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Geoscience students to play in sand

Augmented Reality Sandbox

In this scene from a demonstration video, an augmented reality sandbox user shapes real sand into mountains and valleys. Real-time elevation color mapping and topographic contour lines are continuously projected onto the shifting sand surface using a computer and a motion-sensing device.

Whether on the beach or the playground, playing in the sand is one of the joys of childhood . . .

Two MTSU Geosciences professors will now bring that hands-on sandbox experience into the classroom.

“I think it’s going to be a lot of fun—it’s exciting,” said Geosciences Assistant Professor Jeremy Aber.

Aber and Geosciences Assistant Professor Joe Collins were awarded an ITD grant for their project titled “Providing a Hands-On, 3-D Visualization of Earth Science Concepts Using an Augmented Reality Sandbox.”

Banner 9 set to be released in June

Banner 9 is scheduled to be released campus-wide this summer after several improvements.

Banner 9 software has been set up in production for a while, but it has not been officially released to campus.

ITD staff made improvements to it by installing vendor patches and adding load balancers and additional security along with some display improvements, said Lisa Rogers, senior associate vice president for Information Technology.

See Banner 9 on page 7
Take this quiz to better understand access issues

Faculty:
Have you ever had a student with a testing accommodation?
Testing accommodations are the most prevalent type of classroom accommodation, so I wouldn’t be surprised if you’ve had a student that receives extra time on tests and quizzes.
Along with extra time, students may have digital format as a testing accommodation because of the bridges to access that computers can bring to students with disabilities.
When designing tests and quizzes digitally, though, we need to take a few factors into consideration.

In order to demonstrate quiz accessibility, please allow two minutes to take an accessibility experiential quiz designed to illustrate good and bad design practices.

Some of the takeaways include using:

• > 10 point sans-serif font to help students that have cognitive or vision impairment to read your content
• high-contrast colors to help students with a color-related disability differentiate shapes and text
• short, descriptive phrases as links instead of copying and pasting URLs to help all students understand the link’s destination
• heading styles (not just visual formatting) in order to add navigation structure to longer documents and web pages
• alternative text descriptions on any and all images in order to help students that cannot see the image to comprehend its content
• captions on all videos to help students that cannot hear the audio to follow along in an equitable manner

For other design tips, see our MTSU Instructional Accessibility web pages at mtsu.edu/ait/accessibility.

Students made smooth transition to Multi-factor Authentication

MTSU students made a smooth transition to Multi-factor Authentication (MFA) this spring semester.
Due to faster-than-expected completion of the MFA enrollment process among the first groups of students, ITD set an accelerated timeline for requiring all remaining students to protect their MTSU accounts with MFA, which was completed by March 25.

As a reminder, we recommend using the Microsoft Authenticator app as it allows for fast and easy approvals via online push notifications.
Also, if you have any questions about Multi-factor Authentication, we recommend reading our FAQs online at mtsu.edu/security/mfa-faq.php.
Otherwise, if you have any questions not addressed in the FAQs or need any assistance, you can contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or at help@mtsu.edu.
"I've seen them before . . . but when I actually got to play with one, I said, 'We've got to do this. This is too cool!'" Aber said.

It will be used to buy components to build a state-of-the-art immersive, 3D augmented reality (AR) sandbox. The software itself is available free through its developers at The University of California–Davis, but Aber said their shopping list includes specialized computer hardware, cameras, wood, sand, and a rolling cart to move the sandbox around campus.

"The sandbox is a good link between sort of reality and the tech we're doing on computer," Aber said. "It's modeling the real world."

The sandbox uses real-time elevation color mapping, topographic contour lines, and simulated water projected onto the sand surface using a computer and a motion-sensing device. That allows the user to shape the sand with their hands into hills, mountains, and valleys, and have the mapping follow every change.

Making hand motions under the camera creates rain, which then fills up streams, rivers and lakes. See it in action here.

"It has a lot of applications because we teach a lot of stuff about topography, watersheds, and flooding," Aber said.

"I talk in all my GIS classes about how do we model terrain digitally speaking. That is a mapping technique that's been around for centuries. . . . This is the link between our 2D representations and 3D surfaces."

The AR Sandbox will be used by the applicants and Geosciences faculty to "demonstrate and enhance understanding of Earth surface processes and spatial thinking and problem solving in three-dimensions."

It may be this fall before the sandbox is assembled, tested and ready to use in class. Its first debut may be in student recruitment efforts.

"It will also be adopted by introductory Geosciences courses, generating interest in the Geoscience program and potentially boosting student enrollment and retention by providing a more engaging environment for the students, and enhancing their success with meeting learning objectives," their application stated.

The grants are awarded by ITD for innovative teaching/learning environments. Get details at mtsu.edu/itdacad/docs/ITDCGrantGuidelines.pdf.

For more information, call the Faculty Instructional Technology Center at 615-904-8189.
Harrell returns to alma mater MTSU as database administrator

Clint Harrell joined ITD in February as a database administrator.

Harrell, of Winchester, graduated from MTSU in 1999 with a bachelor’s degree and major in Information Systems. He returned to work at MTSU following several positions in the corporate world.

“My first job straight out of college was working PC support for Ford Motor Credit in Cool Springs,” he said. “In 2001, I started working as a system administrator supporting server/apps for a 24x7 manufacturing environment for Calsonic Kansei Electronincs in Manchester. Not only did I do server admin work but got introduced to Visual Basic 6.0 and Microsoft SQL Server.

“This was a turning point in my career when I started migrating toward a development/database role. ”

In 2002 he transferred to the corporate office in Shelbyville, where he took on a system's analyst role and developed a parts labeling system using VB.NET and an MSSQL Server that was deployed in the U.S. and Mexico.

“In 2010, I took on the database administrator role for North and South America locations. In this role I administrated databases in the USA, Mexico, and Brazil,” Harrell said. “I also was involved in implementing a new ERP system, which was a awesome experience.”

In 2017, he left the manufacturing environment and took a new position with Re-quest as a senior consultant, which allowed him to work at home.

“This position was 100% working from home which at one point and time was a goal of mine. It took roughly a year before I figured out that I was not happy with being home all day alone and found myself missing the camaraderie of an office environment,” he said.

His work at ITD involves supporting the Banner system (database, patching, etc.).

Harrell lives in Christiana with his wife, Dawn. They have two girls—Nora, 6, and Eleanor, 4.

“I enjoying going for a walk, hiking, playing disc golf, brewing beer, and an occasional Netflix binge when I find an awesome show,” he said. “Most of my free time revolves around the kids so hobbies take a back seat most of the time.”

Harrell is a Microsoft Certified System Engineer, Oracle Database Certified Professional, ITIL Foundation Certificate holder, and IBM Cognos Certified Administrator.

Air Force veteran Zimmermann joins ITD in instructional tech

Air Force veteran Mike Zimmermann joined ITD in March as Instructional tech systems specialist.


He is a 21-year USAF Veteran (1977-98), who served in the first Gulf War.

He worked as a master aircraft maintenance instructor and dedicated crew chief on a variety of aircraft including the F-4 “Phantom II,” F-15 Eagle, F-16 “Fighting Falcon” and the A-10 “Warthog.”

He served as superintendent of Aircraft Maintenance Training Development and Applications, where he conducted and submitted an in-depth self-study to the Community College of the Air Force and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

That resulted in the 52nd Tactical Fighter Wing, 52nd Logistics Support Squadron, and 52nd LSS Training Development and Applications School House becoming accredited to award attending students technical credits towards degrees.

“Transitioning to civilian life . . . led me to pursue a career in information technology as desktop support technician within predominantly federal civil service, health care, and private enterprise environments,” he said.

At ITD his responsibilities include providing professional microcomputer and audiovisual support via phone, email, remote assistance, and in-person support. He also provides enterprise software deployment and support over the network to nearly 7,000 computers.

Zimmermann has been married 42 years to Billie Ione Zimmermann, who is public defender for Rutherford County. They have two grown children, Michelle Ione Donahue and Eric Michael Zimmermann, and two grandchildren.

Michelle performs research and writes for the Smithsonian and National Geographic. Eric served as a captain in the USAF for seven years and later pursued a medical career.

The family enjoys snow skiing during the winter months and frequently visit Park City and Deer Valley, Utah.

“We also enjoy traveling to Europe and within the United States as time permits. Additionally, at home, we garden in our raised beds, hike and bike locally, and enjoy keeping fit by working out daily,” he said.
Staff Profile: Craig Myers

Editorial assistant enjoys working, teaching, studying at MTSU

Every good article needs a compelling lead to draw the reader in, Craig Myers tells aspiring journalists.

So, when Myers recounts his own journalistic career he has to use the word “UFO” early on. More on that to come . . .

For Myers, ITD’s editorial assistant, he first realized he had the writing bug when he was just a child. He and his brother and friends would create their own comic books, illustrations, and other short stories in a club they formed.

When he entered high school, Myers served as yearbook editor and continued to write. One poem he wrote introduced him to the world of professional writing and opened up the possibility of turning his passion into a paying career.

“There was a plane crash in D.C., and this guy was helping everyone else get to shore—he even gave his life jacket to someone else. The man ended up dying saving the other passengers and became known as ‘The Gentleman.’ That was the title of the poem I wrote about the event, and some newspapers picked it up,” Myers said.

Myers decided to study journalism, graduating with a degree in the field from Troy University.

“If you’re a young person who wants to make a living as a writer, you’re most likely going to be working for a newspaper, and that’s the path I took,” he said.

After an internship at the Daily Mountain Eagle in Jasper, Alabama, he worked as a reporter for the Pensacola (Florida) News Journal. It was there he investigated a famous UFO case in Gulf Breeze, Florida, and published stories with evidence indicating it was all a hoax.

He wrote a book about the experience titled “War of the Words.” He draws lessons from it and his entire career in his role as a part-time Journalism instructor at MTSU.

A large part of that career was with the Mobile (Alabama) Register, where he worked until the industry began to downsize in the late 2000s. That prompted Myers to leave and look for other ways to use that reporting skill set.

Myers and his family relocated to Murfreesboro in 2015, where he worked at Amazon for a year before accepting the position with MTSU. He has immersed himself in all aspects of University life.

He started anew with ITD, writing and editing stories about technology used by faculty, staff, and students on campus. He produces this Communicator newsletter and one for students called Tech Xpress, as well as student publications and content for ITD’s webpages.

Myers said he has concerns about the profession of journalism, which has been under technological and philosophical pressure in recent years. So when he saw an instructor position open at MTSU, he jumped at the chance.

“I felt it was a good opportunity to remind students that journalistic principles are still very important; we can use this great technology and still retain the integrity of good journalism,” Myers said.

Myers also has written several works of historical fiction, including a screenplay about the Aztecs and Conquistadors. But so far the audience has been limited.

“The only person who has seen my unpublished work is my wife,” Myers said.

He and his wife, Julie, and son, Cade, attend Third Baptist Church. Myers plays guitar in the praise band, and also enjoys ministry with college students.

“He and his wife, Julie, and son, Cade, attend Third Baptist Church. Myers plays guitar in the praise band, and also enjoys ministry with college students.

“Like a lot of young people, I got distracted in college. I wanted to help young people who are going through what I went through, to help students put the Lord first. That was the appeal of working on a college campus,” Myers said.

Myers is involved in Romanian American Mission. That led to an interest in Eastern European languages, which he has pursued by periodically studying Russian at MTSU.
Skype Spotlight:
Going back to basics with some S4B FAQs

Sometimes it's good to just go back to basics.
Many faculty and staff at MTSU don't know that they have Skype for Business installed on their Windows computers and most Mac users don't even have it installed.
So following are some S4B FAQs:

Who can I communicate with via Skype for Business?
The Skype for Business application allows you to communicate with other MTSU users, universities, and businesses that use Skype for Business and public Skype users.

What functionality do I have with Skype for Business?
You can see if a user is available, send them an instant message, share documents, share your screen, make audio calls and video calls, host a meeting, and so much more.
Note: You will need a webcam and microphone for audio and video communication via Skype for Business.

Where can I find additional information?
Additional information, videos and users guides, can be found at mtsu.edu/skype.

Who has a Skype for Business account?
All MTSU users with an MTSU phone number currently have a Skype for Business account.

Is the S4B application installed on my computer?
All Windows computers on the MTSU domain have the Skype for Business application installed. Currently, Mac computers do not have it installed by default.
It is recommended that you reach out to your local IT support so they can assist you with getting it set up or installed. Contact the Help Desk (helpdesk@mtsu.edu or ext. 5345).

Is training available?
If you or your department would like some additional Skype for Business training, please email uc.training@mtsu.edu.

Check out this compliance checklist on data management issues

To support the University’s data security initiatives, remember the following compliance tips from Gené Stephens, assistant vice president, MTSU Office of Compliance and Enterprise Risk Management:

If you are a manager, and an employee in your department/division changes job positions, please review your employee’s access to institutional platforms (e.g., Banner, Argos, Maxient, EAB, etc.).

Determine whether the employee still needs access to a particular platform or whether the employee’s access to the particular platform can be rescinded.

If changes are needed to an employee’s platform/data access in your department/division or if you need any data access changes, please complete an ITD Work Order.

If you are a department/division manager and you and your staff have access to student educational records (such as student class schedules; student grades; student M numbers; etc.) and/or student PII (such as Social Security numbers; account numbers; credit/debit card numbers; etc.), please ensure that you and your department/division employees have reviewed and completed:

- FERPA Training
- Policy 500
- Policy 920
- Policy 950

Ensure you have signed up for Multi-factor Authentication (MFA).

For more information, contact Stephens at 615-494-8812 or gene.stephens@mtsu.edu. See more tips at mtsu.edu/carem/index.php.
How to get info on digital signs

Campus digital informational signs are available to advertise University events and information appropriate to a campus-wide audience or content specific to the individual sign's location.

Content is added to the Student Union video walls, Student Union ballroom signs, and the KUC theater by the signage system administrators; content on other building signs is placed by departmental content administrators.

All content would need to follow digital sign guidelines at mtsu.edu/digital-signs/guidelines.php.

Requests should be submitted at least one month in advance of the event through the following webpage:

mtsu.edu/digital-signs/new-content.php.

More information can be found on the digital sign website mtsu.edu/digital-signs/index.php.

Banner 9, continued from page 1

“We are also in the process of upgrading the Banner Document Management (BDM) system and working on ePrint Single Sign-On (SSO) changes to enable seamless use of those products with Banner 9,” Rogers said.

Key offices are now using and live-testing the latest version of Banner 9, and we hope to release Banner 9 to the rest of campus in June, she said.

What used to be referred to as INB with Banner 8, will now be referred to as Admin Pages, which are web-based pages that have the same info on them as the old INB forms.

And with Banner 9 you can use other browsers besides Internet Explorer, such as Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and MS Edge.

PipelineMT and its menu options (which is really Self-Service Banner, aka SSB) will have no change in June when Banner 9 goes live.

However, ITD will begin developing replacement functionality to take the place of those options currently used in PipelineMT. Work on those changes will begin later this year.

Check the ITD Workshops page periodically for training opportunities: mtsu.edu/itd/workshops/calendar

A new webpage is available with some training resources: https://mtsu.edu/itd-enterprise/banner-training.php.

Planning spring relocation?

Get Telecom involved early

Moving to a new location on campus?

Remember to email telecom@mtsu.edu before you start packing.

A Telecommunication Services technician will be happy to assist in reconnecting your phone in your new location, as well as ensure your phone connects properly to the network to eliminate potential issues in the future.

Also, it provides an opportunity for Telecommunication Services to update your location record for E911.

In your email, be sure to include the following:

- Name
- Campus telephone number
- New location, including building and room number
- Date of move

As a reminder, Telecommunication Services requests a two-week notice on work order requests. Should you have additional questions, feel free to contact Telecommunication Services at x2991.

Remember, after your move is complete, you must update your campus location on PipelineMT so that the online directory is populated with the most current information.

On PipelineMT go to Directory Profile, then click on the Update Addresses and Phones link on bottom left.