



EMERGING TRENDS IN DESIGN RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT:

This poster will showcase the efforts of four interdisciplinary teams of graduate students who participated in exploring emerging spaces in the landscape of design research. The exploration took place in a hands-on design research course required of all first year graduate students in the Department of Industrial, Interior and Visual Communication Design at The Ohio State University. Students from other disciplines were also welcome to take the course. The disciplinary mix was about half design students and half students from across various fields of engineering.

The students were introduced to design research through a visual map of the field (Sanders, E. B.-N. 2006). The map shows a progression over time from expert-driven, research-led approaches toward participatory, design-led approaches to design research. The students were asked to show where they stood on the map as a result of their previous research experiences. All the students located themselves on the expert-driven side of the map, spanning research-led and design-led approaches. They were then asked to decide where on the map they would like to explore as researchers. The students formed teams and chose research topics,

methods and tools. Each of the teams was made up of people from both disciplines. All of the teams decided to explore in the direction of participatory, design-led approaches to design research. The poster will show the results of their projects in mini-case studies. It will summarize the results of their explorations with the new tools and methods.

The course also employed a “writing to learn” thread with weekly journal assignments being used to probe students' thinking. The journal questions proved very beneficial in understanding the students' learning processes. The general consensus was that the course provided learning opportunities not only in new tools and methods of design research, but also important insights into interdisciplinary teamwork. One of the engineering students wrote *“I have learned that the advantages of having a diverse group of people definitely outweighs the challenges. Since I am coming from a heavily expert-driven background, this class has pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and has opened up new ways of looking at research methods. I have enjoyed this experience and strongly feel that this experience will help me in future real world situations”*. One of the design students explained, *“At the beginning of the course, the first journal question was whether or not I enjoy doing research. My answer to this was no. I am happy to say that after taking this course, I can now state that I do enjoy doing a form of research”*.

Sanders, E.B.-N. (2006) Design Research in 2006. Design Research Quarterly, V.1:1, Design Research Society, September 2006.