Grad assistant going next level creating video game music

John Alderson is back at MTSU earning a master’s degree in the recording industry, but this time it’s just a big game for him.

A video game, actually . . .

Alderson, originally from Toronto, is working on his Master’s of Fine Arts in Recording Arts and Technologies after having earned his bachelor’s in Recording Industry Management in 2013. He is finishing up his graduate degree this spring with a final project that focuses on soundtracks for video games.

“I took a couple of years off, but nothing in the industry unfortunately. . . . So I came up with Plan B,” said Alderson. “My final project is audio for video games. . . . I have been recording all new music, sound effects, and dialogue for this game I am using. Now I am at the stage of putting it into the program, doing scripting.”

While more modern video games don’t feature music as prominently, he recalls that earlier games featured music as “the star of the show.”

“Everybody can think about the music from ‘Mario Bros.’ or ‘Zelda,’” he said. “People just sit there and listen to it on Spotify or iTunes.”

Meanwhile, he also has been working as a graduate assistant for the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC), specializing in helping faculty members with Desire2Learn (D2L) setup and problem-solving.

“In undergrad, I took a class with a grad student and he said he worked with ITD doing D2L, so I remembered hearing about that when I went to look for assistantships. The Recording Industry Department had already grabbed up members of my class, so I was a little late,” he said. “So I called [ITD] and asked ‘hey, are you going to have some spots?’ and they said ‘yeah.’

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Tech Tips and Tricks: How to avoid Internet Access Anxiety on campus

Few people would disagree that access to the Internet is essential in our modern age. As with electricity, water and good coffee, we notice when we don’t have access to our social media feeds, cat memes, and email.

Internet Access Anxiety is further heightened when you are on the go and need that connection right away. Knowledge is the best defense against these sort of frustrations so below we have listed tips to getting on the wireless network here at MTSU.

Tip 1: Expect to register the device. Every device you try to connect to the network will want you to register it. The username and password it will ask for will be your PipelineMT or FSA credentials.

For students, the username will be the first part of their email address—usually their initials with a number or a letter. Your email password is expected in the second field. You will then need to provide your name and an email address to register. MTSU currently has a limit of six devices. If you get a notice that you can’t register any more devices, contact the Help Desk.

Tip 2: Expect to be assessed.

Depending on your computer you may be asked to download the NAC agent. The NAC agent is a piece of software provided by the University that makes sure your computer meets the minimum of security threshold to be on the network.

In brief, the NAC agent is a watchdog that ensures that your computer has an anti-virus and has downloaded Windows updates recently. It keeps the network and others on it safe. If your computer does not have anti-virus software or needs Windows updates, the computer will go into remediation and suggest means to fix the problem.

Tip 3: Watch for WLAN. For most areas on campus, wireless access will come through the WLAN. You will see WLAN in classrooms and offices and some public areas. It does not blanket the entire campus. There are places on campus with no internet at all. You will find another access point called RESNET around student housing. You can use either of these access points as needed, depending on which one is the strongest at your location.

Tip 4: Avoid crowds for faster internet connection.

They also will be the hardest places to register the first time, particularly at the first of the semester. Lots of people in a location means the routers there are working their hardest and you will have the slowest connection.

Tip 5: Disconnect and reconnect. With mobile devices in particular you can have situations when the connection does not seem just right. Apple devices especially don’t like to leave a particularly good access point even if you move. If you are having trouble, forget the network or turn off Wi-Fi and then turn it back on. It may seem pretty basic, but doing so can resolve a lot of issues.

Contact the ITD Help Desk if you are having internet connection trouble. You can bring your device in to Keathley University Center (KUC) Room 320 any time between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. Monday–Thursday and 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays to be evaluated and helped.

The ITD Help Desk also has weekend hours from 8 a.m.–4 p.m. on Saturdays and 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Sundays if that is more convenient. It can be reached at 615-898-5345 or by email if you prefer at help@mtsu.edu.
New Aira: App will provide descriptions

A new app coming to campus soon will assist visually impaired students by using their smart phone camera to allow someone to see and describe their surroundings. The app called Aira will be available some time during the spring semester, said Lance Alexis, MTSU director of ADA compliance. “It is an app-based system. Users will download the app to connect to an Aira agent, use the internal camera on the device, and an agent can describe what is in the camera’s view,” Alexis said.

“For people with limited to no vision, this product will assist with navigating campus, describing performances at Tucker Theatre, describing exhibits at Todd Art Gallery and the Baldwin Photography Gallery, describing athletic events that don’t have a radio accompaniment, describe classroom visuals, and use vending machines.”

Alexis said the new app “is a game changer that will increase the safety and comprehensive campus experience for people with limited to no vision. “The accessibility of areas that are basically entirely visual like gallery exhibits will now be accessible and areas that have a strong visual component like a play at Tucker will now be able to be much more fully experienced,” he said.

According to the Aira website, users can just open the app and call the company. “You’ll connect with real, highly trained people who can see your surroundings through your phone’s camera,” the website states. “Protecting your privacy and ensuring you feel secure using Aira are our top priorities. Anyone you connect with will have passed robust background checks, signed strict privacy clauses, and undergone weeks of rigorous training.”

For more information on the app visit aira.io. For questions about usage at MTSU contact Alexis at 615-898-2185 or lance.alexis@mtsu.edu.

Alertus makes Critical Notifications pop up on your computer screens

“What’s that on my screen?”

This spring when a Critical Notification alert is sent, campus computers with the Alertus client installed will see this message displayed on the screen (see below example):

The message will fill the entire screen, so please do not panic.

The Alertus Desktop Notifications are being introduced as an enhancement to the University’s Alert4U (aka Rave) critical notification system. It was deployed to computers on campus in December.

The desktop notification system is in addition to other current modes of communication through Alert4U such as text messages, phone calls, and emails. Alertus notifications will be sent to computers on campus and will take over their screens.

You will want to pay attention to any message that pops up, follow any instructions, and then click “Acknowledge” to remove the alert.

Once the client is installed, you may notice the new icon pictured at left in your campus computer’s lower right system tray (PC) or in the top menu bar (Mac).

If you have any questions, you can contact the ITD Help Desk at 615-898-5345 or at help@mtsu.edu.
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He works with faculty on troubleshooting, gradebook setup, or even helping newer professors add content. He’s also been able to help the FITC set up and begin to use its multimedia studio, which includes a Lightboard and green screen for creating new content for online courses.

“I can give you a good student point of view, and tell you what seems to work well,” he said of his work with the studio and with D2L.

His wife, Stephanie, who he met at MTSU during his undergraduate time, works at the University in the Housing Department. This spring they will be in the job hunt together.

“I’m looking at a bunch of the larger game companies, at home in Toronto, in L.A., Seattle—it all depends on where my wife gets a job and who gets a job first,” Alderson said.

End has come for Microsoft Windows 7 OS

Microsoft ended its support for the Windows 7 operating system on Jan. 14, 2020.

All of MTSU’s student lab computers have been upgraded to Windows 10 in recent years.

However, an estimated 200 million PC users still run Windows 7, according to reports. If your personal desktop or laptop computer still has Windows 7 you can choose to continue using it, but the company will no longer provide technical support, software updates, security updates, and fixes.

Therefore, continuing to use Windows 7 exposes serious risks such as security compromises, data breaches, and virus and malware attacks.

If your desktop or laptop is more than five years old on March 1, 2020, the company suggests replacing it with a new PC or laptop running Windows 10.

The following Microsoft webpage answers FAQs and offers some advice for the transition:

support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/4057281/windows-7-support-ended-on-january-14-2020