THEN HiER Graduate Student Project Report

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The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the objectives and activities that were conducted as part of the MetaHistoReasoning tool Website Project, a THEN HiER Graduate Student Project that was awarded to Eric Poitras on July 25th, 2011.

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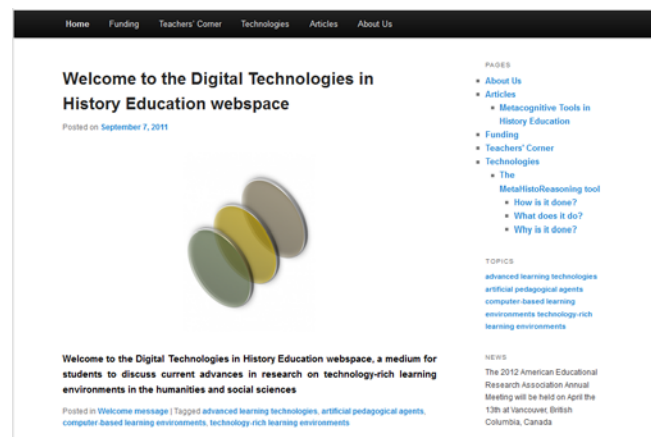**eric.poitras@mail.mcgill.ca**
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The MetaHistoReasoning Tool Website Project

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the project objectives and activities in relation to the MetaHistoReasoning tool Website Project. The initiative was funded by the Graduate Student Project Program of The History Education Network/Histoire et Éducation en Réseau (THEN/HiER) in the amount of $2,420.

The objectives of the project were three-fold, namely (1) creating a webspace to disseminate knowledge pertaining to the MetaHistoReasoning tool, a computer-based learning environment that was designed to teach students how to reason about the causes of historical events, (2) the purchase of new equipment to enable the development of a tablet-based version of the software application, and (3) to disseminate the findings of our research and promote the website at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education held at Wilfrid Laurier University. In the following sections of this report, I will outline the activities that were conducted to meet each objective.

The Digital Technologies in History Education Webspace

The Digital Technologies in History Education Webspace (www.digitaltechinhistoryed.com) is a blog designed to facilitate and promote accessibility to the latest developments and innovations in digital technology and media in Canadian history education. In doing so, it enables users to identify and reflect on the key issues and challenges that are faced by students who learn about complex historical topics with advanced learning technologies, and how those technologies can assist learners to overcome them.

The webspace currently features the MetaHistoReasoning tool, a computer-based learning environment that was designed to teach students how to reason about the causes of historical events. Students are able to learn through performing an authentic task that involves investigating the reasons for why an historical event occurred. They are provided with a range of different historical sources, both primary and secondary, to formulate an explanation for the occurrence of the event under investigation. In doing so, the software provides students with a variety of tools to assist them in their investigation – an artificial pedagogical agent that provides tutoring, a set of instructional videos, the explanation palette, the annotation tool, and a digital library.

Towards the Development of a Tablet-Based Application

In order to develop a tablet-based version of the MetaHistoReasoning tool software, funds were allocated for the purchase of an Acer 10.1 inch W500-BZ412 Tablet. The tablet enables us to demonstrate proof of concepts, and most importantly to begin the development of a revised version of the software that could be implemented as a tablet-based application.

The purchase of this equipment represents an important step in the context of our wider research program that aims to implement the software on computers, tablets, and mobile phones. In doing so, we hope to extend the number of users, which is currently limited to participants in our laboratory, to include students in schools and visitors in museums.

Although in the initial version of the grant submission, I had planned to purchase the Lenovo ThinkVision L2440P Wide LCD Monitor, I chose to purchase the Acer Tablet instead. It includes many of the functionalities that were required to implement the software, and at a reduced cost.

The Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education

The Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education was held from the 26th to the 30th of May 2012 at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Canada. I presented our recent findings in relation to the effectiveness of the MetaHistoReasoning tool at a session of the Canadian Association for Educational Psychology. This association focuses on the application of psychology to education and includes a number of special interest groups revolving around self-regulated learning, special education, and cultural differences in education.

The session was entitled "Technology for Supporting Active Learning and Self-Regulation." The chair of the session was Nadia Nosworthy from the University of Western Ontario. The discussant was Richard Schmid from Concordia University. There were two presentations scheduled in the session. The first focused on the different aspects that charactized proficiency in learning through historical inquiry with the MetaHistoReasoning tool (Authors: Eric Poitras, Susanne Lajoie, and Yuan-Jin Hong). The second related to differences in pedagogical practices in learning with the benefit of electronic portfolios (Authors: Ann-Louise Davidson and Nadia Naffi).