Creation of EGSRIT/Virtual UR Minecraft Campuses and Community Response

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Minecraft; Recreate RIT; Virtual UR; Virtual Reality; Coronavirus; Community

In response to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic, students at University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology found a place to bring together students and alumni in a game called Minecraft to recreate their campuses to scale. At the same time that college students around the country were scrambling to find ways to stay connected at long distances with fellow classmates, these students decided to take this time to work on a large scale community based project that could bring together all members of their communities.

Fig. 1.   Dynamap overhead view of the Rochester Institute of Technology as of 10/20/2020, which can be live previewed by anyone at: http://mc.server-egsrit.com:8123/

I.   THE START

The two groups' formation, structure, level of University involvement, and approach to the projects varied. Recreate RIT was started by a few regular members of the RIT student club Electronic Gaming Society, while Virtual UR was founded by two UR undergraduates as an independent project. As a result, each group faced unique challenges, from financials to server griefing.

Fig. 2.   Ground view of University of Rochester buildings from within the public Virtual UR Minecraft server. More photos of the project available at: https://linktr.ee/VirtualUR

II.   CONCLUSION

Despite these differences, both groups have seen their larger University communities rally to support the projects, from interested alumni to media and company sponsorships. Even those who had never heard of Minecraft or played it before found solace in seeing their alma mater's campus and connecting with their fellow community members. The different approaches both college project runners took to bring to life their news-worthy "virtual reality" projects, as well as the strong community response to the creation of the projects, tells an inspiring research story of using virtual reality technology to be resilient in the face of uncertain circumstances.

III.   REFERENCES

Electronic Gaming Society at RIT Discord: "discord.gg/egsrit" (EGSRIT, October 20, 2020).

Virtual UR - Virtual University of Rochester: "virtualur.com" (Virtual UR, October 20, 2020).