

Keynote Speakers

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KEYNOTE



“The Future of Our Past: Preserving History Through XR Innovation”

Kelley Szany

Senior Vice President, Education & Exhibitions, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center

As the last generation of Holocaust survivors shares their stories, museums are using cutting-edge XR technology to ensure their voices live on. Since 2018, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center (IHMEC) has led this effort, pioneering groundbreaking ways to record, preserve, and present survivor testimony through immersive digital experiences. In just eight years, IHMEC has become a global leader in using XR to deepen historical understanding and engagement. But how do we balance technology with authenticity when telling stories of survival and difficult histories? How can XR revolutionize digital archives and reshape Holocaust education? Join us as Szany explores how IHMEC’s interactive holograms, 360-degree films, and immersive storytelling are transforming the way we connect with history.

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“Reality Check: What Immersive Technology Needs from Education”

Kimberly Hieftje

Center Associate Professor, Yale Department of Pediatrics

Virtual reality is becoming a larger part of the conversation about the future of education, but how it is actually being used in schools reveals a more complex story. In this keynote, I will share findings from a statewide study our team conducted in 2025 on VR use in Connecticut public high schools, commissioned by the legislature. We examined how immersive technology is being integrated, the challenges schools are navigating, and what educators say they need to move from interest to meaningful implementation. Drawing on over 15 years of experience developing and integrating XR and game-based interventions for youth in school settings, this talk offers a grounded look at where we are and what it will take to move forward. It is both a reflection on designing for the realities of public education and a call to imagine what becomes possible when we start from where schools actually are.

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“Designing Transmedia Worlds: Games for Immersive Learning and Context Literacy”

Patrick Jagoda

William Rainey Harper Professor of Cinema & Media Studies, English, and Obstetrics & Gynecology, The University of Chicago

Educational game design frequently focuses on creating short experiences that convey facts, knowledge, and skills through engaging challenges. Historically, serious game designers have been less attentive to broader contexts and what Celia Pearce calls “playframes.” In order to prioritize context, I collate models from three different fields. First, turning to design, I discuss both “embedded design” and “participatory design.” Second, drawing from public health, I explore the “socio-ecological model” and “positive youth development.” Third, borrowing from education, I take up “civic fluency” and “twenty-first-century literacies.” All three of these fields and their respective models offer notable differences, but they all approach behavior and learning within broader contexts.

My argument is that learning games that privilege world making over skills acquisition yield better educational outcomes. While we often think of worlds as immersive and consistent, I also want to consider the ways that self-reflexive loops, frame breaks, and even jagged movements across media can serve as crucial qualities of worlds that spur learning. To offer evidence of this claim, I analyze a series of video games, board games, and alternate reality games that I have co-designed with several groups at the University of Chicago, including the Weston Game Lab, Fourcast Lab, and Game Changer Chicago Design Lab.

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“Building For Education - Innovation Through Collaboration”

Matthew Sanders

Education Director at Meta

Meta is working closely with the education community to build for a future in which immersive technology is more seamlessly integrated with classroom practice. Hear how Meta is thinking about the future of immersive technology, how research and partnerships are informing the company's strategy, and the ongoing product innovation in VR, AR and AI that will change the way educators and learners interact with technology.

Featured Speakers



“Dreamachine: Explore the extraordinary potential of
your”

Jennifer Crook

Artistic Director and CEO

Dreamachine is a world-first immersive experience designed to be viewed with your eyes closed, created in collaboration with Turner Prize winning artists Assemble, Grammy nominated composer Jon Hopkins and a team of leading technologists, scientists and philosophers. Combining flickering light with spatial sound, the experience generates a luminous and technicolour inner world of colours, patterns and dreamlike imagery, created by the power of your own brain and completely unique to you. This talk will present an introduction to Dreamachine: how it was created through an interdisciplinary collaboration fusing world class artists with leading scientific researchers, its impact - sparking insight, reflection and curiosity in millions of people of all ages, and how it is helping to further our understanding of the human mind.

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“Content and AI Integrated Learning in Language Teaching for enhanced AI literacy”

Zoe Gavriilidou

Professor, Democritus University of Thrace & Visiting Scholar, Center for Hellenic Studies of the University of Chicago

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) necessitates widespread AI literacy to equip individuals with ethical awareness and critical thinking in an increasingly AI-driven world. Current AI curricula often prioritize technical skills like coding, overlooking integration with broader educational contexts. This study proposes Content and AI Integrated Learning (cAIIL), a novel framework that combines principles from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and content-based education to modernize AI pedagogy. CAIIL allows students to simultaneously acquire AI competencies and traditional subject knowledge in areas such as mathematics, science, and the humanities. Using language teaching as a case study, this research illustrates how integrating AI into subject-specific learning fosters interdisciplinary understanding, enabling students to develop essential skills in algorithmic thinking, and ethical and critical AI usage. By embedding AI literacy into diverse disciplines, CAIIL prepares learners for effective and responsible engagement with AI technologies across various contexts, promoting a holistic educational approach.

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“Demystifying Artificial Intelligence: A Human Centric Approach”

Lucy Batley

Owner, TRACTION INDUSTRIES

In the evolving landscape of immersive learning, Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerges as both a beacon of innovation and a source of contention. This session embarks on a journey to demystify AI within immersive educational contexts, dissecting prevalent myths to reveal both its transformative potential and inherent challenges. We will explore AI's current role in enhancing multimodal literacies, providing a strategic framework for its thoughtful integration into immersive learning environments. Looking ahead, we'll examine forthcoming advancements poised to reshape the educational experience, equipping educators and practitioners with insights to navigate the future of AI-driven immersive learning. Attendees will gain a nuanced understanding of AI's capabilities and limitations, empowering them to harness its benefits while mitigating associated risks.

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“From research to Policy: Case of the ICT in Education Policy Antigua and Barbuda”

Kadian Monique Camacho

Education Officer- Research and Adjunct faculty, University of the West Indies

There is general consensus that information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a crucial role at all levels of modern education and for all stakeholders involved. This is because it offers the opportunity for personalized learning, where students can learn at their own pace and receive immediate feedback through adaptive learning platforms, as well as an increase in efficiency through its global learning opportunities for students and educators. ICTs even enhance the ability to streamline administrative processes toward systemic efficiency. It makes perfect sense that countries would ensure that there is a clear policy in place to govern their use in education. Research, however, does not translate into policy magically. This paper follows the process of research into ICT in education in Antigua and Barbuda (through workshops and conferences with education stakeholders in 2022) and the road toward translation into policy in 2025.

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“Immersive Futures: Transforming Education through AR and VR”

Danai Korre

Assistant Professor, University of Bedfordshire

Immersive technologies such as Augmented and Virtual Reality are reshaping how we teach and learn, offering new ways to engage, explore, and co-create knowledge. In this talk, I will share insights from recent research at the intersection of AR/VR and education, highlighting opportunities for inclusive, interactive, and experiential learning. Drawing on pilot studies and practical implementations, I will explore how these technologies can support skill development, foster creativity, and bridge the gap between theoretical and applied knowledge.

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“Towards Immersive Intelligent Agents in Computing Education and Training”

Ilenius Ildephoncne

Lecturer & Head of School, University of the West Indies

This presentation explores the intersection of virtual reality (VR), gaming, and intelligent tutoring systems to advance computing education and promote social good. We highlight three key projects. The first introduces RGB-LIT, a system that bridges Roblox with real-world experiences by integrating RGB lighting and IoT technologies, creating immersive environments that fuse digital and physical interactions. The second project explores using Large Language Models (LLMs) as intelligent Non-Playable Characters (NPCs) and virtual assistants within open social gaming environments, supporting personalised learning and social engagement in introductory computing (CS1). The third project promotes Gaming for Social Good through immersive VR experiences featuring 360-degree imagery of natural environments, such as Jamaica’s Blue Mountains, offering users, especially those unable to visit such places, the stress-relieving benefits of nature. Together, these projects contribute to emerging research on immersive technologies and intelligent systems applications.

Featured Workshop



“Immersive Simulations for Skill Learning: An Interactive Workshop”

Chris Dede, Ashley Etemadi and Shari Metcalf

This workshop highlights leading-edge design-based research on immersive simulations for learning. The capability of VR, MUVE, and MR interfaces to foster psychological immersion enables technology-intensive educational experiences that draw on a powerful pedagogy: “Situated” learning takes place in the same or a similar context to that in which it is later applied, and the setting itself fosters tacit skills through experience and modeling. Three exemplary illustrations of immersive simulations are described. First, immersive training systems have shown promise for using virtual simulations to enhance negotiation skills development, including conversational skills and knowledge as well as self-efficacy. Second, game-based learning environments can provide immersive simulated experiences in which learners engage in situated challenges, motivating players learn and practice tasks within the game world. Third, mixed reality simulation (MRS), operated by a human simulation specialist who puppets avatars in virtual environments, offer new opportunities for educators to learn and practice teaching techniques in a consequence-free classroom.