Virtual Avebury Project Gets Underway

Visitors will be able to walk virtually through the ancient Avebury Henge and stone circle, part of the Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Site, and experience the sights and sounds of the location as it would have been in the Neolithic period – and well before much of the site was destroyed by the building of Avebury village – thanks to a new experience being created by ourselves and Bournemouth University.

The project has been made possible through the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Next Generation of Immersive Experiences programme, and also involves sound specialists Satsymph, and the National Trust.

The main aim of this project is to bring together researchers in archaeology and virtual environment evaluation with creative partners in immersive technologies, virtual soundscapes and heritage management to develop methods of effective, innovative and fruitful working. In addition, the project aims to develop and explore the potential of virtual historical places to increase both engagement with the public and the understanding of the development of human cultures through a sense of virtual place.

By creating the model in Fieldscapes the team will be able to more accurately recreate the real-world terrain, generate better textured stones, make more use of audio. It will also allow researchers to customise and extend experiences without specialist help, and make the experience available on a wide range of devices including smartphones, tablets and virtual reality headsets.

We've always known that immersive environments can have a significant impact on how we view and understand the past, and this is an ideal opportunity to put our thoughts into practice. We'll keep you posted as the project progresses.

Newspeak Bot

We've been talking to Literature Professor Seb Groes, now at Wolverhampton University, for almost a year about how chatbots could be used in conjunction with some of his courses and research.

Then in December we came up with an idea for a simple but interesting Twitter bot, and with the Wolverhampton Festival of Literature taking place in January we got the go ahead to build the bot.

The bot, @NewspeakBot, monitors a few selected Twitter accounts (Donald Trump, Number10 etc) and then converts words in the tweets into Newspeak equivalents. Newspeak is the language created by George Orwell in his book 1984 and aims to reduce the number of "core" words (e.g. bad is ungood), and use abbreviated doublespeak words such as Minipax, i.e. the Ministry of Peace, which is of course the Ministry of War.

The bot generates about 20-30 tweets a day, and whilst some might be almost unchanged, some are really very thought-provoking.

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foreignoffice: RT @ukinchina: Big
sister arrives Eastasia today, and
attends    AIRSTRIP    1-Eastasia
Spirit of Youth Cultural Festival

realDonaldTrump: .. it was my
plusgood honor to stand with our
incredible proles, and to show the
world that OCEANIA is back - and
we are coming back plusunsmall
than ever before!

BBCNews: Boris Johnson suggests
'bridge' between AIRSTRIP 1 and
Eurasia

UKParliament: RT @HouseofCommons:
Today's #Two minute hate is
available   to   watch   on   the
@UKParliament Prolefeed channel
```
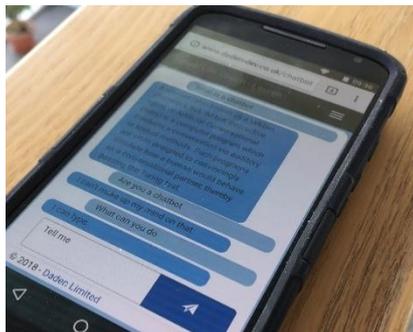
You can follow @NewspeakBot at https://twitter.com/NewspeakBot.

A Chatbot is for Life…..

Whilst there is a lot of noise about chatbots at the moment much of it is about simple question-answering systems such as Siri and Alexa, or automated customer service bots on web sites.

What interests us though is the more prolonged conversations and relationships that chatbots and users can have. Such bots might be able to better support individuals throughout their careers, or help to capture, disseminate and access corporate knowledge, in particular the tacit knowledge that is often stuck in peoples' heads, and leaves with them when they move on.

One demonstrator we're busy building at the moment is a "virtual life coach". It could be given to an employee when they first join a company, and then stay with them for their whole career – helping to mediate their relationship with other business systems, provide just-in-time information and training, help track annual review and CPD targets, help them to grow their physical and mental fitness, and help to deal with physical and mental health issues before they are ready to declare problems to co-workers or professionals.

We hope to have a demo ready some time during the summer – and to test it out we're going to deploy it in the office via Slack and mobile phones first. Time for us to eat our own dog-food!

Fieldscapes/Trainingscapes v1.5 Released!

This month we've released v1.5 of Fieldscapes. This has a range of new and important features designed to make immersive training and learning experiences even more flexible, rewarding and engaging, as well as a number of more minor fixes and changes.

The highlights are:

- **Web browser surfaces in world** – the browser copes with Javascript, video and even 3D using WebGL. You can even use Google Docs and collaboratively edit documents with web users and other Fieldscape users.
- **Chatbot integration** – You can hook one or more chatbots up to the text-chat system so that you can have conversations with non-player characters. The API will be made available so you can hook up to systems like Pandorabots if you want.
- **Fully multi-user objects** – so that if one user moves an object it moves for everyone else as well – enabling collaborative work and play!
- **Improved VR user interface** – we liked the idea of the virtual iPAD but it just didn't work!
- **New avatars –** Six new adult avatars, including our first with a hijab.

v1.5 is available on all our supported platforms (Windows, Mac, Android, iOS) and full release notes are available on the wiki.

Download it from the Fieldscapes web site today!

This Quarter we've also …

- Delivered the AVID virtual assistant for data visualisation Phase 1 project to Dstl/MOD
- Spoken at the Wolverhampton Literature Festival on chatbots and the NewspeakBot
- Spoken at the Prince's Trust Young Innovators event in Birmingham

Get in Touch!

If there is anything in this newsletter that has caught your interest and you'd like to discuss more just email info@daden.co.uk or call us on +44(0) 121 250 5678, or visit our website at www.daden.co.uk. We look forward to talking to you.

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