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LIFEisGAME Wins Best Paper Award at ACM Conference

One of the research projects funded through the Digital Media program received some extra attention in August. The LIFEisGame research team presented their work at the SBIM-ACM SIGGRAPH conference in August. The research project explores how a serious game could be used to help autistic children recognize facial expressions.

LIFEisGAME is led by a team of researchers from U.Porto and UT Austin. Verónica Orvalho is the principal investigator from Porto, while co-PIs J.K. Aggarwal and Yan Zhan are based in Austin. All told, 30 researchers are involved with the project.

The SBIM-ACM SIGGRAPH conference took place in Vancouver, Canada this August. It is devoted to non-photorealistic rendering techniques.Verónica Orvalho won best paper for her work on facial modeling for the project.

LIFEisGAME also received special attention at home. Público, a Portuguese newspaper with national reach, reported on the LIFEisGAME project in a feature story. The research project explores how a serious game could be used to help autistic children recognize facial expressions. The article in Portuguese is available at the Público website. For more information about the LIFEisGAME visit its website.

Fall Visitors Get Cooking in Austin

Things are heating up for the Digital Media Program and not just because of Austin's hottest summer on record. A fleet of students and researchers from Portugal are arriving on campus to study at UT this fall. Carlos Guedes from U.Porto will be on campus as a visiting professor. In addtion, three doctoral students, Tiago Videra, Carlos Figueiredo and Isabel Paiva, have arrived for the semester to take classes that complement their research.

U.Porto music professor Carlos Guedes is one of the principal investigators on the kinetic music controller research project funded by the program. His stay in Austin is also funded by a Fullbright fellowship. He will be here collaborating with his co-PI, RTF and music professor Bruce Pennycook and contributing to classes on campus.

Also working with Pennycook, Tiago Videra pursues his PhD at UNL. His studies emphasize emphasis digital music synthesis. He will be a research intern for Pennycook on the kinetic controller research project. He says he is particularly excited by the prospect of Pennycook's film-scoring class, since courses on that topic are not offered in Portugal.

Carlos Figueiredo is visiting from U.Porto where his doing his PhD. He's planning to take some classes at UT's School of Information. He says that his courses in Information Architecture will give him a practical perspective on how users process information.

UNL doctoral student Isabel Paiva is explorinig her interest in ubiquitous computing through classes offered in the Department of Art and Art History and the School of Information. Her work uses the human skin as a design metaphor for interactive surfaces.

Figueiredo and Paiva aren't the only Portuguese students that will be on campus this fall. The program expects seven visiting students in September and there will be more to come.
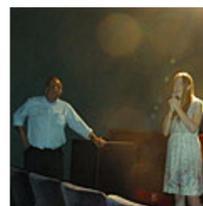
Summer Institute Course Gets Press Coverage

This summer the Digital Media Program offered five short credit courses in Lisbon and Porto. One of the courses engaged with the public in particularly special ways. In Porto, Jeanne Stern taught a three-week workshop on experimental animation to 12 students.

The course ended with a Saturday night screening of student work at the historic Passos Manuel theater. About 35 attendees were treated to a two-hour program that included student projects as well as shorts selected by Stern. These shorts included work by Stern and Portuguese animator Luis Grifu who helped as a teaching assistant during the class.

The class caught the attention of national Portuguese broadcaster RTP, which sent out a news team to Stern's class. After the class ended, RTP aired a segment about the class to a national audience. The clip, in Portuguese, can be viewed on the RTP website.

The course was well received by students, 90% of whom rated it as excellent in a subsequent evaluation survey. You can see examples of student work on the class' Vimeo site.

Digital Media Contract Renewed for One Year

The UT Austin | Portugal Digital Media is pleased to announce that its contract with FCT has been renewed for another year. This extends the project to six years from the original five. "The extension of this contract enables us to continue our work supporting research projects, doctoral students, and supplementary programs," Digital Media co-director Sharon Strover said in a statement. "We look forward to further nurturing productive relationships between Austin and Portugal."

Internship Update

This fall, the Digital Media Leadership Program welcomes two interns to Austin. U.Porto doctoral student Teresa Veira will be working with local public broadcaster KUT over the next three months as a photographer for its interactive projects. Later this year, Rui Silva, an MA student at U.Porto, will be working with RTF professor Andrew Garrison as a sound design intern. The program still has one potential intern available this Fall. The student seeks a placement in the fields of marketing and culture writing. If your organization has a need in either of these areas, please contact internship coordinator Jonathan Daniels at jonathan.a.daniels@gmail.com.