WIMT▲CH

Students bring a story to life at WIMTACH's latest hackathon

By: Linda Vachon

28 students of Centennial College's Interactive Gaming program raced against time to bring a coffee table book to life as part of a hackathon held at Progress Campus on February 25, 2019.

The hackathon was organized by WIMTACH, (Wearable, Interactive and Mobile TechnologyAccess Centre in Health) which partners with companies who want to take their ideas from concept to market.

For this event, Ian Xun, owner of Anansi Moving Images Inc.approached WIMTACH with an idea for his coffee table book on Jamaican writer,Louise Bennett. Bennett, whose writing and poetry is a reflection on Jamaican life, is considered a cultural icon.

"I wanted it to be a living document that people would go back to and engage with on an ongoing basis, " Xun said about his book.

Xun had an idea for the creation of a mobile app that would use augmented reality to detect an image and connect users to other media suchas a video or audio recording featuring Bennett's works. Working with WIMTACH provided Xun with access to state-of-th-art technology and a research team to help develop concepts and bring his project to the next stage of development.

"It's our first point of contact with the client; to test our capabilities [and] for clients to see how students perform," said Jeziel Vidal, Project Manager at WIMTACH.
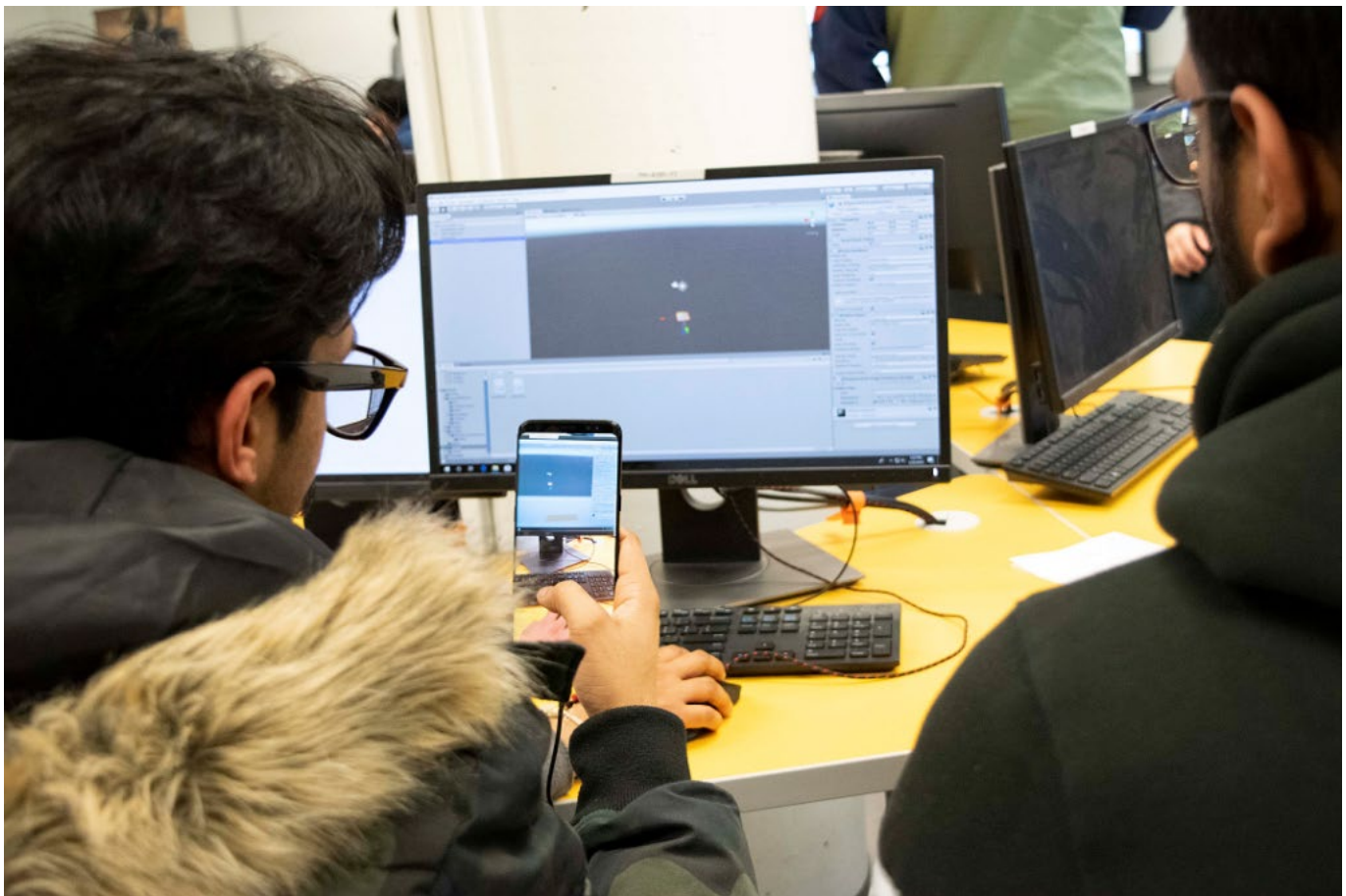
Hackathons give students a valuable opportunity to take their classroom learning and creativity to solve a real problem provided by a real client. Megha Guruaja, a student of the Interactive Gaming program, signed up for the hackathon because it was a great way to top up her resume for potential career opportunities.

"I wanted to explore a different thing," Guruaja said about her decision to participate in the hackathon. *"Luckily it was augmented reality, (an area) that is growing now."*

Arben Tapia, a professor of the Interactive Gaming program, was on hand, to help them fix technical problems.

"This is very important for students to have this group work and kind of experience," said Tapia. *He said that the event prepares them for the job market where they will be expected to work with others in different teams.*

Participants were given 7 hours – from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. –to complete the tasks they were given. Each group was evaluated on their ability to develop a mobile app that enabled the image recognition functionality, link the image back to media content and deliver a polished end product. Teams were also given an extra point for innovative ideas they brought into the project.

After 4:00 p.m. sharp, each group presented their findings to a team of evaluators including Xun and Tapia.

Guruaja presented for her team and demonstrated how they were able to get the application working. Her team came in second and she was happy with the result.

It was a great experience," she said. "It will help my career a lot and give me a leg up."

The winning group succeeded in achieving all the criteria and received an additional point for the idea to create a server where the media will live.

After any hackathon, WIMTACH continues to work with clients who want to move forward with one of solutions presented. According to Vidal, in some cases, students may be hired by the company to work on the next stage indevelopment of the product.

The client Xun was impressed with what the students wereable to accomplish and how WIMTACH organized the event over all.

"I'd love to continue working with WIMTACH," Xun said as hecontinues to build out this technology. He hopes to build out a platform forother publishers to use.

For more information about how to organize a hackathon orhow to participate in one, please visit www.wimtach.centennialcollege.ca.

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May, 02, 2019