





Disha Sardana

Ph.D. in Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia Tech

 disha-sardana.squarespace.com  dishas9  dishas9@vt.edu  +1(540)449-5353

EDUCATION

PH.D., INTERDISCIPLINARY

VIRGINIA TECH, BLACKSBURG, VA, USA

MAY 2023 | CUM. GPA: 3.88 / 4.0

M.S., ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

VIRGINIA TECH, BLACKSBURG, VA, USA

MAY 2018 | CUM. GPA: 3.85 / 4.0

SKILLS

RESEARCH

User Studies • Experimental Design • Hypothesis Testing • Surveys • Mixed-Methods Research • Qualitative & Quantitative Methods • Interviews • Usability Testing • Thematic Analysis • Machine Learning

PROGRAMMING

Python • R • MATLAB • C# • Javascript

TOOLS/ DEVICES

HoloLens 2 • Magic Leap 1 • HoloLens 1 • Unity3D • Git • Visual Studio • Miro • Figma • Max/MSP

EXPERIENCE

LEAD IMMERSIVE ANALYTICS RESEARCHER

JAN 2019 – MAY 2023 | CENTER FOR HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION AT VIRGINIA TECH (CHCI AT VT)

Relevant links: [Demo I](#) | [Demo II](#) | [Creativity + Innovation Day-Article](#) | [Student Spotlight](#)

- Developed and tested an approach for embodied data exploration of multi-dimensional datasets in an immersive **mixed reality (MR)** environment using HoloLens 2
- Demonstrated the proof-of-concept at a science fair (ICAT Creativity + Innovation Day 2019) and gathered user feedback from a diverse general audience (over **20 users**)
- Designed, conducted, and analyzed a research study with **34 participants** to evaluate the strengths and limitations of analyzing data in a 3D immersive environment compared to a non-immersive WebGL desktop environment based on accuracy and task completion times of specific visual analytics tasks
- Recommended design guidelines for doing data analytics in an MR environment based on frames of reference by assessing user performance, presence, rank order, and subjective user feedback
- Designed, conducted, and analyzed 90-minute in-person research sessions with **55 participants** to quantify the impact of audio on augmenting visual data analysis in MR environments using real-world space weather datasets
- Performed thematic analysis on the collected data and compared task metrics such as the number of patterns identified by users, their confidence level, task responses, NASA-TLX, and SUS questionnaire between audio-visual and visual-only scenarios
- Conducted a user study at a space weather conference (CEDAR 2023) and collected data from **43 space science experts** to broaden the demographics in order to more rigorously quantify and assess the potential impact of XR technologies on educational and analysis tools and techniques
- Wore many hats through various projects as a designer, coder, engineer, and artist, and collaborated **cross-functionally** with people from different backgrounds, communicated research across disciplines, and looked at a problem from diverse perspectives

LEAD RESEARCHER ON AN NSF-FUNDED PROJECT

AUG 2017 – JUL 2020 | INSTITUTE FOR CREATIVITY, ARTS, AND TECHNOLOGY AT VIRGINIA TECH (ICAT AT VT)

Relevant links: [Spatial Audio Data Immersive Experience \(SADIE\) - NSF Funded Project](#) | [wvtf-article](#) | [VT News](#)

- Designed a new motion-tracking glove to enable user interaction with immersive sound environments utilizing **motion capture systems**

- Programmed the logic to recognize 3-dimensional gestures (such as pinch, zoom, etc.) from real-time coordinates of various glove elements
- Tested and debugged the system by conducting beta-testing with around 40 users
- Conducted in-person user studies with over **150 users** to study the human perception of sound in an immersive multi-layered auditory environment
- Performed hypothesis testing and **statistical analysis** (including t-test and ANOVA) on user data, leading to four publications in prestigious audio-related conferences

PROJECTS

STUDY OF GEOMAGNETIC SOLAR STORMS USING MACHINE LEARNING

AUG 2015 - MAY 2018 | CENTER FOR SPACE SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH AT VIRGINIA TECH (SPACE@VT)

Relevant links: [Best Presentation Award](#)

- Presented a study of large solar storms occurring from 2000-2018 to quantify their effects on the Total Electron Content (TEC) in the ionosphere over the U.S. sector
- Studied the strength of influence of various storm parameters on the TEC using tree-based **machine learning** techniques, such as, random forest
- Used AWS, Python, and scikit learn to build a pipeline to fetch and ingest ionospheric data (order of 10s of GBs) to train and test machine learning models
- Work won the **student presentation award** at the AMS 98th Annual Meeting (2018)

AN INTERACTIVE AUGMENTED REALITY BOARD GAME

JAN 2019 - DEC 2019 | CENTER FOR HUMAN-COMPUTER INTERACTION AT VIRGINIA TECH (CHCI AT VT)

Relevant links: [Best Poster Award](#) | [Game Design](#)

- Designed and prototyped an “Interactive **Augmented Reality (AR)** Board Game for Recruiting Prospective Students”, as an innovative recruitment strategy to promote playful information delivery and collective decision-making
- Game design was achieved through various research methods such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, personas, formative evaluation, and usability studies
- Led the development of the AR component of the game using Vuforia and Unity3D
- Communicated findings to the stakeholders at the university
- Work won the **best poster award** at the CHCI Student Symposium, Blacksburg, VA, in May 2019

LEADERSHIP

- **President** | CHCI Student Council, Inaugural Chapter at Virginia Tech, 2022-2023
- **Co-Founder & Vice-President** | Kala - Indian Classical Music Society at Virginia Tech, 2018-2023
- **Graduate Liaison** | Creativity + Innovation (C+I) at Virginia Tech, 2020-2021
- **Event Coordinator** | Virginia Tech Eta Kappa Nu (IEEE-HKN) Honor Society, 2018-2019
- **President** | Indian Students Association at Virginia Tech, 2015-2019

HONORS

- Selected as a reviewer for the **NASA Open Science 101 curriculum** and a panelist for the **Transform to Open Science (TOPS)** panel held at NASA Headquarters, Washington D.C., on October 14, 2023.
- Received an honorable mention for “Clear Articulation of Hypotheses and Metrics” for the **IEEE VAST Challenge 2022**
- Awarded **NSF scholarship** for the Student ThinkTank at the International Conference on Auditory Display in 2018 & 2019
- Received a student presentation award at the AMS 98th Annual Meeting (2018) for **exceptional research & presentation**

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS [FULL LIST ON GOOGLE SCHOLAR]

- **Sardana, D.**, Chandrashekhar, N. D., Gračanin, D., Matković, K., & Earle G. D., “Iterative Design of an Immersive Analytics Environment,” in **HCI International 2023**.
- **Sardana D.**, “Embodied Data Exploration in Immersive Environments: Application in Geophysical Data Analysis,” **Dissertation (2023)**, Virginia Tech.
- Debchoudhury, S., **Sardana, D.**, & Earle, G. D., “The relative importance of geomagnetic storm signatures on the total electron content perturbations over the continental US,” in the **Journal of Geophysical Research: Space Physics, 2021**.
- **Sardana, D.**, Kahu, S. Y., Gračanin, D., & Matković, K., “Multi-modal Data Exploration in a Mixed Reality Environment Using Coordinated Multiple Views,” in **HCI International 2021**.