Kendal College: The 2012 prospectus featuring augmented reality

Summary

Dan Hodge, a tutor at Kendal College identified the possibility of using augmented reality to enhance the college prospectus. By integrating printed media with a downloadable app for the iPhone, the college has produced a prospectus that can contain more information for prospective students without the added bulk or print costs of increasing the size of the document. This has created interest on a global scale and it is thought to be the world’s first prospectus to utilise this capability.

About Kendal College

Kendal College is located in southern Cumbria, not an area usually renowned for cutting edge technology use. The college runs both HE and FE courses covering a wide range of subjects in its two town centre campuses. The college also curates the town’s museum that is attached to the Arts and Media campus.

The challenge

College prospectuses are a balance between providing enough information to prospective students and not being too big, nor too expensive to print. This means that they run the risk that information in them becomes very generic and impersonal. If you capture more information about a course and what learners think, then the prospectus could soon become too large and expensive to produce. Much of what is contained in a prospectus is not seen as relevant as readers tend to only be interested in the one area of study that is relevant to them. Those who have dyslexia can find it hard to access the information as the wall of print can create a barrier.

The activity

During June 2011, Dan Hodge visited design degree exhibition shows in London and his imagination was captured by the use of QR codes (Quick Response codes). He came back and enthusiastically started to look at their possible uses. Talking to some friends about the possible use of QR codes they asked if he had looked at augmented reality, (a view of real objects or images augmented by virtual computer-
generated imagery). Dan set out to investigate that and in doing so he read an article about the way augmented reality had been used at the Cannes film festival. Visitors to the festival could download an app which, when pointed at film posters brought them to life and the director spoke to you. Dan loved the idea and considered how it could be used in teaching and hit on the idea of how it could bring the college prospectus to life.

During a week long summer school he and the learners experimented with augmented reality and produced a tourist guide to Kendal in only 3 days. He had tried contacting the producers behind the Cannes project but had no response. One of the summer school learners showed Aurasma to Dan. This time the company were very responsive and within two days Dan had augmented reality statues standing in his garden.

Dan took the idea to Maggie Cawthorne (Director of Curriculum) who liked it so much she passed it on to the Marketing Manager Paul Goodwin: "It was like that first time I saw my signature on a fax again, magical. We need this in our prospectus."

The decision to utilize the technology in the prospectus for 2012 was agreed. Dan explains: "What we wanted was the photos to come to life, so it was important to capture them at the same time as the video."

It was important to ensure continuity in lighting, scenery and the dress of the students. All the images were captured at the same time as the video. To complete the impression of the images coming to life, the static page elements rest on top of the photo and the video.

The college had only six weeks to realise the project before the launch on the 17th October. For the project to work it required co-ordination and communication, each part relied on the other. The prospectus needed to be print ready and the videos had

www.jiscrsc.ac.uk/case-studies
to be edited so that Dan could integrate the augmented reality part into them. Fortunately the parts fell into place and the target date was hit.

The outcomes

Kendal College now has a prospectus that fully incorporates augmented reality. Fourteen of the images included ‘come to life’. The Kendal College app is freely downloadable from iTunes and work is on-going to produce an Android version. There were over 200 downloads during the first two weeks after the launch. The college is anticipating a greater demand for their prospectus and more downloads as it is promoted in the local schools and through open day events.

The app is not static as Dan is adding new parts to it, like making a speaking tutor appear in front of a college advertising banner. What he wants to do next is straight from the realms of Harry Potter, having images in the local paper that will spring to life and promote the college further.

Dan explains: "It's a case of getting people to associate the app logo with the idea that something will happen when you point your phone at that image.

The augmented reality prospectus works for us on a number of levels – Kendal College has been noticed from around the world for producing a cutting edge publication with new technology. The prospectus is the realisation of the level of teaching that is happening in the college: when you demonstrate it to a potential student or parent you can tell them 'we did this and we're teaching our students to do it as well!' When you demo it to businesses, they ask you which agency you used and you just have to shrug your shoulders."

Paul Goodwin, Marketing Manager told us: "The augmented reality prospectus works for us on a number of levels – Kendal College has been noticed from around the world for producing a cutting edge publication with new technology. The prospectus is the realisation of the level of teaching that is happening in the college: when you demonstrate it to a potential student or parent you can tell them 'we did this and we're teaching our students to do it as well!' When you demo it to businesses, they ask you which agency you used and you just have to shrug your shoulders."

The impact

Students Olivia Lumb, Danny Stone and Adam Shuttleworth shared their views: “It’s really good and you can see it anywhere”, “It blew my mind” and “This technology, it’s the first time I’ve seen it, it should be used all over, it’s great”. Their Group Tutor commented: “The look on their faces was like they’d just seen witchcraft”. The College Governor also had good comments to make: “I don’t understand how it works, but I like the effect.”

The impact of the prospectus has been worldwide not just local. Soon after its launch posts appeared on Twitter from Japan and Australia and it was blogged about within augmented reality circles globally. Dan comments: “If you have an idea and it makes
people smile at the thought of it, then that journey of getting to the point when it’s finished is worthwhile. And then when they see it working in real life it’s far more than a smile.”

The lessons learned

- There has been UK wide interest in the app from other colleges.
- International interest shown through tweets and blogs.
- The information is more accessible for prospective learners and gives them a student’s perspective on the courses.
- In the first two weeks from the launch of the app there were over 200 downloads.
- More information at no extra print cost.
- The videos are multipurpose as they can be stand alone resources on the web site.

Tips
- If you have the know-how and skills in your establishment then the set up costs are small.
- Make use of the in-house skills you have, the videos were shot by a part time tutor, and photos taken by the marketing department.
- Consider how you want to integrate the images into the AR and plan to get the best out of your production.
- Include QR codes for those who don’t have access to the app to widen its usability.

Useful links

- Jisc RSC Northwest
- Kendal College
- You Tube – Kendal College prospectus launch
- ITunes – Kendal College AR app
- Aurasma

Disclaimer
Disclaimer: Jisc Regional Support Centres work with more than 2,000 UK learning providers helping them to improve performance and efficiency through the use of technology. Case studies may refer to specific products, processes or services. Such references are examples and are not endorsements or recommendations and should not be used for product endorsement purposes.