Scratch: Creating and Sharing Interactive Media

Organisers
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Abstract: Scratch (http://scratch.mit.edu) is a new programming language that makes it easy to create interactive stories, music, games, art, and animations – and share those creations on the web. In a little over a year, more than 47,000 members have contributed over 300,000 projects online. Scratch presents powerful opportunities for learning – as people program and share with Scratch, they learn to think creatively, plan systematically, and work collaboratively, while also learning important computational ideas. In this seminar, participants will have a unique opportunity to work with the creative team that developed Scratch. Join members of the Scratch Team from MIT Media Lab for hands-on experiences with Scratch, explorations of how collaboration is supported by Scratch, and design-oriented activities for further supporting collaboration. Bring your laptop – no prior experience with Scratch is necessary!

Seminar description
Scratch (http://scratch.mit.edu) is a new programming language – developed by the Lifelong Kindergarten group at the MIT Media Lab – that makes it easy to create interactive stories, music, games, art, and animations. Creating with Scratch is much easier than traditional programming languages: you simply snap together graphical blocks, much like LEGO bricks or puzzle pieces. Once you’ve created a Scratch project, you can then share it with the world on the Scratch website, like you share videos on YouTube or photos on Flickr. A wide range of projects have been shared on the Scratch website, from community narratives to role-playing games to scientific simulations. In the first year and a half since the website was made public, Scratch has been downloaded more than half a million times – more than 47,000 members have contributed over 300,000 projects, and many of the more than 200,000 registered members have participated by commenting, tagging, bookmarking, joining galleries and taking part in discussion forums.

Designing, programming, collaborating, and sharing are tightly interwoven in the practice of Scratch. Both the application interface and the website are designed to support and encourage collaboration and sharing. In this seminar, we will introduce Scratch and the online community, explore the ways in which collaboration is supported in Scratch, and brainstorm ways of enabling more opportunities for collaboration in Scratch. This seminar presents a unique case study of collaborative learning as mediated through an online environment designed to support young people in creative design activities. We will investigate the technical aspects that support collaboration (e.g. mechanisms for code collaboration, galleries for sharing projects, forums for providing support) – and then illustrate how these technical affordances are contextually appropriated by the community (e.g. community members using galleries as critique groups).

The overall objective of this half-day seminar is to engage participants in explorations of how Scratch supports (and might support) collaboration. The workshop will provide participants with opportunities to: gain hands-on experiences with Scratch programming and the Scratch website, analyze stories from the first year and a half of the Scratch community (as presented by the MIT Scratch Team), imagine possibilities for future modes of Scratch interactions and collaborations through design activities, and discuss how Scratch experiences could inform the design of other collaborative environments.

Seminar participation
We invite individuals with a wide variety of experience to participate. From those who are completely new to Scratch to those who have used Scratch extensively, those who have years of programming experiences to those with little or no experience, all are welcome, as a mixed audience will provide new insights and appreciations for working with Scratch. Participants are encouraged to bring their own laptops to the workshop. We will provide participants with copies of Scratch on portable discs, as well as Scratch support materials, including Scratch quick-start cards, the Getting Started guide, and the Reference guide.