

EDITORIAL PREFACE

Michael Thomas, School of Languages and International Studies, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, UK

Welcome to edition 4(1) of the International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments (IJVPLE). This latest edition contains four research articles on a range of themes, including in particular the use of immersive 3D virtual worlds in a variety of educational contexts.

In the first article, “Improving the Impact and Return of Investment of Game-Based Learning,” Christian Sebastian Loh from Southern Illinois University, examines research about the potential role of game-based learning (GBL). While there has been a lot of the usual hype surrounding the emergence of serious gaming, game-based researchers have produced little in the way of empirical research to substantiate their claims. This is especially necessary since GBL is perceived to be a high-risk technology investment. Loh’s article focuses on an assessment methodology and examines the role of data visualisation techniques in order to provide up to date analysis of game-based approaches in education.

In the second article, “Usability Evaluation of an Adaptive 3D Virtual Learning Environment,” Ewais and de Troyer discuss the role of 3D virtual environments for educational purposes primarily due to their ability to present rich interaction capabilities. Moreover, virtual worlds present learners with environments that are more tailored to their personalised learning

preferences in the shape of skills, competence and learning goals rather than a one-sized fits all approach that treats all learners the same. The paper presents data from a project focusing on usability and outlines a number of important recommendations about future use of 3D environments in education.

This theme is continued into the third paper, “Facilitating 3D Virtual World Learning Environments Creation By Non-Technical End Users Through Template-Based Virtual World Instantiation,” in which Chang Liu, Ying Zhong, Sertac Ozercan and Qing Zhu from Ohio University examines how technical barriers can be overcome through the use of immersive environments. Using iVirtualWorld, a prototype developed to provide a platform-independent 3DVW creation tool, the authors examine a preliminary evaluation which indicates positive results in three areas. The research suggests a paradigm for conducting further research on 3D immersive environments.

In the final paper in this edition, “Identification of key Issues in adopting a Web 2.0 e-portfolio Strategy,” McKenna and Stansfield articulate a number of key issues concerned with the practice and sustainability in Web 2.0 applications in the context of an e-Learning strategy for supporting e-portfolios in UK Higher Education. Addressing the lack of research in the field to date, the authors focus on a strat-

egy for promoting best practice and attempts to provides researchers with a framework for utilising Web 2.0 e-portfolios.

We hope you enjoy reading volume 4(1) and that you will consider contributing to the International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments (IJVPLE) in future editions. After thirteen editions of the journal I will be handing over to two new editors for edition 4(2), Dr. Krista Terry and Dr. Amy Cheney. I have been pleased to have seen the journal develop and grow over the last three to

four years and I have every confidence it will continue to do so in the future under the new editorial team. Thank you to all the authors, reviewers and especially to the publication team at IGI Global who have helped make the journal possible.

Michael Thomas
Editor-in-Chief
IJVPLE