Virtual Reality: A Survey of Use at an Academic Library

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**Introduction**

We conducted a survey to inform the expansion of our current Virtual Reality (VR) service in the library. We were primarily interested in user experience, demographics, academic interests in VR, and methods of discovery.

**Pilot**

Currently we offer one HTC Vive VR system that can be used near the science & engineering reference desk. It is managed by student employees at the reference desk. Fifteen minute timeslots are reserved on the library’s website.

**Demographics**

While the most common users were male students in the STEM disciplines, there was use among all measured demographics.

**Survey Results**

**Most Responders Came Because it Sounded Fun**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounded fun</th>
<th>Personal learning</th>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Class assignment</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most Effective Discovery Methods: Advertising and Word-of-Mouth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement</th>
<th>Word-of-Mouth</th>
<th>Help Desk</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**First Time Users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Might or might not</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interest in Academic Uses***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely yes</th>
<th>Probably yes</th>
<th>Might or might not</th>
<th>Definitely not</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*% of users did not express interest in using VR for academic purposes

**Responders Would Like Us to Offer Related Services**

- Attend class sessions on how to create content in VR: 46%
- Borrow less-expensive, less-capable VR systems: 45%
- Regularly using VR for class enrichment: 11%
- Attend class sessions to learn more about VR technology: 39%
- Borrow 360 degree cameras: 24%

**Conclusions**

Academic use wasn’t as high as we expected. In future marketing we will reach out to faculty with suggested ideas for academic uses or collaboration.

Even though the VR service is located at the science & engineering reference desk, nearly 40% of users were not in STEM disciplines. This is encouraging and suggests value in a VR service directed to all library patrons.

We found sufficient patron interest for us to explore related VR services such as offering classes on creating content and acquiring less expensive headsets that can be borrowed outside of the library.

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