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GRID Lab offers extra resources to students

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News Section:

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By Alex Felser

Ohio University's Game Research and Immersive Design Lab (GRID) is unknown to most, except for its 325 registered users.

The lab, originally an arcade located on Court Street, eventually moved to Scott Quad after receiving grants for funding.

Founded in 2005 by John Bowditch, the lab has supplied both jobs and workspace for students — particularly for students in the Scripps College of Communication.

Bowditch, a 2004 graduate of video production, received his master's degree one year later in multimedia from OU and has been working on the lab since.

Now associate director of the GRID Lab, Bowditch originally started it as a graduate project and began to expand after receiving grants.

The lab receives the majority of funding through the main project it works on — the Immersive Video Intelligence Network, which is supported by TechGROWTH Ohio and the Urban Area Security Initiative in Columbus.

Bowditch said Scripps College Dean Greg Shepherd is the main reason the lab got funding in the first place.

"(Shepherd) helped when we had down times," Bowditch said.

Along with working on their main project, last year, Bowditch and other lab employees focused on mobile components such as iPhone and iPad applications. Among apps made by the lab was Food Master, a free nutritional game for children to learn how to eat healthy.

The labs offer game and multimedia resources for students in the School of Visual Communication at no extra expense. Users are only required to sign up for a GRID lab account online.

As a result of various successes and grant money received, the lab is able to employ 30 to 40 students at any given time.

One such student is senior Karl Henkel, who has worked at the GRID lab during the past year and first joined after Bowditch approached him in a class.

"It not only looks good on a resume, but it's relevant to your career (as)

opposed
to working in dining halls," Henkel said.

Bowditch agreed, saying the lab has helped students get jobs with top-named companies.

"The lab offers an area for people to work on independent projects and use high-end computers and software," Bowditch said.

In the future, Bowditch hopes to start offering workshops for software certifications such as Apple and Adobe.

The goal is to put OU on the map and have students and faculty rival top research schools in the nation, he said.

"The goal has always been to grow in capabilities and staff resources," Bowditch said.

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  (/category/news-section/news/city-news)
  Homecoming
  (/category/news-section/news/homecoming)
  9/11: 10th Anniversary Special Section
  (/category/news-section/news/911-10th-anniversary-special-section)

Sports
(/category/news-section/sports)
  Bobcat Sports
  (/category/news-section/sports/bobcat-sports)
  HS Sports
  (/category/news-section/sports/hs-sports)

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  News
  (/category/blog-type/news)
  Sports
  (/category/blog-type/sports-blog)
  Culture

Culture
(/culture_all)
  Post Modern
  (/postmodern)
  Pillow Talk
  (/content/pillow-talk)

Multimedia
(/category/news-section/multimedia)
  Slideshows
  (/category/news-section/multimedia/slideshows)
  Videos

Opinion
(/opinion_all)
  Editorial
  (/category/opinion-category/editorial)
  Column
  (/category/opinion-category/column)
  Letters
  (/category/opinion-category/letters)
  Cartoon
  (/category/opinion-category/cartoon)
  Submit a Letter
  (/content/submit-letter-editor)

About
(/content/staff)
  Staff (/content/staff)
  Work for The Post (/content/work-post)
  Store (/products)
  Advertising

The Post | 325