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The Quest Atlantis Project; Using Games to Bring Ethics and Presence to the Classroom

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This interactive demo will focus on the power of gaming technologies to immerse young students in authentic learning scenarios in the schools. We will engage the audience in the Quest Atlantis project (QA), an international learning and teaching project that uses a 3D multi-user environment to immerse children, ages 9-15, in educational tasks. QA combines strategies used in the commercial gaming environment with lessons from educational research on learning, engagement, and motivation. It allows its over 15,000 youth, distributed globally on four continents, to travel to virtual places to perform authentic educational activities (known as Quests), talk with other users and mentors, and build virtual personae. We will be entering its Plague World, to engage in its Modern Prometheus story in particular, which brings ethics to the classroom, and structures an immersive experience where students can engage in moral dilemmas. Based on Mary Shelley's literary classic Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus, this 3D world allows students to engage issues such as medical ethics, the nature of human existence, and if the ends justifying the means, as they experience a town affected by a disastrous plague. Students learn the elements of writing a persuasive essay, and that ability is put to the test when the fate of the Doctor and his creation is put into their hands.

In addition to playing the single-player experience, conference participants can also interact with a "worked example" of this unit, and during the live demo can engage with other conference attendees in a multiuser version. To prepare for the multiuser demo, conference participants are encouraged to visit the Quest Atlantis homepage where they can read about the project, create a guest account, and play through the single player example (<http://QuestAtlantis.Org>). In addition, participants are encouraged to visit the "worked example" of the work, in which they can read an overview from the design team as well as other notable scholars in the field (see <http://inkido.indiana.edu/workedexamples/plague>). After the initial introduction and demo of QA at the conference, participants can play the multiuser version in teams of five, provided they download the software (see above) and access the internet. Thus, laptops are encouraged, and previous exposure to the single user game or worked example will greatly facilitate game play and ensuing dialogue.

Bio. Sasha Barab is Professor in Learning Sciences at Indiana University (USA) and Director of the Center for Research on Learning and Technology. He is also the creator and principal investigator of Quest Atlantis (QA), a 3D multi-user virtual environment (MUVE), which immerses students, ages 9-15, in authentic learning tasks as part of their daily school curriculum (<http://www.questatlantis.org>).