



New Center at UC Irvine to Seed Research and Collaboration on Digital Media and Learning

(IRVINE, CA, Oct. 27, 2009) -- Digital media and the Internet are transforming how young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life. A newly-created Digital Media and Learning Research Hub located at the University of California-Irvine will provide a international center to nurture exploration of and build evidence around the impact of digital media on young people's learning and its potential for transforming education. Funded through a \$2.97 million grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Center was announced today at a national forum at Google headquarter that brought together leading thinkers around the challenge of reasserting American global leadership in education.

"Global digital media are rapidly becoming a driving force in globalization, scientific advances, and the intersection - and sometimes clash - of cultures," said David Theo Goldberg, director of the UC Humanities Research Institute and co-director of the Digital Media and Learning Research Hub. "Every day new questions arise about the ability of traditional systems and institutions to prepare both young people and life-long learners for the social, economic and political demands of a complex and networked new century."

Through study of how youth are using digital media, researchers will seek to understand the implications inherent in how this generation of youth – unlike any previous one – is embracing the online world to access information, socialize, and engage in public life. Research is expected to help schools, libraries, museums and other institutions engaged in teaching and learning better prepare students for the 21st century workforce.

"We're at the very early stages of this phenomenon where youth and kids are learning so much more outside of the classroom via the Web and social networking," said Mizuko Ito, University of California, Irvine researcher and co-director of the Research Hub. "If we don't tap into the learning revolution that is going on today, I'm very concerned we're going to have many kids being left behind."

With a physical office at UC Irvine and a new virtual destination – www.dmlcentral.net -- the Center will support emerging research on digital media and learning by hosting international conferences, facilitating workshops and working groups, and bringing together researchers, practitioners, policymakers, industry leaders and others working on related projects. It will also house related research initiatives of the MacArthur Foundation's digital media and learning initiative. Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society and the nonprofit research group FutureLab are partnering with UC Irvine on Hub activities.

“At this time of extraordinary transformation, it is critical to harness and coordinate research that provides insight into the impact and applications of digital media for learning,” said Connie Yowell, director of MacArthur’s education grantmaking. “MacArthur has long been committed to improving public education in the U.S., and we see the emerging research and practices in the field of digital media and learning as holding the potential to transform the way we prepare our young people to be engaged citizens and to compete in the 21st century workforce.”

Two MacArthur initiatives are already active at the Hub. They are bringing together researchers and practitioners to explore 1) the transformation of learning and assessment in the 21st century and 2) the unprecedented ways in which technology is enabling youth to participate in the political and public sphere. These investigative efforts, lead by Mizuko Ito and Mills College professor and researcher Joseph Kahne, respectively, are major initiatives of the University of California Humanities Research Institute, the system-wide UC research center for the humanities and social sciences, based at UC Irvine.

More information about the Digital Media and Learning Research Hub can be found at www.dmlcentral.net.

About the MacArthur Foundation

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation supports creative people and effective institutions committed to building a more just, verdant, and peaceful world. In addition to selecting the MacArthur Fellows, the Foundation works to defend human rights, advance global conservation and security, make cities better places, and understand how technology is affecting children and society. In 2006, MacArthur launched its digital media and learning initiative to explore how digital media are changing the way young people learn, play, socialize and participate in civic life and what that means for their learning in the 21st century. More information is available at www.macfound.org/education.

Contact

Jeff Brazil

jbrazil@hri.uci.edu

949.824.9956