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**BALL STATE UNIVERSITY'S IDIA LAB LAUNCHES NEXT-GENERATION
IMMERSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE ON BLUE MARS**
*Massive New Site Features Fully Interactive, Detailed Replicas of 1915 Panama-
Pacific International Expo, Japanese Temple, Virtual Museum and More*

MUNCIE, IN and HONOLULU, HI, Nov 23, 2010 --- Ball State University's Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts (IDIA) announced today the release of IDIA Lab City, a new immersive learning experience powered by Blue Mars, Avatar Reality's 3D social world platform. Visitors to the new area can virtually tour and examine stunning, realistic recreations of artifacts and artworks in their original historical contexts, including sculptures at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and a centuries old Buddha at a Japanese temple.

IDIA's premiere effort in Blue Mars showcases several examples of recent grant supported research projects. For example, students in IDIA's Immersive Seminar in Virtual Worlds 3D laser-scanned sculptures in Ball State University's Museum of Art collection, resulting in accurate and detailed replicas in IDIA's simulation.

IDIA director John Fillwalk, also an associate professor of art at Ball State, believes that these new efforts in Blue Mars are also an excellent example of the university's Emerging Media Initiative (EMI) and its focus on accelerating economic benefits to the state of Indiana through technology transfer and the preparation of increasingly media-savvy human capital.

"Part of our mission at IDIA is to develop new technology solutions for our expanding range of clients that are interested in engaging next generation media design, to the economic benefit of both the state and the university," said Fillwalk.

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With Blue Mars still in its beta phase, IDIA is exploring various new ways that the platform might be used, from learning and the arts to gaming. Future IDIA initiatives in Blue Mars will include the design of immersive artworks, shared media collaboration tools and the development of an open virtual campus for use by educators interested in engaging the platform as an environment for learning.

The premiere projects can be viewed by downloading Blue Mars for free at <http://www.bluemars.com/>. There will be an in-world meet and greet tour with IDIA staff held in IDIA Lab in Blue Mars on Tuesday November 23, 2010 at 2 PM PDT. All are welcome!

About IDIA Lab

The Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts (IDIA) at Ball State University is an interdisciplinary media arts lab, funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., that explores the intersections between art, science and technology. IDIA designs projects in virtual reality, immersive art, games, simulation and human computer interaction. <http://idialab.org/>.

About Blue Mars and Avatar Reality Inc.

Developed by Avatar Reality, Blue Mars is a premium 3D virtual world platform featuring unparalleled interaction, fidelity, scalability, security and connectivity. Blue Mars enables artists, game, and application developers to create and distribute amazing interactive 3D experiences for a global audience. Blue Mars launched in Open Beta in October 2009 and began selling virtual land to third party developers in January 2010.

Avatar Reality was founded in 2006 by interactive entertainment visionaries Henk Rogers - best known for introducing Tetris to the world - and Kazuyuki Hashimoto, former CTO of Squaresoft and vice president at Electronic Arts. Led by CEO Jim Sink, the Avatar Reality team features industry veterans and world-class experts in casual, PC and console games, and virtual worlds and economies. Privately held, Avatar Reality is based in Honolulu and San Francisco. For more information, visit <http://www.bluemars.com/>.

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