

Caroline D. Hardin
Statement of Purpose
For School of Education
Curriculum & Instruction
Digital Media

Since starting my Master's degree program, I've been thrilled to participate in many opportunities to advance the field of computational literacy and computer science education for women and other underserved groups. I've created games for language learning, designed apps for studying, ran experiments using virtual reality, designed classroom activities for metacognitive constructionism, created and field tested a wearable electronics curriculum, spoken at a conference about non-traditional education paths, created an augmented reality game for exploring UW campus resources, organized a women's hackathon, updated the Wisconsin Science Festival CS activities, organized a class tour of a hackerspace, led an all girls scratch club at the Madison Children's Museum, and volunteered in leadership positions at a number of conferences. My thesis project is developing an open-source social pinboard site for use by girls-in-STEM outreach programs.

During this time, I worked for the UW's Academic Technology. My work experience here includes moderating the forums for the first UW Mooc, instructional design support for a blended course, designing a badging system, supporting faculty in using academic technology, designing an augmented reality game with ARIS, creating case scenario/critical readers, writing javascript code for an augmented reality social tagging app (SIFTR).

My area of interest remains how to lower the barriers for entry into computer science and computational literacy for women and other underserved groups, with a particular focus on open source academic technology and games. I came to recognize that one of the best ways to advance the state of the field was to continue to contribute to serious scholarship, research and outreach. Therefore, I am applying to earn my PhD with Matthew Berland and his Complex Play Lab in the Digital Media Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Curriculum and Instruction department.

My statement of purpose for my Masters application says that "After I've earned my Master's degree, my goal is to partner with nonprofits such as My Class Cares or Room to Read to develop high-quality, open-source, community-collaborative IT educational resources and games." I still aspire to contribute to these worthy causes, but see that a better way to leverage my energies is by using scholarship to create resources, and research to verify the effectiveness of these resources. I take inspiration from a variety of important projects in the area of CS education, such as Scratch, ARIS, and Computer Clubhouse, all of which emerged from an academic setting. Being in an PhD program also creates ample opportunities for me to advocate for improvements in the field through writing and publishing.

Especially in this era of unprecedented challenges for higher education, we need new leaders with a background in digital media, instructional technology and computational literacy. I deeply believe in the Wisconsin Idea and I want to be at the UW because of its dedication to making an impact beyond the classroom. I'm excited by the challenges of pursuing a PhD and am ready to take them on!

Sincerely yours,

Caroline D. Hardin