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Newfire's Higher Education Partner Program

Norman Desmarais

Some colleges and universities are expanding their creative writing courses to include writing for entertainment and real-time 3D and other multimedia programs. Traditional writing programs concentrated on linear writing, such as essays, novels, journalism, television, radio, theater, etc. Computer technologies have introduced a whole new dimension for authors non-linear writing. Interactive games, novels, and short stories with multiple story lines and a variety of endings began appearing on floppy disk and CD-ROM around the turn of the decade. The advent of the World Wide Web also opened new horizons. Writers began to see how documents could branch out to other related documents or be linked to them. Writing courses have recently begun to address this relatively new trend.

Newfire Inc., producers of software that enables game developers to create high-performance 3D titles for playback within standard Web browsers and on CD-ROM, announced the Newfire Higher Education Partners Program on Monday, November 3. The program, which has already attracted some respected colleges and universities, provides significant discounts to schools that incorporate Newfire software into their multimedia studies programs. That software includes Newfire's Catalyst authoring environment and Torch Internet entertainment player which enable authors to deliver high quality entertainment experiences via Web browsers. All of Newfire's products are based on Internet standards, including Direct3D, OpenGL, Java, and VRML 2.0.

Newfire's Higher Education Partners Program already has attracted several leading colleges and universities which are beginning to complement their multimedia programs with entertainment and real-time 3D studies. They all plan to integrate Catalyst and Torch, into their courses.

These schools include:

Parsons School of Design, one of New York's leading schools for art and design. A division of the New School for Social Research, Parsons recently launched a new game development and industrial design curriculum.

Full Sail, one of the world's foremost schools for digital media, audio, film, and video careers. The school offers extensive instruction in creative media at its Winter Park, Florida campus and provides training that emphasizes hands-on experience and solid, practical knowledge that furthers career goals.

Cogswell Polytechnical College, a small, prestigious digital arts and engineering institution located in Sunnyvale, California. Cogswell has recognized that the fast changing global economy demands a strong focus on personalized life-long education and careers which encompass a future in high tech arenas.

The University of Texas at Arlington, the second largest component of the University of Texas System. UT-Arlington instructs future Internet entertainment authors through its Liberal Arts program titled, "The Art of Engineering The Web."

Randall Thier, President and CEO of Newfire, said: "Now is the perfect time for Newfire to contribute its leading-edge technology and techniques to these emerging programs. By arming students with the latest technology that brings 3D Internet content to life, we can help these schools produce graduates who will impact the interactive entertainment industry on the day they graduate."

Anthony Deen, Graduate Studies Coordinator of the Digital Design Department at Parsons School of Design in New York City said "The Newfire Higher Education Partners Program exposes Parsons students to cutting-edge technology capable of revolutionizing 3D content on the Web, from games to industrial prototyping,. By partnering with companies like Newfire, we are able to give our students hands-on experience with the very software that is breaking new ground on the Internet."

"Any college that strives to prepare its students to succeed as multimedia artists, producers and engineers must keep its finger on the pulse of new technology," said Happy Aziz, Digital Media Program Director at Full Sail. "Thanks to Newfire's Higher Education Partners Program, Catalyst and Torch are becoming integral components of our game development academic track."

Newfire (<http://www.newfire.com>), a privately held company with headquarters in Saratoga, California., distributes its Torch and Catalyst software directly and through some of the world's leading 3D graphics companies, including Diamond Multimedia, Matrox Graphics, and 3Dfx Interactive. The company has also development agreements with 3D technology leaders, including 3D Labs Inc.

Newfire's Higher Education Partners Program offers substantial discounts to any college or university which integrates Newfire software and technology into its curriculum. To request a Newfire higher education partner program application, educators can contact Newfire at sales@newfire.com.

Newfire will probably set a trend with this program. Many companies recognize academic markets as an entry into the more lucrative corporate market. By making their products available at reduced cost, they encourage the adoption and use of those products. When students graduate and begin their careers, they bring with them the skills and knowledge of the tools they learned in college. Employers often rely on new ideas coming from new hires and recent graduates to keep the company fresh. This can often result in influencing purchasing decisions.

Producers of word processing software, recognizing this phenomenon, made academic versions available to schools, colleges, and universities. Students became familiar with those programs. Many developed brand loyalty and brought their favorite word processor to their place of work.

Academic institutions that use authoring programs probably rely on the lower-priced versions which they can afford more easily. The higher-priced versions, which usually have more sophisticated features, are generally found in business and industry. So far, few, if any, software producers have made any attempt to tap the educational market for multimedia authoring tools. Newfire may have inaugurated a new trend.