

Over the past decade, my combination of commercial & international development work in the United States, Europe, West Africa, Japan & the South Pacific has given me insight & capability within an incredibly diverse set of industries & populations. User-centered design requires a sensitivity to context, the flexibility to lead in unfamiliar territories, & the ability to turn that understanding into innovation. With work experience ranging from Swiss Banks to the Peace Corps, my unique & dynamic skill set is one that encapsulates community as well as product & system development.

### **some highlights**

- Over ten years experience in user-centered design.
- Undergraduate degree in experimental psychology & cultural studies; graduate degree in digital media & fabrication.
- Significant field work in ethnographic research, participatory community assessment, action research, focus groups, paper prototyping & usability testing.
- Worked for Fortune 500 companies such as REUTERS & UBS, international development organizations such as the Peace Corps & the U.S. State Department, & non-profits such as the Children's Discovery Centre.
- Lived & worked in New York, London, Tokyo, Fiji, West Africa, & Serbia.
- Won numerous awards, including the 2001 SXSW Awards for Best Designed Website, the 2006 Award of Excellence from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), a \$30,000 award in 2005 for my work in the cross-cultural technology, & fiscal sponsorship award for a \$500,000 project from NYFA in 2008.
- Invited to speak at a conference at U.N. Headquarters for my cross-cultural design work in the South Pacific.

### **research & development**

I have a broad background in research & development, ranging from an undergraduate degree in experimental psychology to more ethnographic action research on learning & technology as a Multimedia Specialist in the South Pacific. I've run usability testing, paper prototyping, & focus groups on financial news & information technology for a REUTERS dotcom in London, Germany & France, led participatory community assessment & sustainable technology development as a Peace Corps Worker in West Africa, & organized community interventions with the U.S. Embassy in Serbia. My cross cultural technology work in the South Pacific earned me a \$30,000 award & an invitation to speak at a conference at United Nations headquarters, & I have led design teams for the Union Bank of Switzerland at the Museum for African Art, in New York, as well as REUTERS & the Children's Discovery Centre in London.

### **making stuff that works**

My design experience ranges from furniture to web & print design, database & software, physical installations, media environments, project management systems, loan programs, health care training, even simple robots. I can craft fine furniture with my own hands, knock out rough, ready & resilient interactive environments from 2x4's, plywood, & retrofitted dvd-players, & laptops, & build simple robots & functional prototypes out of arduino boards, some windshield-wiper motors & bits of old furniture. I once built a hut out of mud & sticks in West Africa, & lived in it for six months.

### **digital design & technology**

I can program database-driven web sites, have been working with Flash, Final Cut Pro & After Effects for nearly a decade, have designed & installed exhibits, designed & published books, newsletters, brochures, & web sites, work with 3D rapid prototyping as well as laser cutting technologies, & organized residents in a southern Serbian town around the idea of turning their defunct public swimming pool into a cinema by re-enacting & projecting movies of their own choosing, including Rocky IV, Star Wars II, & Bring it on: all or nothing.

### **international work experience**

I've worked for the Union Bank of Switzerland in New York, the United States Peace Corps in West Africa, REUTERS in London, Museum for African Art in New York, the Rhode Island School of Design, the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, the Children's Discovery Centre in London, & the US Embassy in Serbia.

### **it's the people!**

Everything I do focuses on pulling new opportunities & experiences out of people. My community collaborations create systems, machines or points of view that don't work quite right, & then getting strangers to help me make them work in ways that force new dialogues out of the taken-for-granted. My designs are based on action-research that cultivates solutions from the people for whom the work is being designed. I am good at organizing large groups of people & at working intensely with small groups, & I live to stretch unquestioned assumptions until they snap. My combination of commercial & international development work in the US, Africa, Japan, Europe & the South Pacific has instilled in me a deep respect as well as access to the insights of incredibly diverse communities, allowing me to become intimately concerned with the repercussions & benefits of outsider solutions.

I am really looking forward to speaking with you.

Christopher Robbins

## summary

Over a decade designing flexible processes & products for dramatically diverse cultures, & identifying cultural, organizational, & industry "blind spots." Although my core competency is research & development for interactive environments & digital products, I am accomplished in a wide variety of skills. I have led design, development, & research teams, spoken at conferences & published internationally, can create finely crafted work with my hands using wood & metal as well as knock out quick but functional mechanical, sensing, robotic & interactive prototypes. Experienced with video-editing, basic 2D & 3D animation, xml, mySQL, php, flash, etc. as well as rapid prototyping & laser cutters, & am an accomplished animator/ facilitator & collaborative/ action researcher.

## work experience

- 2009-            **Adjunct Professor, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Providence, RI.**
- 2007-2008    **Cross-cultural consultant, Serbia.**  
Developed a number of cross-cultural community interventions & collaborations, including an alternative housing project on the waterways of Copenhagen, a free cinema for the display of locally-made film in defunct public spaces in southern Serbia, & a network of think tanks solving U.S. community problems in Ghana, Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Ethiopia & Serbia, for agencies including the European Commission, National Endowment for Democracy, & U.S. State Department.
- 2002-2005    **Multimedia Specialist, University of the South Pacific, Fiji.**  
Directed the Multimedia department of the University of the South Pacific (USP), running ethnographic research & development projects & directing design teams to create educational technology products, systems & policy for the 12 Pacific Island Nations served by USP.
- 2000-2002    **Art Director, Senior Web Designer: REUTERS/Multex Investor joint-venture, London, UK.**  
Directed design & development for financial information, portfolio management & broker research technology in Germany, France, & the U.K.
- 1998-2000    **Graphic Designer, Gallery Outreach Guide: The Museum for African Art, New York, US.**  
Organized & led community outreach workshops, designed all print material, & created new products for the Museum store.
- 1995-1998    **New Media Developer: The Union Bank of Switzerland, New York, US.**  
Developed digital tools for client management & presentations using Flash & After Effects.
- 1995-1998    **Community Development Worker. Peace Corps, Benin, West Africa.**  
Developed sustainable technology in a rural African community, pioneered a micro-loan program in a rural West African village to create a sustainable grain bank, created health care training manuals, designed & manufactured appropriate-technology fruit dryers, founded an art program at the local kindergarten, & worked as a community organizer, helping members create solutions, products & systems to benefit nutrition & wealth in this sub-saharan village. Trained in participatory rural assessment & action research techniques including transect & personal activity maps.

## education

- 2005-2007    MFA (Honors). The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), Providence, Rhode Island. US.
- 1998-2000    Pratt Institute, New York. US. Dropped out for a dotcom job in London.
- 1991-1995    BA Psychology, BA Asian Studies. University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, US.
- 1994-1995    Tokyo International University, Japan.

## selected awards

- 2008            NewYork Foundation for the Arts awarded Fiscal Sponsorship for my \$500,000 project Dirt for Nauru.
- 2007            MacDowell Colony, Fellowship, Peterborough, NH.  
Anderson Ranch, Brooks Award, Aspen, CO.  
SITINGS Installation Commission Award, RISD Museum, Providence, RI.
- 2006            Rhode Island School of Design Award of Excellence, Fine Arts.  
Stein Experiential Art Prize, Cross Cultural Cross-Media Art in Ghana.  
Haystack School of Crafts, Mad Crow Award.  
Artist in Residence, Kokrobitey Institute of Art, Ghana.
- 2005            Given a \$ 30,000 award from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for my work on culturally inclusive educational technology.
- 2001            SXSW Awards, Best Design, Website.

## selected publications & presentations

- Cultural Identity & educational technology in cross-cultural distance learning. INFOMEDIA. Sombor, Serbia. 2008.
- Crossing Conventions in Web-Based Art: Deconstruction as a Narrative Device. Leonardo, 40: 2. MIT press. 2007.
- The Implications of Gigabit Internet in the South Pacific. Lecture presented for RISD Digital Media Department. 2006.
- The Role of Division of Labor in an In-situ Multimedia-training Project. ED-Media. Hawaii. 2003.
- Director 8.5 Studio. Friends of Ed Publishers, London, UK. 2001.