Exploring the affordances of virtual fieldwork in a multi-user, 3-D digital environment

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Virtual Skiddaw:
Exploring the affordances of virtual fieldwork in a multi-user, 3-D digital environment

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What we built
100 km² area real data, maps
6 detailed sites higher res hand specimens task lists
Navigation avatars guided (linear) free-roaming teleports
Chat range adjustable
Support manual, transcripts

Access via web browser
Gaming VFTs: challenges

Cost: resources, people, time
Real data: detail vs performance
Framework: self-contained vs adaptable
Comparisons: virtual vs physical fieldwork
Overload: not alienating non-gamers...

How to combat fear that VFTs might replace real field teaching?

Gaming engine: affordances

‘3D’ landscape – geology in context; spatial literacy
Rich interface – interactivity and immersion
Self-contained – (mostly): little linked material
Multi-user – especially for distance learners
‘More than fieldwork’ – do something different:
  – flying
  – aerial views, map overlays
  – in-world cross-section
  – teleports (time-saving)
  – fadeable avatars

What about: F2F students? or schools?
Evaluation & the future...

1. V-skiddaw at the OU
   eSTEeM project + Steve Tilling

2. V-skiddaw for A-Level students

3. A Virtual Field Trip Service
   innovate UK project
   Daden Ltd, DesignThinkers, OU

What about:
F2F students?
or schools?

Virtual Field Trip Ecosystem

Authoring Institution
(Also likely to be a user institution, but could be non-educator)

- Create new locations and core lesson plans
- Digitise area from sat/aerial/site
- Under contract (if req)

Geospatial Subcontractor

£ Revenue
Stream from
others’ use

£ Payment, eg per use, per loc, global pass, per annum

User Institution

- Customise Lesson Plans
- Learning Analytics
- Experience Virtual Field Trips
- Create User Generated Content

- Educators
- Students
- KS1-3
- GCSE/A
- UGrad

Web/Cloud

Multiple Locations, eg
- Skiddaw
- Snowdon
- Everest
- Moon

£ Revenue/Cost flows in yellow

Multiple Lesson Plans

KS1-3
GCSE
A-Level
UGrad

VFTaaS Operator
(Daden)

New Locations
New Features

Management/Support Costs
Questions for you

1. Main attractions of Virtual Skiddaw?
2. How would you use a similar VFT?
3. Should we make more?
4. Would you like to be involved?
Shameless plug…

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Scientists are 95% certain that humans are the "dominant cause" of global warming since the

Mammals threatened by fragmentation - 26 Sep 2013
Small mammals affected by rainforest fragmentation are likely to be wiped out more quickly than

Popular experiments

Project team (1)

Open University
Shailey Minocha – leader, virtual worlds
Tom Argles – geologist
Brian Richardson – production manager
Kat Garrow – project manager
Sarah Hack – graphic designer
Nick Braithwaite – OSL Director
Sarah Davies – academic consultant
Trent & Peak Archaeology
David Strange-Walker – LiDAR, photogram
Project team (2)

Daden Ltd
David Burden – *project lead*
Paul Rahme – *programmer*
Macdonald Mbaya – *programmer*
Darrell Smith – *project manager*
Tim Lozinski – *graphics/environment*
Iain Brazendale – *programmer*
Lucy Smallwood-Rose – *administrator*
Guy Wallace – *graphic designer*
Chris Stevens – *programmer*

*HOWLING GALE*

Site visit, April 2013