

Daniel J. Finnegan, EngD.

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Please note that my website may contain an up-to-date CV

Research Interests *Spatial perception within virtual worlds primarily studied through the use of head mounted displays;*
Multi-sensory perception applications to human centred computing and virtual reality;
Spatial audio interaction–binaural games, audio interfaces;
Serious Games/Games for a Change;

Employment Senior Lecturer (Associate ~ Assistant Professor) Cardiff University

May 2019 - Present

I'm currently a Senior Lecturer (Associate ~ Assistant Professor) in the School of Computer Science & Informatics at Cardiff University. My projects primarily investigate human behaviour and perception in multi-sensory virtual and mixed reality (VXR), and I lead the VR sub group in the Human Centred Computing research section.

Research Associate

University of Bath

October 2016 - April 2019

I was a postdoc in the CAMERA research centre at the University of Bath. I explored problems with spatial perception in virtual reality, and design interventions to mitigate these problems.

Teaching

- CM1301: Principles, Tools, and Techniques for Secure Software Engineering
- CM2101: Human Computer Interaction
- CMT206: Human Centric Computing

Entrepreneur Co-Director Echo Games
October 2018 - Present

I founded a Community Interest Company (CIC) with colleagues Dr Daniela De Angeli and Dr Lee Scott. Echo Games CIC develops 'seriously fun' games and interactive experiences for universities, museums, cultural institutions, and not-for-profit organisations. We nurture emerging talent through workshops, game jams and internships, and provide support to cultural institutions that are looking to enhance their digital offer. You can read more here: <https://echogames.co.uk>.

Board Member

ProMo Cymru

February 2023 - January 2025

I was a board member for ProMo Cymru, working to ensure young people and communities are informed, engaged, connected and heard. You can read more here: <https://www.promo.cymru/>.

Education EngD in Digital Entertainment, September 2017

University of Bath, UK;

Title: *Compensating for Distance Compression in Virtual Audiovisual Environments;*

Advisors: Prof. Eamonn O'Neill, Dr Michael Proulx;

Examiners: Prof. Stephen Payne, Dr Betty Mohler;

BSc. in Computer Science, June 2012
University College Dublin, Ireland;
Title: *Object Detection and Tracking in Images and Point Clouds*;
GPA: 3.83 / 4.0;

Grants

See <https://ps2fino.github.io/pages/grants.html> for an up to date list

AHRC Impact Acceleration Account

Cardiff University, 2023;

£15,000;

Competitive funding awarded from Cardiff University's IAA scheme to create digital avatars driven by generative AI for museums.

ESRC Impact Acceleration Account

Cardiff University, 2022;

£30,000;

Competitive funding awarded from Cardiff University's IAA scheme for Mark V prototype development of ViewfindR.

ESRC Impact Acceleration Account

Cardiff University, 2022;

£15,000;

Competitive funding awarded from Cardiff University's IAA scheme for Mark IV prototype development of ViewfindR.

ESRC X AHRC Impact Acceleration Account

Cardiff University, 2022;

£10,000;

Competitive funding awarded from Cardiff University's IAA scheme to create an innovative community driven video games console to explore local heritage and culture.

Trailblazer Award

Bristol/Bath R&D, 2022;

£10,000;

Competitive funding awarded from the Bristol and Bath research and development scheme to create Unlock Bath: A digital Escape Room exploring the interconnected history of the city of Bath in cooperation with several local museums. Read more about the project [here](https://echogames.co.uk/unlock-bath) and play the game [here](https://echogames.co.uk/unlock-bath): <https://echogames.co.uk/unlock-bath>

US National Academy of Medicine

Healthy Longevity Global Grand Challenge, 2021;

£62,500;

Competitive funding awarded from the UKRI's Economics & Social Science Research Council (ESRC) to explore mixed reality in the context of community building interventions for tackling loneliness and reducing feelings of isolation

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

Cardiff University Innovation for All Fund, 2021;

£23,750;

Competitive funding awarded from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to build ViewfindR prototype version 2.0, a virtual learning environment for teaching students in video journalism to develop their creative skills and plan for filming.

Cardiff University Education Innovation Projects Scheme (CUSEIP), 2020;

£2,000;

Competitive award funding for a placement student to work over the summer as an intern in my lab

Cardiff Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (CUROP), 2020;
£2,000;

Competitive award funding for a placement student to work over the summer as an intern in my lab

Heritage Dot Bursary, 2019;
£175;

Full conference delegate fees waived to present at the Heritage Dot conference at the University of Lincoln
<http://heritagedot.org/>

University of Bath Researcher Development Fund, 2016;
£1000;

Hosted a 1-day seminar on Games Research across Academia and Industry
<https://www.camera.ac.uk/achievement-unlocked-03-july-2017/>

University of Bath Public Engagement Fund, 2016;
£500;

Co-organized Bath's first ever Human Library event
<http://humanlibrary.org/>

Journal Articles *See <https://ps2fino.github.io/pages/publications.html> for an up to date list*

Potential factors contributing to observed sex differences in Virtual Reality induced sickness

Experimental Brain Research

Accepted for publication

https://ps2fino.github.io/vr_motion_sickness.html

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation in older adults with Virtual Reality: How do we move forward?

Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/23337214231186204>

Unsettling Play: Perceptions of Agonistic Games

ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage

Accepted for publication

<https://ps2fino.github.io/agonistic-games.html>

Immersive Virtual Environments and Embodied Agents for E-learning Applications

PeerJ Computer Science

<https://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.315>

Conference Publications (Peer reviewed)

A note on publication venues for non-HCI interested parties: in my primary area of research, Human Computer Interaction, the ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI) is considered one of the best forums for dissemination of research results and covers the broad spectrum of research in Human Computer Interaction. Papers in CHI are refereed as full papers, and have an acceptance rate of around 15-25% each year.

ACM CHI Conference → *Top tier conference in Computer Science*
(Acceptance < 25%)

**Interactive Feedforward for Improving Performance
and Maintaining Intrinsic Motivation in VR Exergaming**
*Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on
Human Factors in Computing Systems*;
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3173574.3173982>

**Compensating for Distance Compression in Audiovisual
Virtual Environments Using Incongruence**
*CHI '16: Proceedings of the 2016 CHI Conference on
Human Factors in Computing Systems*;
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858065> **ECCV** → *Top Tier conference in
Computer Science*

**HandMap: Robust Hand Pose Estimation via Intermediate
Dense Guidance Map Supervision**
*ECCV 2018: Proceedings of the 15th European
Conference on Computer Vision, To Appear*;

CHI PLAY → *Second Tier conference in Computer Science*

**Agonistic Games: Multiperspective and Unsettling
Games for a Social Change**
CHI PLAY 18 Extended Abstracts
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3270316.3270594>

**Reindeer & Wolves: Exploring Sensory Deprivation in
Multiplayer Digital Bodily Play**
*CHI PLAY '14 Proceedings of the First ACM SIGCHI
Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play*;
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2658537.2661309>

Workshops

**An Approach to Reducing Distance
Compression in Audiovisual Virtual Environments**
*2017 IEEE 3rd VR Workshop on
Sonic Interactions for Virtual Environments (SIVE)*;
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/SIVE.2017.7901607>

Peer Review

Conference Peer Reviewer
ACM CHI;
ACM VRCAI;
ACM IMWUT;

Journal Peer Review
IEEE Transactions on Human Machine Systems;
PLOS ONE;
Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute (ETRI);
IGI International Journal of Game-Based Learning;

Awards

Enriching Student Life Awards, May 2022;
Most Innovative Staff Member of the Year (nominated);

Recognising Excellence Scheme, November 2018;
Merit Payment for Exceptional Performance;
Awarded by the Faculty of Science at the University of Bath;

Best Accessible Game, November 2014;
Audio Defence: Zombie Arena;
Awarded by TIGA;

Distinguished Project, June 2014;
Reindeer & Wolves
Awarded by Dr. Floyd Mueller;
UBIComp Summer School (UBISS);

Supervision

PhD Computer Science

Supervising 3 PGR students; topics covering accessibility in games, serious games for autistic children, virtual reality based exergaming

PGT Computer Science

Supervise 12 students every year; project vary across all research groups; e.g., machine learning, serious games, web technologies

Administration

(2024 - Present) I am the deputy Director of Teaching in the School of Computer Science at Cardiff.

(2022 - Present) I am the PGR training officer in the School of Computer Science at Cardiff. I manage students' training requests, and regularly host PGR seminars for students to develop their professional skills.

(2019 - 2022) I am the Exam Board chair (Yr2) at Cardiff

Invited Lectures

Campaign to End Loneliness, December 2023;
Invited presentation based on my loneliness ESRC grant;

University of Bath, March 2023;
Invited lecture based on my loneliness ESRC grant;

University of Bath, October 2018;
Guest Lecture on CM50276 Humans & Intelligent Machines (MSc): Anthropomorphic Representations of AI;

University of Bath, October 2018;
Guest Lecture on CM20216 Human Computer Interaction (Undergraduate): Designing Auditory Interaction for HCI;

Cardiff University Brain Research Imaging Centre (CUBRIC), May 2018;
Invited lecture on Using L^AT_EX for Open Science;
<https://sciprogramming.wordpress.com/schedule/>

Pint of Science, May 2018;
Invited public talk on Spatial Perception in VR;
<https://pintofscience.co.uk/event/super-computers-and-ai-who-is-ruling-who>

University of Bath, February 2018;
Guest lecture on Games for a Purpose titled: Games (Beyond Games);

University of Bath, October 2017;

Guest lecture on auditory user interface design titled: Auditory Interfaces;

Audio Engineering Society, February 2015;

56th Conference: Audio for Games;

60 minute talk on design of virtual, audio only worlds;

Conference Report:

<http://www.aes.org/events/reports/56thConference.pdf#page=5>

Bath Spa University, November 2016;

Guest Lecture on Game Narrative Design

90 minute lecture on game design and narratives through soundscapes;

Notable Projects T Cell Titans

Platform: Web (Unity)

2023

Echo Games CIC developed serious game commissioned by the Great Ormond Street Hospital, London UK. The game helps young children diagnosed with cancer understand the science behind their treatment in a fun and interactive way.

Unlock CRISPR

Platform: Web (Unity)

2023

Echo Games CIC developed serious game commissioned by the Gurdon Institute, Cambridge UK. Free online puzzle game that invites players to take on the role of an early career scientist researching CRISPR genetic editing tools and their potential in creating tailored treatments for diseases such as cancer. Included as part of SCOPE's curriculum linked toolkit for A-level students in the UK.

Tackling Loneliness with Virtual and Mixed Reality

Research

September 2021 - August 2022

My work investigated how mixed reality may help to alleviate feelings of loneliness and promote reconnection amongst older adults.

Endless Blitz and Umschlagplatz '43

Games for a Social Change

Platform: Desktop (Unity), Desktop (Web)

Release date: October 2018

I have developed 2 serious games title Endless Blitz and Umschlagplatz '43. Both games were developed with the intention of encouraging political reflection, primarily under the concept of agonism. Endless Blitz pits 2 players against each other in an endless scenario of the bombing of the Ruhr area in Germany. The theme of agonism is reflected in the bomber's role of destruction and carnage to gain 'points' in the game at the expense of harming human beings while in the evacuation officer's role, the player must make difficult decisions regarding which civilians to rescue as time is limited. In Umschlagplatz '43, 4 players discuss their lives while they wait at the *Umschlagplatz* for trains bound for concentration camps in the second world war. Only one player will escape the camp; the game involves the exchange of information, giving players the opportunity to deceive one another and save themselves, condemning the others.

Both games were exhibited at the Ruhr Museum in November 2018. They were also inducted into the 2018 CHI PLAY exhibition in Melbourne, Australia.

Dungeon Escape

Multiplayer VR Experience

Exhibited: Multiple Dates in 2016 and 2017

Platform: Windows

Dungeon Escape is a multiplayer virtual reality experience where players escape from a dungeon while an invisible monster hunts them down. One player wears the headset while another carries a physical device that acts as a torch to light up the dungeon. Both players are embodied in a single avatar in the virtual environment and must cooperate to escape. This project explored cooperative play with the need to coordinate actions in a stressful, horrifying environment. The game has been on display at events such as the Cheltenham Science Festival 2016 and Bath Taps into Science 2017.

Audio Defence: Zombie Arena

Binaural first-person shooter game

Platform: iPhone, iPad

Release date: October 2014

As a member of the core development team, throughout the project I directly impacted the design, structure, and development of the game, leading to a critically acclaimed 3D aural experience. With a small team of 2 central developers and a strict budget we delivered the product on schedule. The game was well received by the press, and was awarded 'Best Accessible Game' at the 2014 TIGA awards in London.

Hall of Mirrors

Farmleigh Gallery, Dublin, Ireland

Exhibition: Autumn 2011

As part of the Clarity Centre for Sensor Web Technologies at Dublin City University, I worked alongside Cleary-Connolly (http://www.connolly-cleary.com/Home/About_Us.html) to produce a gallery installation. The installation consisted of two projects; the first was a homemade head mounted display housing a smartphone. I built custom software to interface with the phone's camera, applying filters to the camera's live stream exploring the effect of prisms and inverted vision on our proprioceptive and vestibular systems. The second project involved a wall projector and Kinect motion tracking depth camera. Visitors were tracked in real time while their skeleton was projected on to the wall as a constellation of dots. After leaving the capture area, the dots would dissipate into the constellation, symbolising our own flow through the vastness of space.

3D Audio Displays

Low-latency binaural audio renderer

Platform: Unity, OSX

I built a custom binaural rendering plug-in for the Unity3D game engine. The engine is deployed directly into Unity, requiring no extra programming by the application developer. It enables custom binaural rendering based off of individual HRTF data; a set of filters which capture how we hear audio differently from person to person. Using my plug-in, application developers can deliver a personalized audio experience for different individuals instead of using a generic dataset. It provides a clean, high level application programming interface (API), and fully encapsulates all audio processing. The project code is available from <https://github.com/Ps2Fino/Unity-Audio-Plugin>.