

2020

Introduction: 2020 Frameless XR Symposium

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The Frameless XR Symposium is an interdisciplinary conference that combines technology-focused initiatives with humanities-inspired theoretical inquiry along with empirical research and artistic creation in Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, and Mixed Reality. Planning for the 5th Annual Frameless XR Symposium in 2020 began with uncertainty as to whether we could hold an in-person event due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. As the situation failed to substantially improve over the summer, the planning committee decided to fully commit to a virtual symposium, something we had discussed in the past and took as an opportunity to embrace for the November symposium.

Our goals were to provide the most effective way to deliver secure content while experimenting with virtual platforms and making the event as accessible as possible. We centralized communications using Discord for coordinating announcements, as well as delivering timely tech support, and chose Zoom Webinars for participant presentations which included an after-session meet-up for presenters and attendees to engage in more interactive discussions. To customize these virtual Mozilla Hubs rooms, and to showcase student talent, we conducted a contest challenging Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) students to reimagine a gathering space and design virtual rooms for the event. The 1st Place Winner, Julian Heuser (Computer Science, class 2025) took us into a unique space station in an interstellar world. Isabelle Anderson (New Media Design, class 2022) received 2nd Place by immersing us in an underwater world, and 3rd Place Winner Julia Abbonizio (Advertising Photography, class 2021) experimented with an isolation room to inspire self-reflection in an art gallery setting.

Being mindful of “zoom fatigue” we offered brief instructor-led yoga breaks; and, at the end of each day, we offered special programming. Day 1 showcased a wide range of demonstrations and virtual experiences bringing attendees together in live streams on Zoom, Mozilla Hubs, and the Frameless Labs YouTube channel. Day 2 was an RIT Alumni Meet-Up in the student-designed Hubs rooms with professionals currently working in the XR field.

In conjunction to this year’s symposium, we launched a rebranded Frameless Labs website, boosted our social media presence with a new Frameless Twitter account and doubled the Frameless Labs Facebook and Instagram followers. Going virtual increased our event registration three-fold, attracting attendees and presenters from countries around the world (such as Uganda, Qatar, Columbia, and Italy). Looking to the future, we envision hybrid events that will include a return to hosted programming at the RIT MAGIC Center supplemented by content delivered on virtual platforms.

The symposium is a team effort with collaboration across disciplines and includes colleagues from both RIT and the University of Rochester. As Symposium Chair, I'd like to thank and express my gratitude to the organizing committee for their contributions to the program: Mike Murdoch (Program Chair), Juilee Decker/David Halbstein (Frameless Journal), Frank Deese/Tom Dooley/Meagan Moody/ Missy Warp (Marketing), Joe Geigel/Elizabeth Goins (Demos), Mark Reisch (Mozilla Hubs), Riham Alieldin/ Meagan Moody/Emily Sherwood/ Kristana Textor (University of Rochester liaisons and moderators), Wendy Dannels/Pete Murphey/Elouise Oyzon/Roshan Peiris/Marla Schweppe (RIT participants and moderators) with a special thanks to our student workers, Tessa Cote (CAD New Media Design), Simar Khanna (GCCIS Software Engineering), and Konnor Klercke (COS Computational Mathematics), as well as the continued support from Dr Ryan Raffaele (VP for Research/Assoc Provost RIT), David Long (MAGIC Director), Jenn Hinton (MAGIC Associate Director), Brenda Schlageter (MAGIC Building and Operations), Amanda Hughes (MAGIC Technology Manager), Mark Marcello (Senior Web Developer/Programmer), Jay Sullivan (Senior Systems Administrator/Engineer, CAD Facilities).

Although 2020 has been a challenging and difficult year, everyone made time in their overloaded work schedules to help deliver this year's symposium. I value their dedication and acknowledge their contributions to the success of the 2020 Frameless XR Symposium.



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