

# Virtual Space Evaluation Document

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## **1. Problem**

The brief set out a challenge to all students for this brief, working with the BBC's Head of the Big Screens North; Jeremy Buxton, we had to create an interactive virtual environment themed on a nature setting.

The brief would also require us to use a device called "The Making Things Kit" which was a kind of circuit board that would communicate with a computer using input devices such as microphones, cameras and buttons etcetera. This device would also have to use Macromedia's Flash to help communicate to create the interactive visual and audio aspects of the final piece.

Working in groups we had to compose an idea and pass that by the tutor, who was Jay Field. Our group consisted of Leon Sampson, Sam Topham & Dan Wrigley. Creating an initial idea proved to be the first hurdle and one that would take up a time to polish off and finalise.

### **Idea #1**

The initial idea was themed on space, using planets and interaction to give a user an experience that would help them navigate the solar system as we know it, giving educational feedback about the planets and also offering the ability to spin the planet, zoom into it etcetera.

This idea was knocked back due to it being educational and also prompting the user as what to do and expect which was in contradiction to the brief.

## **Idea #2**

Our groups 2<sup>nd</sup> idea was a total change of theme and now aimed at creating a nature/wilderness product involving trees that would grow, beavers that would try to chop them down and a conservationist that would try and stop the beavers; which you would control.

This idea was also knocked back due to a predictable idea and the platform was very game like and did not meet the requirements of the brief.

## **Idea #3**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> idea and our final one was a journey back to the premise of the original idea; space, and a twist on the concepts. We decided upon an idea to offer the users the chance to create a new planet in 3D using skins Leon would draw, then interact with it using the making things device and its inputs to change the planets size, to increase its population; visually and the rotation speed of the planet.

This idea with a little tweaking here and there was accepted by Jay and we went onto the approach of implementation.

The major issues we could foresee with this idea and project was our very basic knowledge of the making things kit, using input devices with flash, using flash itself to make the planets interactive i.e. spinning, scaling etcetera. Other problems thought of were, time management, scale of the project and fitting workload into the timeframe with other projects running along side this.

As a year group, we knew there would be limitations in powering the mobile plinth device that would give the students the chance to interact with the big

### **Idea #3 (cont)**

screen on the demonstration day. Its power would only give us up to an hour limiting the usage severely.

## **2. Approach**

Our group set out by listing all the separate parts of the project and each individual's strengths, then assigning those sections out individually. Each week we would decide upon a job list for each member to be completed for the next tutorial to show progress for Jay.

Some individual problems we came across are listed below.

- Symmetrical planet skins: solution, using gradients and refrain from skinning to the edge.
- Flash PHP working: solution, reading Jays tutorials and researching on the Internet.
- Understanding of the making things kit: solution, attending Jay's workshops.
- The population visual graphics: solution, looking at online guides and books.
- Using 3D models in Flash: solution, Researching solutions on the internet, found Swift 3D.

As a group we also had larger problems, working with the big screen, solution was a user testing session to test out the work done. The mobile plinth as mentioned above.

### **3. Development**

Development always seemed to be slow, factors such as constant rejections of the project proposal kept us second guessing our ideas and possible solutions. With a blog kept up to date weekly and job lists set each week, development took a steady and precise course, if any work carried over we would try and focus on that specific area to get back on track; alas that would not always work out as something's just don't work that efficiently.

#### **Leon Sampson**

- Planet Skins
- Graphics
- Web site
- Blog Administration
- Anemometer
- Storyboard
- Population section
- Planning & Development

#### **Sam Topham**

- Flash intro
- Flash functionality
- Animation (rocket)
- Animation (intro)
- Animation (planet selector)
- 3D planet models
- Input device setup
- Planning & development
- PHP

#### **Dan Wrigley**

- Concept ideas
- Planning & development
- PHP
- Audio
- Documentation
- Plinth board design and setup
- Some Action script corrections

#### **4. Evaluation**

The project was something we all were excited about at the start; we all wanted to make the best piece of work we possibly could, the work and the project we asserted ourselves too was of a large scale. Taking into consideration the skill sets, we; as a group, had and could use, meant we were always going to be pushing ourselves.

In the end we simply ran out of time to create what we had planned, problems in getting chances to work with the Making Things Kit due to it being primarily reserved for the final year students FMP's, having to make our input items from scratch; some of which we had to buy, spending our own money and working with a code and program we as students didn't receive much teaching in, all added up to a enjoyable but frustrating time.

Below is a list of some of the reasons we could not hand in a completed piece or work for the deadline posed.

- Time allotted to complete the work and project we set ourselves
- Our own Knowledge of programs and coding languages (or lack of)
- Lack of teaching
- Aiming to high with our goals

Everything we were able to complete and hand in was a pure reflection of the work that we could achieve with 3 members in the time frame we had and the skills we could offer.

We shall be running the program on the big screen on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2009-05-22 using the plinth which was custom built for ourselves and the final

#### **4. Evaluation (cont)**

year students who needed to use the making things kit. The program will require interactivity from a user, using the input devices we selected and programmed in, these shall be a Microphone, potentiometer and an anemometer; there will also be a flick switch that will start and end the program.

## **5. Self Appraisal**

### **Working as a group member**

I found that working on individual parts to the project was difficult as this project was such a “hands on, everyone on deck” project. The main things that I managed to develop working alone where most of the graphics, which in the end only about 30% of the graphics I created was actually needed. The reason being for this was because we had to cut some of the things out which would have made this project more versatile and individual to the user such as the alternative planet skins.

This was a very difficult project and tested us all in different ways but I think we all worked well alone but most importantly we all worked better together.

**Leon Sampson**

From the start working as an individual in a group didn't daunt me to much, we got off at running speed, having had a few initial rejections we keep the creative process up.

With this project being a Flash project it was always going to be a struggle to keep my interest and enthusiasm going throughout. Individually the list of skills I could bring to the group was limited compared to Leon and Sam. I feel as though I contributed where I can and that as a whole it helped a lot.

**Dan Wrigley**

## **5. Self Appraisal (cont)**

Throughout the process and development of the project, I have felt very comfortable working with Dan and Leon, primarily because we have worked before in the previous year on a different project, and because we all get along anyway as we all seem to be on the same wavelength. We all get along well and find the time to come together both in and out of the session provided at university. As an individual |I have worked to my fullest potential on this project and further advanced my Flash skills and team management / planning skills.

**Sam Topham**

### **Working in a group**

Working in this group for me was very good as we have all worked together on other project and we all know each others strengths and weaknesses. Everyone worked hard and put in plenty of hours of work into this project. I don't know how successful this project is going to be yet but I do know that we as individuals and as a group have all learned valuable knowledge from taking part in this project.

**Leon Sampson**

As always working in a group has its ups and downs, relying on others for work and meetings to keep the work going, our group always felt that process was continuing on a weekly basis even when we came across certain hurdles.

## **5. Self Appraisal (cont)**

I Enjoyed this very challenging project, it has again made me realise I dislike Flash but I have gained some knowledge in sound creation and group compact work.

**Dan Wrigley**

As a team I thought that we worked well, as we have previously worked together we are all comfortable with each others knowledge on specific subjects and I feel that we organised ourselves as a group successfully in order to overcome the workload.

We worked out who could best complete individual tasks using their knowledge and this helped us to maximise the output of work on a weekly basis. Working in a group could have presented many problems such as scheduling and coming together as a group outside of the set session in university, but we all seemed to communicate fine and got together at the right times to complete the project.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed both the project in terms of the technical side and the group work which was involved such as planning and time management and would be happy to work with Leon and Dan again in the future.

**Sam Topham**