

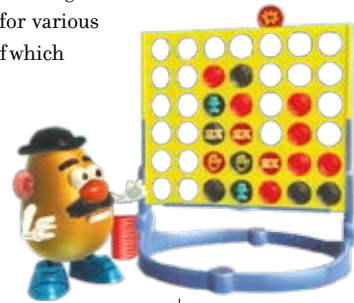
Taking digital arts to the next level

Looking around Louisiana, you'll find evidence of the rise of what award-winning author and intellectual Richard Florida cites as the next great wave in America's economic evolution – the creative class and creative industries. It's most evident in the film sets that dot the state's landscape and now in the growth of the interactive digital media sector: video games, digital effects, and online or 3-D applications (for various industries, from entertainment to defense) – all of which qualify for the state's digital media tax credits.

It's a desirable industry. In 2007, more than 267 million video and computer games (540 games a minute) were sold in this country alone. More than 60 percent of U.S. households play computer or video games.

The vast majority of the jobs are high-paying, knowledge-based jobs. *Game*

Developer magazine calculates the average annual compensation is approximately \$75,000, plus substantial bonuses and benefits.



Already, video game developers and other interactive digital media companies contribute millions to Louisiana's economy. In 2006, entertainment software development was already a \$9.4 million industry in the state. With the entrance of Nerjyzed (pronounced "energized") Entertainment, Yatec Games and Resurgent Entertainment in the last few years, and the recent announcement of Electronic Arts (EA) locating its first U.S. video game testing center in Baton Rouge, La., this number has risen significantly.

According to EA Senior Vice President Sharon Knight, Louisiana was attractive due to its "deep-rooted heritage in sports," the state's digital media tax credits and the pipeline of human capital being vigorously cultivated at state universities.

This pipeline – soon to begin pumping out potential employees – consists of programs at Louisiana State University (LSU), LSU-Shreveport and University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL). LSU's new AVATAR (Arts, Visualization, Advanced Technologies And Research) initiative is designed to build a multidisciplinary faculty base to meet this demand.



Louisiana lawmakers authorized \$750,000 to develop a curriculum and workforce development program involving ULL and the Louisiana Immersive Technologies Enterprise (LITE) in Lafayette. LSU-Shreveport has also started developing a new digital media initiative.

Jacqueline Beauchamp moved her company, Nerjyzed Entertainment, and its 14 employees from Dallas to Baton Rouge in 2006. She now has 48 employees, and new hires are primarily from Louisiana. Last fall, the company's first video game, *Black College Football Experience* (BCFx), hit the shelves complete with authentic band performances from historically black colleges and universities such as Louisiana's Grambling State University and Southern University.

New Orleans-based Turbo Squid, whose executives along with Beauchamp helped design the state's digital media tax credits, was among the first to take advantage of

incentives. The company hosts the largest 3-D marketplace in the world for models and digital assets used in game development and other digital media industries.

Since its formation using the digital media tax credit, Yatec Games has released two casual games, *Enchanted Garden* and *Identity Quest*, and is developing another title to assist children with speech articulation problems.

The Louisiana Optical Network Initiative (LONI) is a highly developed, publicly funded, statewide 40 GB network infrastructure that can support a robust video and computer game and 3-D application development industry. The state has also invested in two new economic development staff positions devoted to the digital media industry as a result of the interest generated by the digital media tax credit. And local entities, such as the Baton Rouge Area Digital Industries Consortium (BRADIC), which was instrumental in attracting EA to Louisiana, help support digital media business recruitment, expansion, startup and retention.

As the cross-pollination of creative talent and convergence of products among film, music and video games continues, Louisiana's role in the entertainment industry is expected to remain at the forefront, continuing to capitalize on the state's native creative culture. **EQ**

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INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE



Winter/Spring 2005
Development of digital media tax credit program.

2006
CERT (Consortium for Education, Research and Technology), a partnership among North Louisiana's nine colleges and universities, launches initiative to support workforce development and industry growth in Louisiana.

Spring 2006
Yatec brings industry jobs to Louisiana.

2007
Yatec releases first casual game, *Enchanted Garden*.

2008
Yatec releases second casual game, *Identity Quest* (IQ).

Spring 2008
Legislature targets \$750,000 towards a digital media workforce development program, partnering University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Louisiana Immersive Technology Enterprise.
LSU creates AVATAR initiative.

Fall 2008
CERT and LED co-host business development tour of Louisiana for digital media executives from around the country.

Summer 2005
Andy Redman, graduate student at Cambridge University, publishes *The Next Big Thing*, a study of the potential of the video game industry, commissioned by the Baton Rouge Area Chamber and Louisiana Technology Park.

Winter 2006
Nerjyzed Entertainment moves from Dallas to Baton Rouge.

Fall 2007
Nerjyzed releases first video game, *Black College Football Experience* (BCFx).

BRADIC formed to aggressively pursue the relocation, expansion and startup of digital media companies in Louisiana's Capital Region.

Summer 2008
State government authorizes creation of two new full-time business development positions focused on digital media industry within LED.

Electronic Arts (EA) announces the location of its first quality testing facility in Baton Rouge for EA SPORTS titles.