

New video game in 48 hours? Yes

Teams got one weekend to come up with an original concept.

By Lauren Hetzel
Contributing Writer

OXFORD -- Spending 48 hours straight in Benton Hall is not a typical weekend for Miami University students.

But that's exactly how five teams of eager participants from around Ohio spent a weekend recently as they worked for two days to create an original computer game as part of the American locations of the Global Game Jam.

The concept is simple: Create a four- to five-person team consisting of people from region and simply create a computer game.

The catch: Games must be complete in 48 hours, instead of the typical six-month production of most games. Adding to the challenge, teams must shape their game around a theme and include challenges like creating a game that is played using something other than a computer mouse.

Participants ranged in age from 15 to 23. Many were Miami students involved in programming and Web design or Miami's newly created game studies minor.

This concept of rapid game development as a model for gaining a quickly gaining popularity, according to assistant professor and organizer of the Miami Game Jam, Lindsay Grace.

"The awesome thing is you have one major focus. You are fully supported and all you have to do is crank out that one game," he said.

Grace participated in the first Global Game Jam last year from its Chicago location.

"The idea was just to get a bunch of people who are passionate about gaming together for a weekend and let's just make a game," he said.



Meaghan Libby studies her computer screen Tuesday, Feb. 23, during Sean Duncan's games and learning class at Miami University. Staff photo by Gary Steiner

Play games

Play games created at Miami's Global Game Jam online at kims.muhio.edu/gamejam or globalgamejam.org.

own audio stories. This is a huge step up from most of the other locations facilities, which, many times, have only one studio.

Various training and feedback sessions were offered throughout the weekend, including talks from Johnny Wilson, a noted computer game world veteran. Aside from possibly a quick eat-in, participants worked straight through until Sunday, when the jam ended and the finalized games were exhibited to the public.

"Spaniards in Space," which utilized "Spain and

as bait to lure and kill aliens "Dino Outvote" — a play on Don Quixote — was also created and used for a change and rain, which ruins the players' disguises if they are hit.

The games can be played at kims.muhio.edu/gamejam or globalgamejam.org.

Although the Global Game Jam was created as an educational experience, winners are sometimes able to reap larger benefits from the experience.

Many of the teams take the games they created and become their own companies.

"It's a nice place to create a prototype for something that may become the next big thing," Grace said.

Such is the plan with the team who created "Spaniards in Space" and now hopes to put it in the independent game space.

Last year, the Global Game Jam created 10 commercial successes out of the 370 games created.

"Part of the spirit of the Game Jam is sharing all of the games people make," Grace said. "The version of the game you make you have to allow to be freely distributed, because it's supposed to be an educational experience."

As far as the next step for Miami, an exhibition is to the works for late April that would allow cases some of the favorites from the Game Jam.

Grace concluded by sharing his enthusiasm about the current innovations happening in today's gaming. "It's no longer simply about running and jumping. People started asking, 'How can we make games exciting?'"

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During the weekend work on team

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