Digital Dreamscape: Navigating My VR Lab Practicum

Jasbir Dhanjal, Psych 4010 Practicum in Psychology, Summer 2024

VIRTUAL REALITY LAB



Figure 2: Author introducing VR Lab demonstrations at the Eduverse conference. Photo by J. Ireland, used with permission.

Past Courses

These courses provided a strong foundation for engaging in ethical research, understanding sociocultural dynamics, and applying psychological theory in innovative contexts.

1. PSYC 2400: Research Methods
2. PSYC 3200: Social Psychology
3. CNPS 3330: Cultural Considerations in Counselling
4. CNPS 4700: Culture and Psychology

KPU VR Lab

Founded in 2019 by Dr. Farhad Dastur, the VR lab welcomes creative collaborations with those wanting to explore the potential of Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and Mixed Reality (MR). It is a space to pursue scientific research and allow students to design, conduct and participate in studies. Along with research opportunities, the lab encourages alternative avenues to pursue a project that supports teamwork and a positive learning experience.

Challenges

1. Navigating complex technical issues with VR hardware and software.

Overcame by: Leveraging self-directed learning (e.g., online tutorials) and seeking support from experienced team members.

2. Building a strong professional network to enhance speaker engagement and public reach.

Overcame by: Partnering with the KPU media team and actively coordinating outreach with the lab's communications lead.

3. Managing interpersonal dynamics in high-pressure environments.

Overcame by: Engaging in thoughtful communication with supervisors, remaining composed during conflict, and demonstrating professionalism in all interactions.

Duties

As a practicum student, I engaged in high-impact tasks that bridged academic knowledge with real-world application:

- Designed and launched a dedicated social media platform to amplify the lab's public presence and community engagement.
- Produced original content, including videos and graphics, to communicate complex research concepts to diverse audiences.
- Led the planning and execution of speaker series events featuring leading voices in the field of immersive technology.
- Managed VR equipment inventory, ensuring efficient tracking, usage, and maintenance protocols.
- Drafted lab policies focused on safety, digital security, and best practices for research integrity.
- Explored community-based applications of VR in education, mental health, and cultural awareness.
- Delivered interactive VR demonstrations at conferences and educational events to promote experiential learning.
- Compiled reports and documentation for internal use and external presentations.

A Practicum That Transforms

This practicum offered more than technical training—it was a transformative experience in leadership, communication, and applied psychology. I gained real-world skills, a strong professional identity, and a passion for research-driven innovation. The KPU VR Lab is an exceptional opportunity for students eager to lead, grow, and make a meaningful impact.

Acquired Skills

1. **Advanced Project Management** – Oversaw complex initiatives from ideation to implementation.
2. **Applied Research & Outreach** – Designed strategies to connect academic knowledge with public needs.
3. **Technical Proficiency** – Gained fluency in VR equipment, editing software, and content production tools.
4. **Leadership & Team Coordination** – Took initiative while fostering inclusive and collaborative work environments.
5. **Multimedia Storytelling** – Created compelling video content using 360° GoPro and Adobe Premiere Pro.
6. **Strategic Communication** – Communicated research findings across platforms with clarity and impact.
7. **Conflict Navigation** – Handled interpersonal challenges with professionalism, empathy, and self-awareness.

Acknowledgement

This poster was created as part of the Psych 4010 Practicum in Psychology at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (Summer 2024), under the guidance of Dr. Farhad Dastur, Director of the KPU Virtual Reality Lab.

Thank you to Dr. Farhad Dastur for his unwavering mentorship and for offering me the opportunity to contribute to the lab's innovative projects. His insight, encouragement, and commitment to interdisciplinary research have profoundly shaped my academic and professional growth.

Special thanks to Kurt Penner for his technical guidance and consistent support throughout the practicum, and to the entire VR Lab team for fostering a collaborative and enriching learning environment. This research and experiential practicum were conducted without external funding.