June 14, 2018

KMDI New Director - Announcement

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Sara Grimes as Director of the Knowledge Media Design Institute (KMDI), an interdisciplinary unit of the Faculty of Information. The appointment is effective July 1, 2018.

In addition to this Directorship, Sara is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Information and Fellow in Book and Media Studies at the University of St. Michael’s College at the University of Toronto.

As the Director of KMDI, Professor Grimes will be following through on her proposal to merge the Institute with the Semaphore Labs, a research cluster at the Faculty of Information, where she has been an Associate Director. Semaphore is dedicated to inclusive design in the area of mobile and pervasive computing.

Prof. Sara Grimes explains: “Historically, the KMDI and the Semaphore Lab have shared many of the same fundamental concerns, ethics, and approaches. But they also have complementary strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, Semaphore contains world-class equipment and spaces. It is home to cutting edge, issue-oriented research produced out of several remarkably effective collaborations with private and public sector partners. On the other hand, the KMDI has institutional reach, and an established record of real, genuine interdisciplinarity. It is based on an epistemologically flexible and methodologically inclusive framework that lends itself particularly well to tackling new ideas and developments, and to forming research partnerships that seek to address emerging questions about our ever-evolving relationship with technology, media, and design. In joining KMDI and Semaphore together, my aim is to create an institute that provides the necessary resources to involve faculty, students, and other members to carry out research, engage in public discussion, and attract outside partners—from other disciplines, but also from public and private sectors. This new KMDI/Semaphore Institute will retain the flexibility
and reach that the KMDI has traditionally enjoyed as a virtual institute, while providing the “actual stuff” required to do research, design, and collaboration."

Professor Grimes’s work is centered in the areas of children’s digital media culture(s), play studies and critical theories of technology, with a special focus on digital games. She recently returned from a year’s sabbatical. Her published work explores the commercialization of children’s virtual worlds, the articulation of a critical theory of digital game play, discussions of intellectual property and fair dealing in digital game environments, as well as the legal and ethical dimensions of marketing to children online. She is Principal Investigator of the *Kids DIY Media Partnership*, a cross-sector, interdisciplinary research collaboration aimed at supporting children’s cultural participation through the creation and sharing of digital media.

Her work has appeared in journals such as *New Media & Society*, *The Information Society*, *Science Technology & Human Values*, and *Cultural Studies* as well as in chapters in edited volumes and in various magazines and blogs. She has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences, workshops and festivals. Professor Grimes teaches courses on children’s cultural texts and artifacts, remix culture, research methods, and the social and cultural dimensions of social media technologies.

The Knowledge Media Design Institute (KMDI) is an interdisciplinary unit of the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. Founded in 1996, the institute is U of T’s first virtual institute to deal with interdisciplinary issues of collaborative design in the artifacts of knowledge creation, production and distribution.

Researchers and students affiliated with KMDI explore, design, and critique the knowledge media that enable people to communicate, create, learn, share, and collaborate. The KMDI community also extends to research and business in the public and private sectors to develop new projects.