Digital Media Studio Project (DMSP) - project brief

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1   Context

As Bjork makes apps for iPhones instead of albums (Biophilia, 2011), Ridley Scott makes films from crowd-sourced material (Life in a day, 2011). Orchestras arrange flash mobs to protest against government cut-backs (Copenhagen Philharmonic, 2011) and social injustice can be reported worldwide with computer software (Ushahidi, 2011). At the University of Edinburgh, musicians make reactive music systems rather than write scores (GruntCount, 2011), projects involving RFID tags are used to develop an Internet of Things (Chris Speed, 2011), and the DMSP's Unwanted Orchestra gets a write up in a fashion magazine (Toys by Eleni Konteisiou, 2011).

2011 was a significant year for digital media and creative expression because whilst the mainstream moved in on it, claiming the once quirky and unstable for themselves, other movements took off offering masses of people a voice powerful enough to intimidate the authorities.

Where do we go from here...?

2   Aims of the project

- This is a multidisciplinary group exercise designed to offer its participants an opportunity to expand their knowledge and experience of design technologies and the creative arts.

- Participants will work in groups on collaborative projects that will eventually be presented, then documented. Aspects of this work will subsequently be written about by each member of the group.

- The project aims to push its participants to develop their creative and expressive voice and to challenge them to apply imaginative concepts introduced in lecture and tutorial sessions in order to develop works of design, sound, music, performance, art, and writing.

- This project expects its participants to push themselves technically in order to realise imaginative and complex design ideas.

- Participants are expected to work in reasonably complex collaborative situations similar to those experienced in professional circumstances. The success of the collaboration will be given credit: over half of the credit for this course is awarded to your group, you should feel motivated to make it work properly by contributing as fully as possible to it.

- The project will expect its participants to work systematically and to meet regularly, independent of their supervisors.

- The project aims to provide opportunities to connect practical design, composition and creative work with a wider theoretical and critical context.

- Finally, the project aims to provide a firm and well defined project brief that participants are expected to explore and respond to in imaginative, diverse and creative ways.

Participants will form small teams working on a project brief, each with its own supervisor. Each group faces the challenge of finding a way of working together, perhaps following the model of a theatre company with roles and responsibilities assigned to each member of the group; production manager, director, producer, actor, technical manager etc.

Project briefs are deliberately open ended, non-specific and as a result, the project may seem to start from a state of chaos. This creates a need to impose order, organisation and imagination, which we expect to emerge from the student body rather than staff.

Whatever the subject matter, each project provides an opportunity to prepare experimental work for public exhibition/display and for the cohort to find practical, creative solutions to problems imposed by real limitations of technology, time and personnel. Meanwhile you are expected to explore a wealth of new technologies developing an articulate understanding of the potential for their use in digital design, sound and performance.

3 How the DMSP works

Please also read the course description available here http://sd.caad.ed.ac.uk/handbook/category/digital-media-studio-project-arch11006/

The first lecture will consist of a short introduction to the course and will be followed by a series of project pitches by various project supervisors. Once you've heard all of these, you'll be expected to choose your top three projects and submit these choices to an online form. You'll then be placed in a group by early week 2 and will have been expected to have your first meeting together with your supervisor by the end of week 2.

Lectures will take place on Thursday mornings at 11:10am. Lectures are designed to give you instruction and information about a range of issues pertinent to the course and the projects you are developing. They may give technical information about the way particular softwares and hardware works. There may be discussion of pertinent themes relevant to creative use of digital media. Practicing artists may also come and talk to you about how they conceive and produce their own work.

Tutorials take place throughout the semester by arrangement with your project supervisor. We've put aside every third Wednesday morning for a tutorial in the calendar but this is not a fixed date and should be worked out when the dates fit best for the majority of the group. The project supervisor will offer you feedback on your project proposals and help to streamline the group so that everyone is working productively, however it is not their job to lead the group.

The project supervisor is there to help you develop your project and provide some overall guidance from an independent perspective. Project supervisors have expertise in the areas you are investigating and in many cases, this area may be central to their own research or current projects. However, their time is limited and you should take care not to waste time with the supervisor on small tasks that you can solve independently with a little more thought[1]. We suggest arranging meetings with the supervisor when you have a specific thing you want to get a second opinion on or, when your group can not make a decision on the next step. It is good to make arrangements to meet the supervisor well in advance, so the group has a deadline to work towards. Time is easily squandered on the DMSP and your group will need to develop a sense of motivation, drive and focus within the first weeks. While the supervisor can help you with this, it is not their responsibility to lead the group, this should come from within your team.

Documentation of your work is an essential part of the DMSP project as this is examined both internally and by the external examiner. Therefore, you should think carefully about this by keeping track of the development and progress of your work and recording it, as well as developing strategies for documenting the final piece.

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[1]googling, manual reading, testing...?

Lecture 2 is dedicated to giving you advice and instruction on documenting your work.

Websites are provided for blogging the progress of the project, submitting work for assessment, hosting documentation and the resources that you'd need to create a similar project, or take the work further in the future. This website will behave like an online magazine. Think of the work you place in the submissions categories as work that is published, the other posts and content you add is more behind the scenes, it won't be examined, but it will be used as evidence of individual contributions, alongside your attendance and general contribution to the development and implementation of the project.

There will be a demonstration of how to use the website system at the start of the course. The base URL for the course is http://dmsp.ace.ed.ac.uk/blog. Your project's website will be http://dmsp.ace.ed.ac.uk/blog/projectnameYEAR, e.g. http://dmsp.ace.ed.ac.uk/blog/emergentsonorities2012.

4   Submissions

The DMSP is based around group activity but individual marks are also awarded. Some parts of the project are submitted and assessed as a group, others are individual, these are added together to give you a single mark for the whole course at the end.

- submission one - group submission worth 30%

- submission two - group submission - the completed project materials and documentation of its final presentation 40%

- submission three - individual submission, a short essay / article on a particular feature of your project 20%

- submission four - attendance at events, tutorials and discussions and your individual contributions 10%

4.1   Submission 1 - the group's first project 30%

This is group work and is assessed as such (i.e. everyone in the group will get the same mark for the work).The format of this submission will be discussed with your project supervisor and should be specified by the group as the work progresses. Because each project is different, we can't to specify here exactly what you should prepare for this submission however, there are some suggestions;

- An illustrated art-group manifesto with different sections written by each member of the group

- A digital brochure about your project

- A collection of resources and research, well edited and compiled in digital form

- A performance / presentation of beta work

- A virtualisation of what things might be like in 2 or 3D, video or sound (a fixed version of what you hope eventually to be able to perform/present in real-time)

- An analysis / rationalisation of the context in which you are working, getting to grips with the work of other artists in a similar field.

- A realisation / reinvention of someone else's work in anticipation of making your own project based on what you've learned by doing this.

Whatever you decide to submit, it should conform to the usual academic standards and be entirely your own work, crediting fully the work of others that you might be using for reference.

Submit this work to a category called **submission-1** on your wordpress website. All work in this category will be marked. Keep it simple, clean and clear. Imagine if you were going to have to mark it and make is as easy for the people who have to do this to understand what it is you've done.

Please also place a note in the form of a link to the locations of this in the online submissions system. Although this is a group submission, each member of the group should upload the same link to their own folder on the submissions server.

4.2   Submission 2 - the finished group's project 40%

Presentation week (week 12) is where work on the practical elements of your project reaches a conclusion in the form of a presentation or performance. Most groups opt to make use of the atrium area in Alison House but performances and presentations can happen elsewhere. It is good if you can organise and find a space to use beyond Alison House, but remember that project supervisors and academic staff can't be in multiple places at the same time so try to coordinate with other groups where possible, it is very good if performances can all happen on the same evening in the same building for example. The presentation week is also likely to be the only chance you have to obtain decent documentation of your project in action by filming and recording people using your installation or hearing you perform. This presentation is a key opportunity to get feedback about your work from your colleagues and project supervisors before you submit the resources and documentation that is required for assessment after the vacation.

The documentation of your final project and the preparation of the resources that were put together to make it work is compiled and prepared by the group and used by everyone in it as a reference point in submission 3 (see section 4.3.1). Think of this documentation / documentary as something you'd give to a gallery or festival that you'd like to impress, summarising and showing the best parts / elements / innovations /context of the work, be brief, insightful, accurate.

We can't specify the form this should take here but it could be a 3 minute documentary, a well balanced and mixed recording, a booklet or brochure, an essay, your project supervisor should be able to offer guidance on this.

This document of "the actual thing in action" should be accompanied by the resources used to put the presentation, piece, game, animation together. Obviously, we don't need full resolution film files, but we do want to see the code you've developed, the materials gathered and see how they were put together so that we can get a clear understanding of the work involved in making the piece and which elements of this work are yours. It is important to label these resources as your own work.

Resources submitted for submission 2 should be different to any submitted in the first submission.

Place the group's documentation and related resources in a category called **submission-2** on your wordpress blogsite.

Please also place a note in the form of a link to the locations of this in the online submissions system. Although this is a group submission, each member of the group should upload the same link to their own folder on the submissions server.

4.3 Individual contribution 30%

4.3.1 Short online article 20%, 1000 words max.

Taking your lead from interesting online magazines such this one in artcritical, 2011, write a short, punchy article on a theme relating to your project. We definitely **DO NOT** want personal diaries about how well or badly the project went, but a discussion of an interesting theme that you might have had to engage with directly or that interests you now that the practical work has been completed.

For example, if your project was about projection mapping, you could write about the issues relating to how projection mapping has been co-opted by the advertising industry and how might have limited the artistic potential of these approaches. You **SHOULD NOT** write about how you fell out with everyone because your projector broke on the night of the presentation.

The article should be no more than 1000 words long but can include images and references to the documentation and resources you published in submission 2.

Place the group's articles in a category called **submission-3** on your wordpress blogsite.

4.3.2 General contribution to the project 10%

This is an easy 10%, turn up to the group meetings, make a contribution to the blog site, take on responsibilities in the group and meet the deadlines and you should be able to get 10%. Let your group down, fail to give advance warning that you're not coming to the meeting, miss your group's deadlines etc., and you'll get less than full marks.

4.4 Submission deadlines

- Submission 1 - Midnight on Friday, week 5
- Submission 2 - The first Friday after the Easter vacation period; Friday 27th April 2012.

- Submission 3 - The first Friday after the Easter vacation period; Friday 27th April 2012.

- Submission 4 - General contribution assessment will cease after the last meeting with your supervisor

5 Budget

There is a small amount of money available to each group that can be used to help buy small items, pay for taxis, sensors, printing. The budget limit is £80 per project. Keep receipts so that the money can be claimed back. To keep paperwork to a minimum, only one claim is possible per group and should be made by end of April in the year of study at the latest. Nominate one of your group to look after the receipts and make the claim, that group member will pay everyone else back once the money is in. Claims should be given to the Postgraduate secretary with all receipts included. Claim forms can be downloaded from here; https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/download/attachments/64690479/Expenses-Claim-Form.pdf

For larger purchases, please discuss suggestions with the course organiser, there is no guarantee these requests can be met but we'll certainly try if it looks like other groups in the future will get some benefit from the purchase.

6 Criteria for Assessment

Work will be assessed in line with the University's common marking scheme[2] and on the basis of;

- ability in assimilating a broad knowledge of new technologies (that have unrealised potential) in a design context

- quality of design in terms of innovative use of the technology, taking account of usability, and presentation

- professionalism of submissions, presentations, contribution to the acquisition and sharing of knowledge and manner of dealing with the uncertain aspects of the project brief

- ability to respond creatively to limitations, be these in time, money, personnel etc.

- individual level of participation in the project

- the level of awareness you've shown regarding the wider context of this work

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[2]http://sd.caad.ed.ac.uk/handbook/marking-scheme/

- the coherence of the group's approach

- the clarity of written components and design/art work itself.

Please note that assessment will take account of tradeoffs between the above criteria, particularly in light of the diverse backgrounds of students in the class. You are encouraged to seek feedback during the development of your work, but please note that adhering to feedback does not guarantee a high assessment of the completed work. Note also that the assessment of the work is not necessarily commensurate with the amount of time spent on the project work.

We will offer constructive feedback on the submissions but cannot give detailed FB on every detail of the work submitted. Within **four weeks** of submission you will have received short written feedback on your work and a provisional mark, to be confirmed after the exam board in May/June of the year of study. Tutors may refer to the risks taken in response to the brief, the design quality, the coherence of the group's approach, the originality of the response to the brief, the clarity of any written components, the style and clarity of the design work itself and how well you've demonstrated awareness of the wider context of this work.