Center for Game Research @ Rensselaer

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s School of Humanities & Social Sciences and its Social and Behavioral Research Center have teamed to create the Center for Game Research, an opportunity for an interdisciplinary faculty, graduate and undergraduate students to devote themselves to research in games and interactive simulation.

What is it?
The Center for Game Research is a unit of the Rensselaer Social and Behavioral Research Laboratory (SBRL). Its affiliates are Associates of the SBRL, which provides its facilities.

Why is it being established now?
Rensselaer has emerged as a national leader in games and simulation with its existing minor in Game Studies; the initiation in Fall, 2006 of a full dual-degree B.S. in Games and Simulation Arts and Sciences that is already attracting industry notice for its attention to games-specific curriculum combined with in-depth skills in arts, computer science, cognitive science, and management; and a committed group of faculty researchers already conducting and publishing games research.

The new center provides an umbrella organization that develops and coordinates research in games and simulation by multidisciplinary teams from diverse backgrounds in arts, cognitive science, computer science, and human-computer interaction.

What facilities are available?
Games Research Suite. This living room-like environment is equipped with all major game consoles, an extensive library of current and historic games, a comfortable seating area, a large wall-mounted plasma screen display, and video and audio monitoring and recording, including split-screen video combining views of the game and its players.

Motion Capture, VR, and Animation Systems. With a major NSF grant, a Vicon motion capture system is being installed into a large existing Virtual Reality studio. The Center for Game Research will be a major user of this equipment, as will artists and researchers in the Rensselaer Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC).

Networked PC Room. A large 10-station networked PC room is available for study of social gaming.

Focus Group Rooms. Two professionally designed focus group rooms with unobtrusive audio and video recording are available for concept studies, marketing research, and other research studies that use group discussion.

Real-time Streaming Video. Video from all research rooms in the SBRL, including the Games Research Suite and Focus Group rooms, can be viewed from any Web browser in real time so remote collaborators can view and participate in studies as they are conducted.
HOW DOES THE GAMES RESEARCH CENTER COLLABORATE WITH CORPORATIONS?

There are two primary methods of collaboration: corporate memberships and research contracts.

Corporate memberships give organizations access to Center activities and information, and engage them in defining research directions for the Center. Corporate members have access to research findings before publication and access to the expertise of Center researchers for informal discussions and Q&A sessions. Participation in Center research studies places talented students and corporate representatives in close proximity. By participating in the Center’s formal programs, corporate members have the opportunity to help set the research agenda in ways that may benefit their organization.

Two formal events are held for corporate members. In the Fall, a one-day meeting of Center affiliates and corporate members is held to set the research agenda for the coming year. In the Spring, a larger conference is held in conjunction with Rensselaer’s annual Game Festival. At this Spring conference, Center affiliates present research findings, corporate members are invited to provide their perspectives on research issues, and distinguished academic and industry people are invited to speak.

Membership fees are paid annually and are considered gift funds. As such, they may also provide tax benefits to the corporation. Fees support the cost of research, facilities, and programs and support graduate and undergraduate students who work within the Center.

Research contracts are legal agreements between Center research teams and the corporation to investigate and report upon a specific research problem. Issues of intellectual property ownership, conditions and timing of disclosure of research findings, time milestones in research, research costs and fees, and other matters are negotiated and codified within the contract. Research contracts have a Principal Investigator (PI) who directs the project and is the primary liaison between the corporation and the Center.

For more information, contact:

Dr. Katherine Isbister,
Rensselaer Social and Behavioral Research Laboratory,
21 Union Street, Troy, NY 12180, Telephone: (518) 322-7569, isbisk@rpi.edu.

For a video tour of the Social & Behavioral Research Lab, go to: www.sbrl.rpi.edu/about/tour.html