



Tec augmented reality project lets you experience science fiction

“Hurry up. The future of humanity rests in your hands. The Resistance has this advice for each step of your mission.”

The adventure gets started with this message in [“I Love to Read Sci-Fi”](#), a program created by a group of **teachers and students** from **Tec de Monterrey** to **encourage people to read**, which **immerses users in the stories** with **augmented reality**.

Readers who take part in this experience find worlds based on iconic **science fiction novels** such as **“I, Robot”** by **Isaac Asimov** or **“Fahrenheit 451”** by **Ray Bradbury**.



This project formed part of the **Snap Creative AR Challenge**, which challenged **universities from around the world to reimagine the future of storytelling.**

This was confirmed by Andrés Monroy, head of scientific research at **Snap Inc.**, the company sponsoring the challenge along with **Microsoft Research** and the **BBC's** research and development department.

*“We want to foster an **ecosystem of augmented reality creators**, as we believe this is the future of human-computer interactions,” said Monroy, who is also a **Tec graduate.***

‘SAVING BOOKS’ WITH AUGMENTED REALITY

The project consists of a **rally** in which readers play the role of a **resistance member** who wants to **save books** from being burned.

This is based on the story of “**Fahrenheit 451**” in which books were destroyed with fire.

Other **books** that players have to recover include “**Amphibian Man**”, a Russian novel on genetic experimentation, and “**The War of the Worlds**”, which is about alien invasions.

Players have to [download the augmented reality files](#). Once these have been installed, they can interact with **animations** and **characters** that tell them what the next steps are.

The files are currently available to members of the Tec community and can be used on devices with the **Android operating system**.

*“Mixing **storytelling with augmented reality** is an engaging combination,”* said **Ana Gabriela Rodríguez**, head of innovation at the **Vice Rector’s Office for Academic Affairs and Educational Innovation** at the **Tec**, who mentored the project.

“The challenges come up as part of the story’s central thread and players continue reading the books to solve them,” she explained.

A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

In 2019, **Snap Inc.** (the company behind **Snapchat**) launched the **Snap Creative AR Challenge** along with **Microsoft Research** and **BBC R&D**, which was open to universities from around the world.

Andrés Monroy himself directly invited his alma mater to take part and a call was launched at all the campuses through the **Tec’s Educational Innovation Department**.

“I Love to Read Sci-Fi”, a project proposed by a group of students and teachers from the **Querétaro campus**, was then chosen to represent the Tec in the global challenge.



Lucía Subías, Director of Leadership and Experience at Querétaro campus and the person responsible for this project, shared that this campus has been holding [alternate reality games](#) to encourage people to read **since 2014**.

*“When we found out about this call, we decided that our project, which **we’ve been doing for years** in Querétaro, could be **reinvented** for **augmented reality**,”* said Subías.

A **multidisciplinary team** was then assembled with **teachers** and **students** from the **Bachelor’s Degree in Digital Art**, as well as members from **theater and literature**.

*“As a **team**, we managed to adapt to each other really well, despite never having worked together before. We have a **culture** at the **Tec** that makes it easy to work in our teams,”* she added.

THE ONLY ONE FROM LATIN AMERICA

In December 2019, the Snap Creative AR Challenge chose 11 universities to continue developing their work, including **Tec de Monterrey**.

Tec de Monterrey was the **only** university chosen from **Latin America**, together with universities from the United States, Portugal, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, and India.

All the teams taking part received **10,000 dollars** to continue developing their projects.

Besides mentoring from Ana Gabriela Rodríguez through the **Educational Innovation Department**, the “**I Love to Read Sci-Fi**” team also received **mentoring from Snapchat** and **Columbia University** in **New York**.

The 11 **Snap Creative AR Challenge** projects had the opportunity to introduce themselves virtually on June 17 at the [ACM IMX 2020](#) international event, which was for **multimedia experience** projects.

“Taking part really motivated us. Colleagues from different universities thought that the Tec project would encourage people to read and that the augmented reality development was impressive,” shared Rodríguez.

Subías added that the projects taking part could continue to **operate** and **be improved**, as the challenge did not contemplate singling out one team as the winner but showing what progress they had made.

*“The final participation was aimed at **sharing and imagining the future**: where we could take the **next step** in the evolution of media,”* she said.

She added that the plan is to encourage the experience of “**I Love to Read Sci-Fi**” to be **reproduced** on campuses at the Tec and other universities.

*“We want to get it up and running. **We want them to experience it, to play it, and give us feedback so that we can grow and encourage people to read,**”* she concluded.

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