CAIN and Able

Ulster has secured prestigious funding to investigate new approaches to research and teaching in the area of peace and conflict studies using Web 2.0 and immersive virtual world platforms. The unique initiative represents an exciting opportunity to explore and exploit new teaching tools beyond a traditional classroom setting.

The project, 'Visualising the Conflict: Immersion in the Landscape of Victims and Commemoration in Northern Ireland', is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and is led by INCORE – the International Conflict Research Institute – in partnership with the Intelligent Systems Research Centre (ISRC) in the Faculty of Computing and Engineering.

The project builds on a recently completed archive on victims, survivors and commemoration – work which was undertaken by Conflict Archive on the INternet (CAIN). It aims to engage and educate a new generation of users through the appropriate use of Web 2.0 technologies to create an online, virtual world which maps the geographical spread of deaths during the Troubles, as well as 3D models of physical memorials.

A cross-disciplinary team will carry out the project. The principal investigator and award holder, Dr Martin Melaugh, CAIN Director, will be supported by Michael Callaghan, leader of the Serious Games and Virtual Worlds research team at the ISRC and Professor Gillian Robinson, Director of ARK, both of whom are co-investigators on the project.

The other members of the team are: Professor Brandon Hamber, Director of INCORE; Kerri McCusker, research associate in the ISRC; Dr Shane Wilson, lecturer in the School of Computing and Intelligent Systems; Mike McCool, ARK and INCORE IT manager; and Janet Farren, secretary to the project. Three research associates will also be recruited to carry out the planned work.

Dr Martin Melaugh said: "The whole project team is delighted with this second award from the AHRC. It demonstrates the regard with which the funder and the assessors hold the previous work undertaken by CAIN. It also confirms the merit they find in the innovative research set out in the proposed work plan."

Professor Brandon Hamber added: "INCORE is delighted with this award which acknowledges the quality of the existing CAIN resource and gives us the opportunity to work collaboratively with our colleagues in the ISRC who are leading research in virtual world technologies."

The project represents an opportunity for INCORE/CAIN to explore new research directions and allows staff to investigate developments at the forefront of computing and technology in this area.

Michael Callaghan commented: "The use of the immersive virtual world platforms will extend the reach and impact of the existing CAIN resources. It will add a collaborative multi-user element to the online experience adding a sense of physical presence for users while facilitating cross-community involvement and dialogue."

Following an application to the AHRC's Digital Equipment and Database Enhancement for Impact (DEDEFI) scheme, £260,179 was awarded to the project. The funding is time-bound and the project will end on 28 February 2011.

Inside Links:
The recently completed online archive project is available at cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/ and for more information on the current research project, contact Dr Martin Melaugh on m.melaugh@ulster.ac.uk, ext 75517.

Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance. Only applications of the highest quality and excellence are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, visit www.ahrc.ac.uk.

Arts & Humanities Research Council