

From Walt Scacchi, UCI Sr. Research Scientist at the Institute for Software Research, and Research Director, Center for Computer Games and Virtual Worlds.

Scacchi, principal investigator on the three year, \$3 million NSF grant, said Bonnie Nardi and a graduate student are part of a 23-person team funded by this grant. Being included on Coburn's list is "a sign of distinction and a compliment. They absolutely don't get what we're doing, whereas anybody who works in the field gets what we're doing."

Computer games and virtual worlds are the new media for the 21st century, in the same way that cinema and the World Wide Web were transformative 20th century media. UCI is on the forefront of what may be the biggest engine of innovation in the next decade, whether it involves education, manufacturing, healthcare or homeland security. "It will be fundamental to large scale cultural transformation in next decade and beyond, and industry, government and academia will all come to depend on the development and routine use of computer games and virtual worlds."

The NSF money is supporting studies of existing computer games and virtual worlds, and technology development for new products and uses. Eight corporate and government partners are working with the UCI research team on the NSF grant, including Northrop Grumman Corp., The Aerospace Corp., and Discovery Science Center. In some cases they are adding funds of their own.

In the future, many will use the UCI research to develop, test and refine a products and processes, including cyber warfare exercises, medical rehabilitation programs, and science curriculum.

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A few other notes:

An estimated two thirds of users of the largest computer games and virtual worlds are 15 or younger, meaning the future work force of the U.S. will be skilled in computer games. Computer game and virtual world development and manufacturing is a multi-billion dollar industry globally and in Orange County. The United States currently leads the rest of the world in computer game and virtual world development and technology, with more than \$10 billion of a \$60 billion global market. Most of that is in California, particularly in Orange County. The county is one of the top 10 world centers for developing computer games and virtual worlds, with more than more 40 such companies based here. The biggest is Blizzard Entertainment, which developed "World of Warcraft" in University Research Park, before their success required them to move to larger quarters in Irvine. They currently have about 1,400 employees in Irvine, out of 6,000 globally, up from 400 in 2004 before they released World of Warcraft.