4-1-2017

Georgia Library Spotlight - retroTECH at Georgia Tech Library

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retroTECH at Georgia Tech Library

retroTECH is a Georgia Tech Library program in which the campus community can create the future by exploring the past. The vision for the retroTECH Lab entails a highly curated combination of classic, older hardware and software alongside modern tools for digital archiving and emulation—all designed to be accessed and used. This newly piloted lab will not only serve as a hands-on historical reference point; it will activate new ideas about future technology and preserving innovation.

The retroTECH space takes what archives around the world are doing behind the scenes with digital forensics and born-digital workstations and combines it with a hackerspace ethos, making it all available for public access, empowerment, and engagement. The retroTECH program aims to reimagine digital archives by offering patrons a chance to use vintage, forensic, and emulation equipment typically restricted to library staff, museums, and specialized collectors.

The Georgia Tech Library and Archives acquired their seed collection of five classic workstations from an alumni and former faculty member whose work inspired the idea. Along with several emulation workstations, these machines form the core of the pilot retroTECH Lab space, where the team is testing programming to implement in the future permanent lab in the renewed building. The team is also currently developing two mobile labs, the Emulation Time Machine and the Archive-O-Matic, which will expand retroTECH's services beyond the borders of the physical lab space.

The retroTECH team is committed to community outreach, continuing education, and developing partnerships around campus and the Atlanta area. Since the opening of the lab in 2015, the team has fostered a relationship with Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program. Faculty partner with retroTECH members to develop course-based instruction sessions that allow students to explore the archived technology, reflect on the histories of digital media, and develop research questions related to their assignments.

In addition to course-integrated instruction sessions, the retroTECH program also offers drop-in hours. During the fall and spring semesters, the lab is open for Georgia Tech community members and the general public. During drop-in hours, users can explore the classic workstations and retro games.

In the summer of 2016, the retroTECH team received a campus grant in partnership with the Digital Media Game Archaeology Lab to host an event series that would bring communities

together to explore digital pasts and futures. Fall speaker series events investigated such topics as game archelogy and production, vintage computing, and digital forensics. The spring lineup will include additional panel discussions as well an interactive data recovery workshop. The events are free to attend and open to the community.

For information on the retroTECH program, equipment, lab hours, and more, visit: http://retrotech.library.gatech.edu/