



Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

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## GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

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**Kathryn Mcdivitt** <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

Sun, Nov 11, 2012 at 10:30 AM

Reply-To: Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

To: Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

I was thinking that the footprint animation with the stomp would load after the player hit 'Start' and then a roar would follow. Like it's announcing, "The hunt has begun!" I want to add some other element of interest to the menu besides the footprints, like the logo text would have an animation and perhaps something else as well but I don't know what yet. If you'd like to do the footprint animation in the menu, I can do a simpler, quick animation with the text, and it'll just load before the footprints start. This way is certainly less complicated and would still be cool, but of course I'd prefer it to be very complicated. :P

I'm planning on having separate 'grass' and 'plant' pieces. Like in a desert, those pathetic shoots scattered about would be the 'grass' and the edible looking plant would stand out. I was thinking that the grass pieces could randomize for a 'new level' feeling, but maybe static grass locations with just the plant bouncing around would be easier to comprehend for children. I want the plant to spawn on top of a grass section, so I could do a little animation for the grass to sway and it would reveal the plant. I don't know how you have the code set up right now, but that would mean that the grass and plants would need specific places to spawn either way. If you didn't want to change anything, I can just put the grass on the dirt layer and drop the animation.

If you're ok with the style, this is probably a great learning experience for me. I've never used half of the crap photoshop has, ha. :) Maybe once I'm more finished with everything else, we can revisit the idea of a background for more interest. I'd like to imply a plateau with an expansive 'world' below. It isn't especially necessary, though. So for now I'll move on to something that is.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Saturday, November 10, 2012 10:25 PM

**Subject:** Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

Thanks for the pictures! They are awesome!! I will try to get them in the game soon! I like the look for the menu screen. Would you like for me to have the menu screen transition between the images to make it look like tracks are being made in real time? It is definitely do-able. We could even add a sound when each step is added, and a random roar every so often. Having an animated background would be much cooler than my old static one. :P

I am a little confused by what you mean by "grass pieces" and the plant "bounce." Right now, the plants spawn in random locations on the screen, but I was hoping to eventually create a grid/board layout with decided locations for the plants. Is that what you are talking about? If so, do whatever is easier

for you. If you have an idea how to make it look good, I can probably figure out how to code it.

You are the creative genius here, so I would like to give you the freedom to choose a style that works best for you and the game. I will probably love anything you make. :)

On Sat, Nov 10, 2012 at 9:56 PM, Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

So right now I'm working on the first level bg and plants, and I've got a prelim for the menu thing without the text. After, I'll start storyboarding everything in. I've got to let the story simmer for a bit and see how I can incorporate the educational bits well. And I found that I can't behave when I paint, it always becomes too much visually complicated for young children. So, I've been playing with using more tools and textures and am a little behind where I want to be. What I've got is the back part of the background, the dirt. I've also got a grass texture I'm going to cut out of. Which leads me to a question: should I make varying parts that can 'refresh' and move around to different spots on the screen after you've collected a plant, or should the grass pieces stay in the same place and the plant simply bounce between? Or should I only have one grass patch where the plant will spawn so you don't have to tweak at all? I know I also proposed a simpler style than this, so tell me if this is alright, or if I should try to go even simpler like I had originally planned. The problem with that style is, that unless you rework the level to have a 'background' or even a 'foreground' that they can't direct the character into, it reads very flat. I don't want to introduce any land features on the actual play map which would confuse a child. And good luck in Washington! Just getting an interview at microsoft is awesome.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Friday, November 9, 2012 9:19 PM

**Subject:** Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

Another thing!

Could you send me the GIF for the loading screen and anything else you have done so far? I would like to start incorporating them into the game. Just in case the GIF doesn't play nice with XNA, could you send the individual images for the loading screen too? I could *pretty* easily create a loading screen animation, I think.

We also get the whole week off for Thanksgiving (Nov 19-23), so I will hopefully have some time during break to make some improvements to the Game Play.

If you are some how able to make screens or storyboards for the introduction story, I feel that would add a lot to the game for (maybe) a

small amount of work.

I really do appreciate all your help with this. It is a great motivation to keep working on and improving the game. :)

On Fri, Nov 9, 2012 at 9:09 PM, Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)> wrote:

I like it, but you'd have to make all that art for me first. :) Do you think there is a good way to really incorporate the educational part into the story? My original motivation for the game was to be educational, but it is hard to integrate the educational part without it feeling separate from the story-line. Thoughts?

Also, I have an interview with Microsoft out in Redmond, WA next week, so I will not be at the meeting Monday. I am excited for the interview, but sad that I have to miss the GDC meeting. :(

I talked to Andria about how you wanted some guidance on how to keep an idea from getting too complex, and she said that she would be willing to chat about it at the meeting on Monday. She remembers you as the "girl who was sitting next to me last meeting", so you should totally talk to her about it!

Have a good weekend!

On Thu, Nov 8, 2012 at 6:10 PM, Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Yep, still don't get it. I'll just have to talk to him about it later. I think the first idea I'll just have to keep working on until I like it. Or I'll drop it altogether. One or the other. The second idea, I haven't really spent any time on, but if you think it's workable, I'll have to start thinking about it. Azure Dreams... It's not a 'good game' per se, mechanically. I'm just an RPG nerd. If you like dungeon crawlers or 'tactics' games, it might be worth a look see. In the right format, any language and age group should be able to use a learning app if it's immersive rather than translative. So it could teach a kid vocabulary or an adult a foreign language depending on what you plug in. On the art and story side, a document isn't really restricting because it's exploration rather than problem solving. On some post about documents on reddit, all the comments kept saying to make a prototype instead of a document if you don't have a large team. So then the parameters are set and ideas have to evolve by built in boundries based on practical application. I would like to talk to your friends, I'm looking for any kind of insight on the subject.

So, I've mulled on this 'completion' sentiment of yours at work today and I think we can definitely make the game feel very complete by aiding the flow a little.

Ok, here we go. From the beginning:

The menu - picture of a dusty patch of land, with the usual 'start' and title. when start is hit, all text fades and three T-rex footprints appear in a walking sequence with corresponding sound, then a roar  
 Cutsceen - the one we discussed earlier introducing the brother, finding food, etc.

First level - dusty 'plateau' with the patches of grass which provide a setting that finding food is more of a challenge, and then you find the flower which leads to...

Cutsceen. open with picture of flower, pan up. Awesome, an oasis just beyond there. Ain't every day you see one of those in these parts. Got trees and yummy leaves and everything, very awesome. let's make sure to get different kinds for brother, right?

Now, I think one more level would wrap the game up nicely as the journey back to the nest for the brother to hatch or further exploration with the hatching event just 'triggered' upon completion of the levels. The player will have accomplished a mission, overcome adversity, and gone on a journey and therefore feel very complete. You mentioned you wanted to put shapes in also? If you'd like to do one more level, I'll leave the gameplay bit to you. I can only think of complicated things, of course. I think we can also include some info on the dinosaur food chain into the learning too, with the herbivores eat plants, T-rex eat YOU! thing being the whole point of the first level. Let me know if you'd like me to storyboard any of this out, or if it's not a viable idea, etc etc.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdvitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdvitt@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 7, 2012 10:15 AM

**Subject:** Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

Haha. I read through everything, and I like your ideas. To be honest, I am not so sure I understand the swan thing either... I talked to Jack and he wanted it to be like Battle Toads (or arcade scroller type) kind of except the assets would be 3D to make it look more snazzy.

The first game idea you mentioned seems pretty deep, but also incredibly depressing. Some games are like that on purpose, and are still successful.

I haven't played Azure Dreams, but now I kinda want to. I really like the sound of the second game idea. It seems like the player is going to have to make some moral decisions. Deep, but in a different way than the first game idea. It would probably take a lot of programming for the action parts, but it is definitely do-able.

I bet kids would have a lot of fun with talking to their (parents') iPad. Alternatively it might be useful to help speech disabled students practice their speech in a fun way. I know there are a lot of apps specifically designed for special needs children.

The Dinosaurs Game is the only game I have ever written to "completion." And I refuse to call it finished. I think it will probably never be completely done, but it was good enough for submission at the end of the class. It is a very simple game and there isn't any plot at all, but the game design document I had to write was huge. Creating a Game Design Docent was really helpful for me because it was a structured approach to thinking about the game, setting, and mechanics. It directed me to

think about things I wouldn't have thought of on my own. Our teacher never provided a proper format either. He just told us to Google it.

My friends Andria Osborne and Stephanie Dao are both in the club, and they are also novel writers. They might be able to give better advice about how to keep an idea from getting to complex. I introduced you last week, but I'll point them out again at the next meeting too.

Brittany

Sent from my iPod

On Nov 5, 2012, at 11:25 PM, Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

I wanted to send you that list of indie studios, but I can't seem to find it. It wasn't just the list of indies on wiki, I swear, what the heck... < On a relevant note, I'm setting a goal to have the dino bg and character design done for next time. Hopefully since I told you, I'll guilt myself into it being true. I also don't get the swan thing completely. I don't understand how much work it would be. Like the specifics of character detail and animation? I'm a beginner, so it needs to be kept in mind that I'm slow as anything.

[Incoming wall of text, don't feel obligated to read my ramblings]

I don't know where to start for a simple game. How do you keep it simple and not get bored and then never finish? Went through my concept folder and found two games I'm not currently working on, so I suppose that's why they haven't ballooned incredibly. One I tried very hard to keep simple(it didn't really stay simple) and another that popped up from the conversations last meeting(which was a brain doodle, so I never thought to do anything with it). They both could be made in renpy/pygame, I think... but...They're both still very large ideas. I have issues. I don't expect to do anything with these things. I know that they're huge. Perhaps I could focus on one element at least and see it through to completion? But even then, how much is too much? What do you think?

The first is 'Portrait of You' which I initially thought of as something simple to program myself but, uh... Programming is hard. And the idea sort of exploded into something...odd. It's a depressing lesbian love story combining visual novel cutscenes and SEGA style gameplay in between. So, the game basically opens with a woman lying awake saying "I can't sleep, I don't want to close my eyes just to lose her again tonight..." So instead she starts to doodle. That's the visual style of the game, 'doodles' but with a watercolor 'echo' that implies another level of reality. The first level is an olden-style side scrolling platformer (think mario) that a really simple 'knight saving a

princess' scenario. At the end of the level, the cutscene reveals that the main character was doodling in class, and her crush asks her what she's doodling. The following levels represent their relationship as it progresses, then as the crush gets cancer and eventually dies. The final level being, well, uh, if you've ever played a harvest moon and mined, you know how you something get projected up by water streams and sometimes fall in a pit? It's like that but with elevators when you're trying to get to her death bed at the hospital in time and it's a time attack for extra panic. And each 'SEGA' level would represent the emotion of the corresponding relationship phase in a roundabout way. Also, each level you fail has a a soul-cancer inducing cutscene where your crush leaves you. The more I thought of this game, the more sadistic it seemed to get. Who the hell would play this...?

Then the other idea is called Atlas Scion. It seems to have ended up a love song(\*coughripoff\*) to one of my favorite PS1 games, Azure Dreams. So it's a dating sim/RPG. But in outer space(nothing new). The main character's name is Aerron and he's a retrieval pilot and the son of the most famous retrieval pilot in the galaxy. Retrieval pilots fly on the surface of or even into certain planets' tunnels or the layers of gases to collect anything useful such as resources/alien technology. As his father has recently died, Aerron is retracing his father's footsteps all the way back to the hub ship where his father first got his start and became famous. This hub ship(Atlas) is parked right next to the planet Terrene, where minerals(/ore/what have you) were once gathered to save the withered earth. Since the race of aliens known as Aether have since claimed the planet and humans have discovered other planets with similar resources, this hub ship is run down and practically abandoned. So Aerron gets to this ship, wonders what happened, and in a stereotypically hero fashion decides to help. Now, this is rare, because it's a gameplay idea that caught my attention here. The 'dungeon' is like your usual 'galaga' game(at least in parts), so you play as a ship rather than a person. Then you have rpg style enemy encounters where it becomes more tactical by introducing squares, an action meter, etc. I don't have a solid idea. I found a game that sort of has similar gameplay in the tactical aspect, megaman battle network. You progress through areas or levels of which there is a certain number. And as you go through the levels you find parts(mechanim?) to improve your ship(called an arrow ship?) that play into the battle systems, either with boosted stats or new attacks. I've been working on a similar customizing component for my main project, so this would actually be a fairly complex upgrade system, but I won't get into it. On the ship it's a normal visual novel game. You meet the girls: a mechanic, a waitress in the mess hall, the captain's daughter and eventually an Aether girl(maybe more girls, but I didn't care to think of more). Nothing unusual in this aspect until you get to the moral issue with the Aether. Terrene actually holds another mineral that humans considered useless, but Aether need for survival. Not only have you killed Aether as part of the game, but you have the option to claim his mineral for the human race and bring a new golden age upon man, killing off the Aether. Obviously, the girls have opinions about this. Oh, and you get to fix up the ship. I loved that part of Azure Dreams, where I got to fix up the town. Couldn't think of whether this would have to be an anime game, or if I could pump some style into it and it made my brain hurt, so I went blegh and dropped it.



+1 vague idea from our conversation earlier of a teaching ios(maybe?) game for language that is like hey you, pikachu with voice recognition, but it's set in a wacky japanese style alien invasion where you have been captured by them and have to teach them the ways of your planet so that they may conquer it. I also like the idea of sing-alongs, just to make you feel more awkward for talking at your ipad. And an japanese arcade with learning games. And table flipping. Also not a simple idea, even if I eliminated voice recognition from the lineup. Argh.  
If you made it through this novel, you are both resilient and awesome.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>  
**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 1, 2012 2:33 AM  
**Subject:** Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

I agree that the screen was a little intimidating with too much going on. I remember that I was going to make the sprites bigger at one time, but then that meant I would have to redo them all. :P At the time, I decided to deal with the small characters, but now I have an awesome artist on my team, that is definitely possible. :D

Brittany Oswald  
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Computer Engineer : Iowa State University

"Anything worth doing, is worth doing right." -Hunter S. Thompson

On Wed, Oct 31, 2012 at 10:29 AM, Kathryn Mcdivitt  
<[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

If it's for 3-4 year olds and gender neutral, I'm thinking soft colors and shapes with gender neutral shades. Kind of like [this](#) reference? When I was three or four, I never cared what games were about, I just liked pressing the buttons until something happened. So, I don't think anything would have to be different gameplay-wise or anything. Maybe make it feel more 'zoomed in' somehow, because I imagine things going on all over the screen would be intimidating at that age. Like divide it into squares, and the t-rex will randomly travel through them but in a predictable manner. Go through enough randomized stages and get the flower that way? Attached a doodle of this.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>  
**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 30, 2012 10:03 PM

**Subject: Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game**

Haha. I loved your suggestions, but realistically, I probably won't be able to get extremely far on most of that. I love hearing your ideas though!

I actually have loading screens, and they are super lame. Anything you do to make an improvement would be greatly appreciated. If you have some sort of animation in mind, I could probably figure out how to make it happen with the code.

I would like to minimize violence, but I still really like the EXTINCTION idea. That made me literally laugh out loud. My target audience is 3-4 year olds, but I think we might be able to make it work.

For an added challenge, how do you think that we could make this a gender-neutral game? I may have worded that awkwardly, but I want to make sure that the game is appealing to little girls too. Any thoughts?

On Tue, Oct 30, 2012 at 8:30 PM, Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

Well, while we're making things too complex... If you revamped the flower bit into a "collect so many of these" type thing with damage causing you to lose health and have to start the flower(plant?) count over, and set an attainable goal for the first part, you could just take the 'bonus level' and make it level 2. You could also make some collisions (am I using that right?), like trees or rocks or something to make it a little more fast paced/strategic when you run away from the T-rex. Then make 'level 2' more complex and make it like a simon says or something. If you wanted to stick to the one level + a bonus level thing, I think the one level would need another layer of complexity to make it feel like a complete game rather than a level. Like an arcade game I guess, but without 'level 2' or anything. Like you 'unlock' the yellow flower by collecting so many flowers and only have so much time to get to it and avoid the t-rex? You could put the 'simon says' element here or 'collect only blue flowers' and hitting a different flower or t-rex would make you start the count over. I don't know. It depends on how much life and energy you want to put into the game. I'd say probably three characters in a simple style wouldn't be too much, and the having multiple colors is no problem if I make a black and white original, which is always a good idea anyhow. Or I could get distracted making a cute little loading screen and not make any actual progress on the game itself. I love making loading screen animations... And maybe an over-dramatic, asteroid-randomly-caused-by-



not-collecting-flowers "EXTINCTION!" game over screen would be too much for kids. What a shame. I'm sure an egg-painting mini-game is way too complex, but that would be kind of awesome for no reason. Even if you just selected patterns to put within 'tiers'... And your pattern was shown within the game itself.. A very complex idea would be to make a big adventure to find somewhere warm enough for your brother to hatch at the beginning of the ice age, ha. I'm very skilled at making things overly complex, so filter everything I say. I once started a renpy game three years ago, but then the concept grew into three separate games that are too complex for renpy. So let me know what you want to do and how much time you want to spend on it (just this month, or...?) and I'll act accordingly.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

**To:** Kathryn Mcdivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 30, 2012 6:00 PM

**Subject:** Re: GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

Haha. Oops. I forgot to attach it. :P Here you go!

I also agree that the game didn't really give any purpose to the user. I like the idea of collecting things for a new younger brother! I have had issues before trying to get the player to eat all of the plants because as soon as you eat the flowered one, it takes you to the bonus level (with the colors). Following this collecting things idea... one of the plants could have a "thing" behind it, but you have to eat all of them to find it. Hmm...

I was also hoping to eventually allow the child to choose from several different types of dinosaurs (like all the kid characters from Land Before Time) and they could maybe choose their own color too. It would make the game a little more customizable, but do you think that is unnecessary complexity?

On Tue, Oct 30, 2012 at 3:54 PM, Kathryn Mcdivitt

<[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)> wrote:

There was either nothing attached, or I really need to join the rest of the world and get a gmail already. I've started doodling some things from what I remember anyway. As far as expanding the game, I'd like to see a premise. If you wanted it to be a static character throughout, it could be like a young apatosaurus(/brontosaurus) is about to get a new baby brother (when the egg hatches), so he collects the things he wants to show to him. This would play into

the levels you already designed with the flowers and leaves and be really simple for a child to understand. If you have an reference of the style you mean, that would be great. Otherwise, I'll see if I can come up with a few styles or at least one I'm happy with to show you.

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**From:** Brittany Oswald <[brittany.oswald@gmail.com](mailto:brittany.oswald@gmail.com)>

**To:** Kathryn McDivitt <[kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com](mailto:kathrynmcdivitt@yahoo.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, October 29, 2012 11:19 PM

**Subject:** GDC: The Dinosaurs Game

Hello Kathryn,

Here are some of the image files and screenshots from the Dinosaurs Game. Right now the credits button doesn't do anything, but if I will definitely give you some credit if you decide to make some assets for the game. I really like the jungle/dinosaur time period style, but you are free to create whatever you think would look cool for kids! Also let me know if you have any creative ideas to expand the game, either to make it more engaging or educational. I would appreciate any suggestions you have.

As far as formats are concerned, JPEG or PNG is fine, whichever you prefer. The program will accept both. If you have any other questions, just let me know! You can do as little or as much as you want.

Thanks for your help! :D

Brittany