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Disney Research chooses Lamberty's DigiQuilt software as finalist in Learning Challenge competition

Summary: Lamberty and a team of student researchers wrote the current version of the software designed to help elementary children learn mathematical concepts.

(June 22, 2010)-DigiQuilt software, designed by Kristin Kaster Lamberty, University of Minnesota, Morris assistant professor of computer science and a 2000 graduate, has been chosen as a finalist for the ACM Special Interest Group on Graphics and Interactive Techniques (SIGGRAPH) 2010 Learning Challenge. Disney Research sponsors the competition that reflects the Disney philosophy that “fun and learning shouldn’t be contradictory.” Lamberty and 19 other finalists have been invited to attend the SIGGRAPH 2010 International Conference and Exhibition on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques at the Los Angeles Convention Center from July 25–29, 2010, when the Learning Challenge winners will be announced.

Helping children learn math

Lamberty and fellow finalists created learning widgets, layered activities that move learners from minimal knowledge to active knowledge in one or more sophisticated and entertaining learning concepts. The projects focus on mathematics, art, science, music, reading, or writing. Lamberty’s software, a tool designed to help elementary children understand mathematical concepts like fractions and symmetry, was first imagined as part of her dissertation work at the Georgia Institute of Technology. At Morris, development of the current version began in the spring 2006 Software Design and Development course. Lamberty’s team of student researchers, of which Jason Biatek ’10, Excelsior, played a key role, wrote the current version of the software. DigiQuilt has been used in Georgia and Minnesota classrooms and in homes by third through fifth graders for the past eight years over the course of its development.

“There are so many ways of looking at the world,” says Lamberty. “DigiQuilt supports children’s learning by giving them tools that help them look at and understand their quilts in a variety of ways. I love what the software has become as well as where it is going. It’s exciting to be recognized as a finalist in the competition, but it’s even more exciting to see how the software has evolved and changed to support learning in new ways. UMM students supported by the Morris Academic Partners, Multi-Ethnic Mentorship, and Grant-In-Aid programs helped shape the software and contributed to the research in the field. My love of patchwork quilting and a desire to help children explore the mathematical nature of quilts in engaging and creative ways has become the center of my research program.”

Disney Research

Disney Research is an association of research labs within the Walt Disney Company that share the common mission of inventing new pioneering technologies for the media and entertainment industry. Finalists in the Disney Learning Challenge receive travel grants to attend the SIGGRAPH conference. Winners receive a cash prize and Disney Research and Development Tours, Disney Animation Tours, and Walt Disney Studio Tours.

ACM, the Association for Computing Machinery, hosts the SIGGRAPH conference. It is the world’s largest educational and scientific computing society, uniting educators, researchers, and professionals to inspire dialogue, share resources, and address the field’s challenges.

Photo: Jason Biatek '10, Excelsior, Lamberty, Katie Froiland '10, Eden Prairie, and Stephen Adams '12, International Falls, presenting "Encouraging Awareness of Peers' Learning Activities Using Large Displays in the Periphery" at the ACM Special Interest Group on Computer Human Interaction (SIGCHI) conference in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 2010.

DigiQuilt screen

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