



WHO's Hiding in the Barn?
Exploring Life as a Barn Owl

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what is it?

WHO's Hiding in the Barn? is a movement-driven, interactive, animated experience that will amuse, engage and teach adults and children about barn owls.

WHO's Hiding in the Barn? was designed for the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston, Massachusetts and was in residence at the Zoo for one month during the summer of 2005.

This exhibit was also featured in the Boston CyberArts Festival and the Dynamic Media Institute New Works Show at Massachusetts College of Art in the fall of 2005. A version of this piece is installed at the Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences and the Amelia Park Children's Museum.



"I'm Larry, and I'm here to teach you what it's like to be me — a barn owl! Just keep watching and I'll let you know when to move."

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why participate?

There are many benefits to making movement integral to an interactive, new media, learning experience. Moving enhances our physical health. It also enhances our learning. Studies show that when we move we improve circulation to our brains and we become better learners. In moving, we tap into our physical memory, which helps us with recollection and retention. When movement is part of a game, it fosters a social atmosphere. Incorporating animation to this movement/learning experience adds joy as well as clarity.

WHO's Hiding in the Barn? engages the user mentally and physically. Animated content entertains as well as inspires participation. Games require the user to look, listen, think, react and move! Yet, in the midst of all the fun, players gain an appreciation for what it is like to be a barn owl.

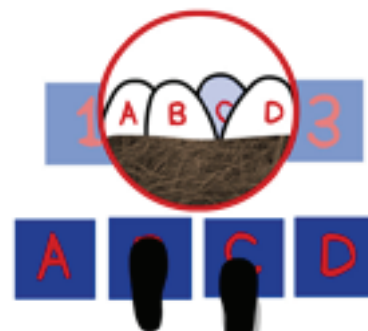
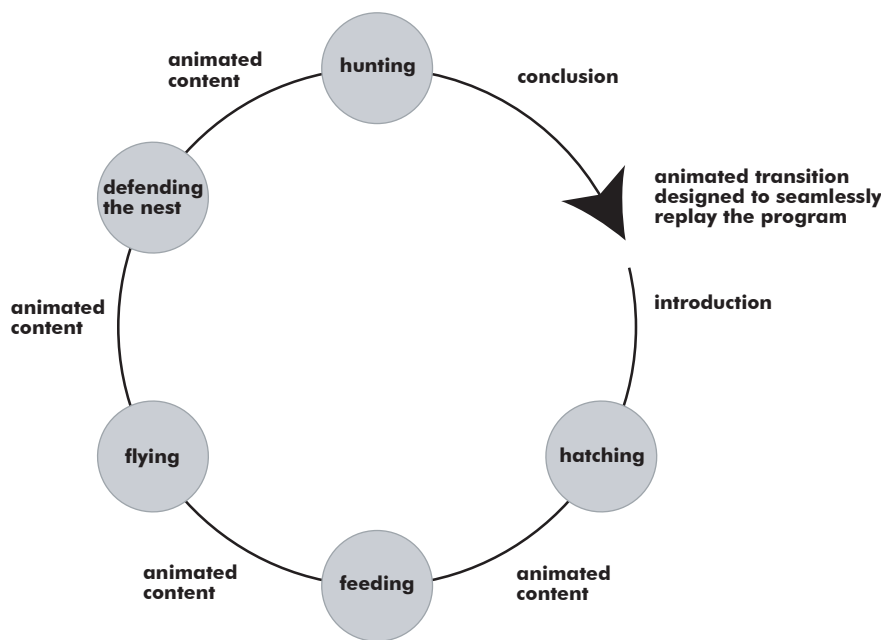


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how it works

The exhibit is based on the life of an adult barn owl named Larry. In the program, Larry talks about his life and then gives the user an opportunity to participate in games that mimic his life experiences.



system architecture

screen shots from the animated content

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how it works

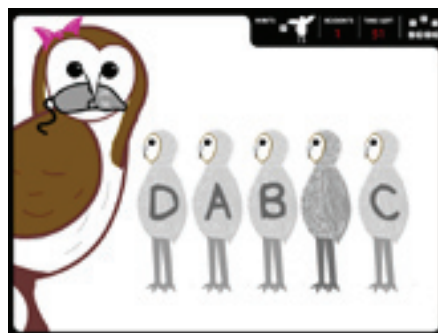


hatching game

There are five games interspersed with six animations: hatching, feeding, flying, warming the nest and hunting.

hatching game

The user has 30 seconds to get the chick out of his shell. Three pads control different parts of the chick's body: wings, egg tooth and legs. By stepping on the three pads, the user must quickly figure out which ones to use to get the chick out of his shell.



feeding game

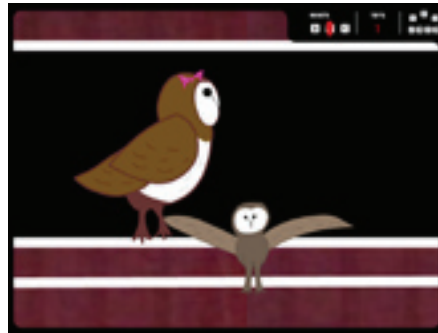
feeding game

In the feeding game, the user takes on the role of Larry as a young chick, competing with his 4 other siblings to get fed. To do this, Larry must first get in the position closest to the mother barn owl. To move Larry in front of one of his siblings, the user needs to select the pad associated with the sibling immediately in front of him, (A, B, C or D). The user must be quick because sometimes Larry is pushed back by another chick. If and when he makes it to the front position, he must squawk to get fed before another one of his siblings pushes him out of the way. Larry needs to eat four rodents in one minute in order to be successful at this task.

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how it works



flying game

flying game

The flying interactive begins with the mother barn owl perched on the barn window with a young Larry. When she nudges him off of the window sill, the user must make Larry fly by doing quick jumps on pads A-C. If he is not successful within 3 tries he loses the game.



defending the nest game

defending the nest game

In this interactive, the user takes on the role of Lulu, the female owl. She has two jobs: 1) keep the eggs warm and 2) fend off predators during the egg incubation period (one minute).

To keep the eggs warm, the user must touch the pad corresponding to each egg, (A, B, C and D), frequently and lightly before the egg turns blue.

To prevent the predators (a cat, snake and raccoon) from attacking the eggs, the player must use her attack button. Predators that return more than once need to be fought off more aggressively than the first time they are encountered which means that the user has to press the pad more than once. This forces Lulu to be away from her nest longer which makes the game harder as time goes on.

If one of the eggs is attacked by a predator or gets too cold, the user loses the game.



hunting game

hunting game

In the hunting interactive, the user takes on the role of Larry trying to capture his prey (a rodent). Each location corresponds to a pad. When the user hears the sound corresponding to a location, she must choose the correct pad. If she does this quickly enough, the owl catches the rodent. The owl must capture four rodents within one minute.

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the experience

"I really liked it. I learned that it's really hard for the mother barn owl to defend their nest, and that baby barn owls need a lot of food."

— Amanda, player, age 8



"I had no idea about barn owls. I learned about how they were born, and about their egg tooth...I think it's a neat idea, because it gets your mind into it, your sight, and also your physical ability."

— John, player, age 24



"I liked when you try to make the baby owl fly. That was my favorite."

— Jack, player, age 5



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accolades

"I had really high expectations hearing [about the project], but it has absolutely exceeded all of my expectations.... What's wonderful about it is that most computer based interactives tend to be passive where its just one person hitting a key or moving a mouse, but this is really amazing, because it gets the whole body involved. You are reading, listening and thinking but you are moving at the same time, which is an incredible combination. Very few zoo interactives get all the senses engaged like this one does. It's really remarkable."

— Anthea Lavalle, Director of Education, Franklin Park Zoo

"WHO's Hiding in the Barn? is truly a unique and innovative approach to educating children of all ages on the topic of owls. Besides the creative aspects of this project, it is physically and mentally challenging. When you first begin following Larry's direction you think as an adult... 'oh this will be a piece of cake' then you realize the attention to detail and coordination that one has to have in order to be successful from one stage to the next. Larry tested my focus, coordination skills and made me giggle the whole way through."

— Stacy Sweeney, President, New England Institute of Art

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technical specifications

space requirements

The footprint of the exhibit is approximately 6' x 6'. Open space around the exhibit is desired as the application tends to foster a social atmosphere.

equipment needed

- 1) PC computer, 500 Mhz processor or better, 128 MB RAM, with audio capabilities.
- 2) Monitor (17" or larger)
- 3) External speakers (desired)