renamed this year for its founder who died suddenly last December.

This year's school brought 14 presenters and 36 student participants for a week-long program in Porto exploring social and political changes catalyzed by the mass adoption of digital communication technologies. Presentation topics included social-media use by activists, India's national ID system, technology failure, and policy literacy. Several students from UT Austin were enlisted as rapporteurs for the formal presentations, and their [notes can be accessed from the wiki](#) created for this event.

One of the presentations facilitated the production of a live internet-audio show, which involved each of the participants at the School, few of whom had any radio or audio production experience. The final version of the radio show can be downloaded on [the Pontydysgu website](#). The show kicks off with a remembrance of Chapman and an overview of the School's goals before leading into segments about particular topics chosen by participants.

A unique feature of the School is its Affinity Sessions, colloquially known as "BarCamps." These sessions during the middle of the day are optional meetings whose agendas are set by the participants. This hybrid model combining formal presentations with unconference-style sessions enables participants to dig deeper into particular topics and network with participants with similar interests. Examples of Affinity Session topics include civic science, music and activism, youth and social media, and surveillance on the net.

Gary Chapman was a senior lecturer at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT-Austin and established the first International School on Digital Transformation in 2009. While kayaking in Guatemala last December, he suffered a heart attack and died. Inspired by Chapman's memory, the Digital Media Program has carried on his work and renamed the event for him. To learn more about the Gary Chapman International School on Digital Transformation, [please visit its website](#).

Researchers Visit Austin for Project Breadcrumbs

The contemporary online news environment presents readers with a flood of articles and information; it's now rarely a matter of whether something's online, but if something interesting is online. Researchers funded through the Digital Media Program are developing a system to help readers find content that suits their interests.



Professor Álvaro Figueira from Faculty of Sciences, University of Porto, came to Austin this July to meet with his Austin-based collaborator assistant professor Luis Francisco-Revilla of the School of Information. One of Figueira's project grant holders, Henrique Alves, also came to Austin to join the meetings and for an exploratory visit. Francisco-Revilla said that the ability for Portuguese researchers to visit Austin is invaluable for pursuing this research. Although it's possible to do some coordination via email or Skype, it is difficult to brainstorm or work out problems on the whiteboard without meeting face to face.

The members of Project Breadcrumbs are developing a web-based application for the social sharing and recommending of news stories. Users of the system identify news stories that suit their interests, and they can bookmark and tag the stories in the application. The system then uses this information, as well as their social contacts, to organize the personal news collection and to recommend similar stories in the future. The purpose of this project is to see whether this hybrid system can provide a better news-reading experience for ordinary users.

The application is being developed on a number of different web-based programming and scripting languages. The heart of the system being developed in Porto is written in Java, but the researchers are also using Javascript and PHP for the web-based interface, which is being developed in Austin. Unlike older systems such as del.icio.us, the software features a drag-and-drop interface, which provides an intuitive way for users of all skill levels to save and bookmark articles.

Project Breadcrumbs is one of seven research projects that were recommended by the Digital Media program and funded by FCT during the 2010 academic year. These projects require investigators in Portugal to identify faculty at UT Austin and another Portuguese institution as potential collaborators and then work with these faculty to complete the research.



Ana Cabral Martins Reflects on Productive Time in Austin

This spring, several Digital Media doctoral students came to Austin to sit in on classes and use UT's research facilities as they developed their research projects. One of the students who spent the semester is Ana Cabral Martins, who researches digital cinema at UNL.

Martins audited three classes in the department of Radio-TV-Film this past semester. She sat in on Classical Hollywood Cinema with Tom Schatz, Alternative Poetics with Charles Ramirez Berg, and Mary Kearney's Introduction to Research Methods. Martins said that Kearney's research methods class was particularly useful in helping her think through what ways she can approach her research.

Although Martins describes her project as a "classical theoretical thesis," it examines rapid changes in showbiz, asking "How has digital technology changed the way we see movies." In particular, Martins is looking at 3D cinema, Netflix, and alternative exhibition spaces such as the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema as case studies for her work.

On leaving Austin, Martins praised the research facilities at UT Austin. "I'm going to miss that library so much," she said of the main Perry-Castaneda Library, adding "I had everything I need there." She spent most of her time working on the sixth floor of the building. "In Lisbon, it's so hard to find a comprehensive film archive," she explained, agreeing that her time in Austin gave her a unique opportunity to pursue her work.

ZON Digital Animation Advanced Lab Wraps Up

The ZON Digital Animation Advanced Lab at UT Austin came to a close at the end of July, as 10 professional animators visiting from Portugal took part in an intensive program of study led by UT instructors Geoff Marslett and Ben Bays. For the past several weeks, the participants have studied a variety of animation processes and techniques and met with some of Austin's top animation experts. In addition to the program's intense work schedule, the visitors have gone on recreational trips—such as a day on the nearby Comal River--and professional visits, including a tour of Sony Online Entertainment studios.



Participant João Alves of Lisbon Labs noted the advantages of working with such a diverse group, stating, "Just having a talented group of people together, in the same space, everyone with different backgrounds and goals, makes the Animation Lab a constant learning experience. The teachers--both the regulars and the guests--take it to a whole other level, due to their vast experience of working in both the film and gaming industries."

Professional freelancer Diana Salavisa likewise noted the broad range of experiences and skills represented in the program. She said, "For a 2D drawing professional, it is a wonderful and enriching experience ... Geoff Marslett and Ben Bays not only showed us the primary software and techniques in the digital world, but they are also giving us new ways to explore our ideas and concepts through diverse animation programs and tools, and I can now implement and explore those techniques on my films."

On July 15th, the ZON Animation Lab participants spent two hours touring the Austin studios of Sony Online Entertainment, a company known for major videogame titles including the massively multiplayer classic game Everquest, Star Wars Galaxies, and the recently released DC Universe Online, currently SOE's top title. The students saw live game demonstrations, examples of pre-rendered sequences, and learned about the studio's techniques for particle animation, character rigs, and voice recording.



UT Students Defend Digital Media Dissertations

Three PhD students in the Department of Radio-TV-Film defended dissertations that explore aspects of Digital Media this summer.

Brett Caraway, a PhD Student in Radio-TV-Film (RTF), defended his dissertation in June, titled "Resistance Commons: File-Sharing Litigation and the Social System of Commoning," it investigates the phenomenon of illicit file-sharing with a unique economic perspective. In the dissertation, Caraway frames the legal campaigns of the content industries as a negative reaction to emerging commons-based social relations. The defense was held June 22, and the committee was chaired by Digital Media co-director Sharon Strover and associate professor of Radio-TV-Film Laura Stein.

In July, RTF PhD student **Matthew Payne** defended his dissertation "The Ludic Wars: The Interactive Pleasures of Post-9/11 Military Video Games." The dissertation examined how military-themed video games have been marketed and enjoyed in the period following the terrorist attacks in New York City. Digital Media Program co-director Sharon Strover chaired Payne's committee.

Also in July, **Chris Lucas**, an RTF PhD student, defended his dissertation "Crafting Digital Cinema: Cinematographers in Convergent Hollywood," which related how the adoption of digital technologies have altered the roles of cinematographers in the US film industry. RTF professor Thomas Schatz chaired Lucas' committee.

Congratulations to all of the recent PhD graduates!

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