

WHERE

IS DIGITAL
ENTERTAINMENT
TAKING US?

I completely agree that schools have to facilitate a smoother transition to the workforce, than is currently in place, especially in the digital entertainment world (which includes video games).

- Jesse Lindsley | CEO and Founder of Thrust Interactive



MOLLY

spends her time living an artist's dream, creating and perfecting some of the most popular products in today's economy using the latest technology. And, she didn't have to leave the Southeast to do it.

A recent graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and a native of Nashville, Molly wanted a career in digital gaming. At first, she didn't think it would be possible to thrive in this high-tech, constantly evolving industry without moving to the West Coast. However, after starting school out west, she discovered a degree path at SCAD that worked for her. And, while she was finishing her degree, she began working for Thrust Interactive, a national leader in gaming.

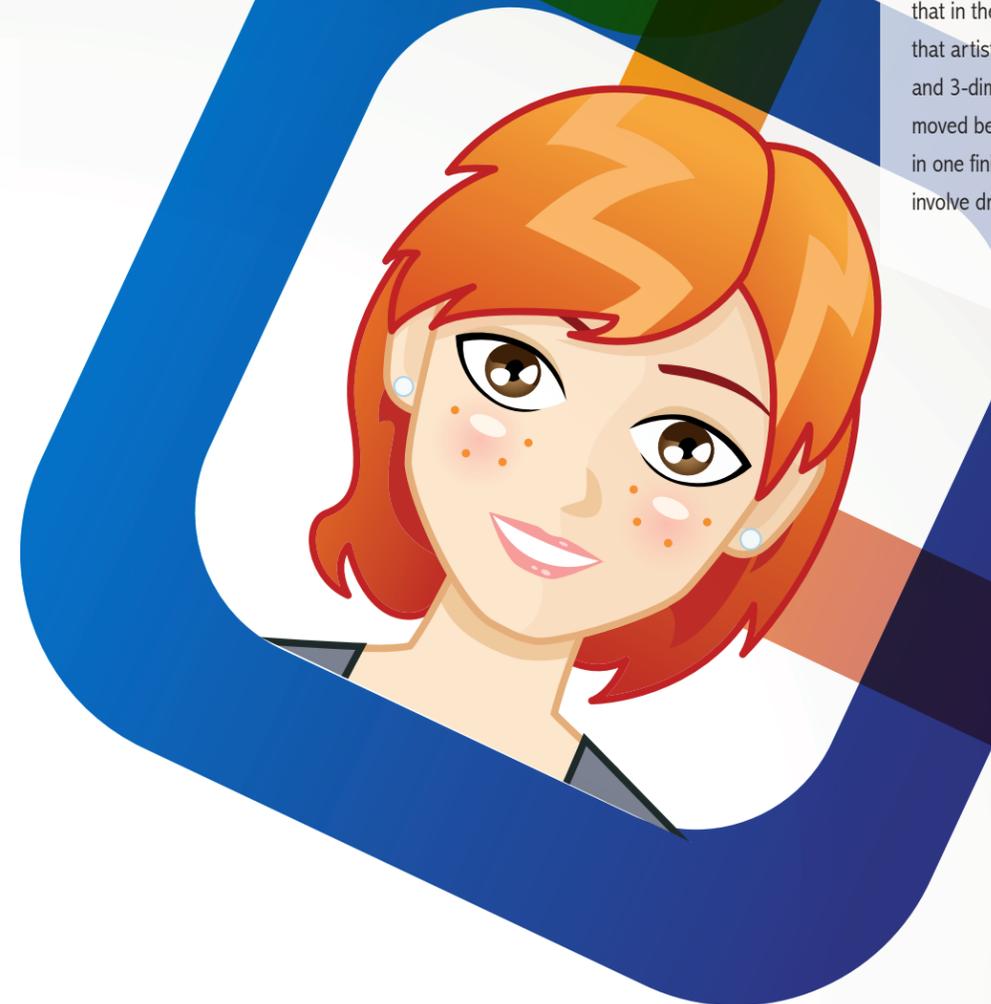
Molly's job at Thrust is one of more than 1,800 video game jobs in Georgia. These jobs, at more than 80 companies, represented \$758 million in sales in 2012 and more than \$527 million in labor income. Georgia has become a hot spot in the digital entertainment industry. And, the only way to keep more students like Molly in the Southeast is to create more jobs in the career paths that excite them.

There are more aspects of digital entertainment than just video games. The animation industry is one of today's fastest growing. The demand for animated entertainment has grown exponentially in every dimension, including film and television, interactive design and game development, motion graphics, production design, visual and special effects and more. We are living in a digital media based world. Digital content is driving our connections and our communication.

Georgia is now also among the top five states in the nation for film and TV production, with more than 333 productions shot in Georgia in fiscal year 2012, investing more than \$879 million in the state. According to the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office, entertainment industry projects generated \$3.1 billion in 2012, a 29 percent increase over fiscal 2011. This number is expected to grow even larger as the popularity of filming in Georgia increases.

Is Digital Gaming an Art Form?

Molly admits that it has taken a few years, but she is glad to see that the arts community is accepting game design as an art form and designers as true artists. She said that in the past, technology could not handle the things that artists wanted to do with it. Now, with 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional animation, the gaming world has moved beyond Pong, incorporating multiple art forms in one finished piece. For example, most games today involve drawing and other visual arts, as well as script writing and music production.



The Georgia Department of Economic Development and Georgia Department of Labor report that more than 25,000 Georgia residents are employed in the entertainment industries, including 11,000 full-time positions. Georgia understands that as our economy and the marketplace change, and technological innovations are realized, our education system must ensure that future graduates and workers have the latest skills and training.

How can we do
a better job of
attracting digital
media companies?

Not Just About the Art

Having graduated from SCAD, Molly was excited to join Thrust Interactive and work with big clients like Turner Broadcasting on projects ranging in scope from \$25,000 to \$250,000. But she needed a little business training if she wanted to “move up” in today’s flatter organizations.

Because Thrust is essentially a start-up, everyone plays multiple roles in order to complete projects and keep the business successful. Thanks to ARC’s on-the-job training program, Molly has learned new skills that make her more valuable than ever to Thrust. She learned how to use Microsoft Excel to schedule, budget and manage projects, giving the young game designer the ability to also make sure her projects are running on time and on budget.

There are 30,000 digital media jobs globally that exist that cannot be filled due to lack of talent and the current circumstance of the education system. Why not be a part of the transformation and fill these jobs in Georgia?

~ Joan Voegesang
President & C.E.O.
Toon Boom Animation

Changing the Way We Think and Learn

Does the integration of arts and media help prepare georgia students for today’s digital jobs?

From elementary school through college, Georgia emphasizes STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) to boost critical thinking and problem-solving skills. To that end, the Georgia Department of Education created Georgia Peach State Pathways and more than 14 in-state colleges and universities offer studies in film and television production and are arguably home to some of the nation’s best university video game development programs. This aligns employers statewide to a pipeline of talented workers ready to take on today’s jobs, and the innovations of tomorrow.

It is extremely important that our learning institutions begin to embrace these concepts in a larger way. Today’s high school graduates will face an increasingly competitive technological marketplace. And more and more college graduates are finding in their job search that they do not have the skill-specific qualifications they need. Installing digital education in schools as early as the elementary years opens up additional possibilities to

an entire generation of digital natives. This world currently exists everywhere around our future leaders, except in the classroom.

Though there is still an enormous amount of work to do, entertainment and media programs at Georgia’s colleges and universities are graduating students ready for job success in game development, graphic design and animation, to name a few.

Georgia’s technical colleges have worked with leaders in the entertainment industry to create programs for the state’s emerging, existing and transitioning workforce. Most jobs will require some form of higher education/ CTE certification or industry recognized certification.

The ability to be work ready hinges on not only having the right educational foundation, but also on the creation of projects and products from concept to launch. Internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing opportunities that apply classroom learning in a real-world environment are very valuable and are available through many companies within the state of Georgia.

Technology will always keep changing. For example, Molly says that when designing games for Facebook, Thrust is always trying to keep current games updated and fresh while also trying to produce the next big thing.

Trying to hit this moving target is challenging. But that volatility can be mitigated by nurturing relationships between schools and industry. Candidates with the business skill sets and the digital know-how will lead the way in tomorrow’s business environment. The magnitude and cutting-edge innovations in the digital entertainment industry cannot be bound by yesterday’s business rules and practices because creativity can’t be confined by a figurative “box.”

As institutions of higher learning and digital industries form these bonds, both will win. The “win” for industry is that they too can keep their finger on the pulse of innovation and can be around people who are not burdened by the real-world and see things through the eyes of those immersed in learning.

What are the future opportunities for greater collaboration between arts and venture capital?