The Ethnographic Exhibit:

The Remaking of the Human Zoo using Unity

Project Information

Title: The Ethnographic Exhibit: The Remaking of the Human Zoo using Unity
Name: Blaire Bosley
Department: History Department
College: The College of Wooster

Team Information

Instructional Technologist: Dr. Breitenbucher
Librarian: Dr. Jacob Heil (ex officio)
Faculty Members: Dr. Denise Byrnes & Dr. Katherine Holt
Undergraduate with Technical Skills: Blaire Bosley, Zachary Phillips-Gary

Project Description

As early as the 19th century, indigenous people were being taken from their lands by westerners and placed in exhibits like circuses, world fairs, and in the case of this project, ethnographic exhibits, also know as human zoos. At human zoos the indigenous people would be put inside of an environment that replicates their home; in addition, these people were forced to practice their native traditions, wear their native clothes, and eat their native food. By practicing their native traditions they were used as a source of education for Westerners on the variety of colonized cultures; it also ingrained a racial superiority within the Westerners who visited these exhibitions. Although human zoos lasted until the late 20th century, the history of these exhibits have gone untold for decades; however, through this project I hope to use technology as a way to educate people on an untold subject.

As an extension to my Junior Independent Study at the College of Wooster, this project will use and edit an existing 3D model that I created in Unity, which is an animation and game development software. This will be a historically accurate project that pays tribute to the many indigenous people taken from their homes and used as a source of entertainment. Additionally, Unity will help to showcase the ways historians can utilize digital humanities as a resource to educate the public on the many

historical moments that have been overlooked. The project will also expand the ways in which people view history through digital immersion. By engaging with a lesser known historical topic through virtual reality, the user will be able to learn more about the history of the world around them.

The Role of ILiADS

As of now, the project is at the preliminary stages of development and has a lot of features that can be added to enhance the experience of the user. Hopefully, ILiADS would be a space that allows for the team to work on three specific features of the project. The first feature would be adding a model of a zoo exhibit. This feature would allow for the user to have a real-life perspective of the human zoos and what they looked like during this time. Secondly, the group would work on cleaning up the graphics of the project to create a smoother and clearer 3D world. Lastly, the group would work on adapting the project so that it can be used with the HTC Vive, thus creating a virtual reality project from the unity environment.

The only problems that might be faced are the time restraints with all the goals that I hope we reach. Thus, I believe that it is very necessary that the prior summer months are spent refining the original project so that when we attend ILiADS we come with a project that is ready to be manipulated. Another problem is a lack of accessible primary sources such as pictures, diaries, and other historical resources, which could shed a light on individuals in the human zoo. Additionally, I need to learn more about preserving the intellectual work of the virtual environment through the consultation of ILiADS Liaisons because I would like for it to be useful to future historians

Project Timeline

After the end of the 2016-2017 school year a basic model of the project will be designed. Throughout the summer the goal is to fix any errors that might be hindering the performance of the project, while, adding any components that need to be incorporated. Thus, at the end of the summer, prior to ILiADS, the project should have a preliminary design. Afterwards, we will be able to add final touches to the project as well as implement the virtual reality aspect of the project. Below is a monthly schedule of the task that will take place prior to the ILiADS program:

MAY 2017:	Working with Professor's Holt and Byrnes, I will complete preliminary research on the project as a part of my Junior Independent Study Project. This entails a thorough historical

examination of Ethnological Expositions as well as the construction of a preliminary environment in the gaming engine Unity.

JUNE/JULY 2017: I will debug the existing prototype and implement more features within the Unity environment such as videos and audio detailing the history of the zoo. Additionally, I will spend these months ensuring that the project has all the necessary historical information.

ILiADS WEEK 2017: This week will be spent working on implementing the VR protocols, troubleshooting the implementation of the project, adding modules, optimizing performance, working out questions to related to hosting/serving the final project. Also this week will allow for the team to be in discussion with ILiADS consultants on the ways in which we can preserve the project.

FALL 2017: The fall semester will allow for me not only to help other humanities majors but also to use my new skills in the implementation of my Senior Independent Study. I hope to utilize my new knowledge to map out the historical ways in which African American women resisted oppression during Reconstruction.

Sustainability

Through the process of working on my Junior IS project I have learned a lot about Unity, 3D design, and virtual reality (VR) environments. Thus, I hope to learn even more while at ILiADS so that I may be able to build a robust environment that can be utilized in the future. In addition, there are two specific plans that will be in place to ensure that the project can be sustained for as long as possible. The first plan is to take a video of a VR walk-through of the environment that can be placed on a website, allowing for students at the College of Wooster to have access to a digital humanities project in case they would like to imitate a project like this in the future. Secondly, the project will be shared with the Unity community, allowing for it to be a resource for other Unity users around the world who want to adapt or change the environment. Because the software being used for this project is always adapting, it was decided that these were the best two options to ensure that the project will be able to be self sustainable and helpful to others who might be working on a similar design. In addition, this will allow for the public sharing of the project with a larger community.