

80Days: around an inspiring virtual learning world in eighty days

The 80Days project, which is funded by the European Union, aims to create a Digital Educational Game for Geography that integrates interactive storytelling with intelligent teaching methods. The computer game is aimed towards the 10-14 year old age group, and is being developed as a collaborative project across Europe. It makes use of adaptive technologies to balance the game's playing and learning aspects to the individual student, and it follows a Geography curriculum developed to cater for most aspects found in the teaching of the subject across Europe.

The game's story involves a boy who is kidnapped by an alien scout. The boy is studying for a geography exam, and the alien scout claims to be making a travel guide for the planet Earth. In return for the alien scout allowing the boy to fly the alien's spaceship, the boy promises to aid the alien's task. The game is split into "micro missions" which, to be completed, need some aspect of Geographical knowledge or skill to be proven.

The other European partners involved with the project design the game, provide geographical data, produce the story, implement the adaptive algorithms and develop the educational aspect. The researchers, Dr Effie Law and Dr Tim Gamble, who work in Computer Science at the University of Leicester, are involved in evaluating the final outcome of the game. They test to see if educationally the software works, whether the adaptive learning algorithms are effective, and to make sure that the game is fun to play.

There will be three versions of the 80Days game produced, an "alpha", a "beta" and a "final", with 10 months in-between each release. The first version was released at the end of February 2009, and has already been tested in several schools using questionnaires and focus-group interviews to evaluate the user experience and learning efficiency. The feedback gained from the students is then used to help improve the next version of the game.

For more information about the 80Days project, please visit:
<http://www.eightydays.eu/>