

The Studio X Karp Library Fellows: Peer-to-Peer XR Learning & Engagement

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Established in the summer of 2020, the Karp Library Fellows Program at the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries aims to prepare students for their future careers through their work in and contributions to specialized library spaces. While collaborating with library staff, Karp Library Fellows share their expertise, provide training to their peers, and enhance the Libraries. Over the course of the last year, three undergraduate fellows were placed with UR's XR hub, Studio X. The Karp Library Fellows for Studio X include a Public Programs Coordinator, an Immersive Technologies Developer, and a XR Researcher. The fellows bring diverse experiences and skillsets to Studio X and are united by their passion and curiosity for immersive technologies.

I. LOWERING BARRIERS TO XR ENGAGEMENT

In this talk, the fellows will describe their contributions to Studio X and how they helped shape its space and program. In the past year, for example, fellows have led workshops on XR tools and methods, conducted user research, developed outreach materials and a Studio X brand, written blog posts, and consulted with faculty and library colleagues on XR projects. They will relate how their different majors and interests have informed their work, their understanding of XR, and helped them produce programming that resonates with their peers.

Throughout the year, the fellows have focused on engagement strategies and how to make these technologies relevant to students across disciplines. This is crucial for one of Studio X's guiding principles: lowering barriers to entry. Immersive technologies often can seem inaccessible to new users because of cost, a steep learning curve, and their perceived lack of relevance to many students. In fact, many of UR's students have never tried VR before. The Karp Library Fellows have been central to Studio X's success in connecting to UR students.

For example, after conducting research on how to engage humanities students with XR, one Karp Library Fellow devised and delivered programming options such as an Intro to XR workshop and a Beat Saber competition. Considering the complexity of many 3D tools, other Karp Library Fellows have developed

creative, low-stakes workshops for Blender and Unity, in which attendees can make fun 3D characters and work with a virtual version of UR's campus as a sandbox.

Furthermore, the Karp Library Fellows continue to build skills relevant to the growing landscape of XR career opportunities. Learning how to teach, troubleshoot, and promote XR technologies provides them with experience that will prove invaluable and set them apart when they enter the job market after graduating. For example, one of Studio X's Karp Library Fellow alums is already working as a developer for a video game development firm that creates AR projects.



Fig. 1. Immersive Technologies Developer, Muhammed El-Sayed '22 sets up a Microsoft HoloLens headset in Studio X.

II. CONCLUSION

The Karp Library Fellows will outline their work with Studio X, share strategies for engaging new XR users, describe how these experiences have informed their future career goals, and underline the importance of student collaborators when building new services and spaces on campus.

III. REFERENCES

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