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Student creates augmented reality book

Northern Rivers Times, Lismore

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SAE Creative Media Institute design student Christel Cherryadi has created an augmented reality (AR) children's book called Splash the Starfish that helps young children identify their emotions.

The book, which she worked on in partnership with psychologists from Parentshop, was developed as part of her final project for the Bachelor of Design degree.

Splash the Starfish is about a young boy's desire to save starfish that have been washed up on a beach. The story was based on Loren Eisley's poem, The Star Thrower.

"I wanted to create a children's story that was fun, but would also support children in their development and inspire them to dream," Christel said.

The Destination Australia Scholarship recipient's ambition is for her book to be embedded into Australian primary schools as a learning tool.

"I want children to have fun and learn certain values along the way. Splash the Starfish touches on emotional themes, so it's just a way of introducing

those feelings to kids," Christel explained.

Former primary school teacher and psychologist at Parentshop, Michael Hawton said Splash the Starfish could be used to assist children from ages two to seven with their emotions.

"What Christel has created has a lot of potential. One of the first steps for children is identifying their feelings, and understanding what those labels are. Some children can't comprehend their emotions, so it's about helping them to identify what they are," he said.

"Splash the Starfish is very good in that it's a tactile experience for children. It provides them with additional words on top of their existing vocabulary, and it's got a level of cause and effect built into it which is both engaging and intuitive."

Christel admits the AR element to the book was only born after she took an AR elective unit as part of her design degree.

"I hadn't even thought about the book being in AR until I took that elective and it really opened my mind to the possibilities," she said.

"Every page gives readers an interaction,

and as you progress through the story, it becomes more gamified."

The project involved eight SAE students across different disciplines including audio, music, film, and animation.

Audio student, Kathy Stephens, collaborated on the project and engineered the sound.

"I've never done anything like this before! I got the opportunity to create the soundscape, like the waves, and develop the starfish language, which was a great experience for me," Kathy explained.

"It's fantastic to be involved in a project that has such meaning behind it. I'm really looking forward to seeing how Splash the Starfish is received by the general public."

SAE Design and Interactive Technologies Program Committee Chair, Rachel Shea applauded Christel on what she's accomplished with the book.

"Christel's project highlights an important arena in which the design industry is making an impact in our world," she said.

"While much of design work in industry is brand focussed,

this project illustrates the important role that design plays in the non-commercial aspects of our daily life. We are very proud of Christel's innovative project which utilises AR technology to bring awareness to the issue, and to help children identify their emotions."

Christel was full of praise for her teachers at the Byron campus and thanked them for their unconditional support from the beginning.

"I have to thank my teachers because they've fostered an open and collaborative culture. When I came up with this crazy idea, no one dissuaded me, they wanted to know more and asked how they could support me to make Splash the Starfish a reality."



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