

AR Dev Blog

The following is an AR focussed Q&A with the Product Owner of Bird BnB, Dave Wilson.

What do you see as the biggest benefits of using AR in gaming?

I think that AR is still in its infancy, but we're beginning to see some applications that are genuinely better in AR. I think when dealing with "approximately human sized" objects that you need to move around at "approximately walking speed" and then it can work well. AR also works really well if real world data is necessary.

Bird BnB will be simshipped - tell us about your experience developing an AR game for multiple platforms?

We started this project in 2018, with the purpose of developing our own experience working in Unity with AR. At the time, AR was just beginning to make an appearance.

ARKit v.1 had been released and we were very impressed with the demos that came with it - the tracking was good, and it did a good job of remembering where the tracked planes were located in the world, even if they went out of view for a while. ARCore v1 was also released, but the initial version had some issues with tracking.

AR foundation hadn't been released, and vuforia looked a little opaque.

So we created a wrapper to handle running either SDK on either system. This made maintenance difficult, because both SDK's were updating rapidly and with different feature sets.

Eventually, Unity released foundation, which basically did what we were doing, except better and we didn't have to maintain it.

ARCore also got updated very quickly, and soon had good tracking in place.

Foundation pretty much solved all our problems, the only issue we have had is that it updates slower than we'd be able to update our own wrapper after each new version of AR Core/Kit is released. However this is offset by the lack of maintenance required by us.

Tell us about your experience developing with ARKit?

ARKit was relatively easy to get up and running, and updates have been reasonably easy to integrate.

Tell us about your experience developing with ARCore?

ARCore has improved very rapidly since it was launched. The nice thing about it is how compatible it is with older hardware.

What was your greatest challenge during the development of this project?

Getting ARCore and ARKit working together has been challenging. We have also had to work hard on the design of the game, to make an AR experience that wasn't purely a novelty.

What was something unique you learned during Bird BnB development that was different to previous projects you worked on?

This is our first 3D mobile game, and we've definitely found that this has presented new challenges!

What key pieces of advice would you give to others about developing successfully for AR?

I would definitely recommend that developers use AR Foundation - it makes the process of developing for multiple platforms much easier.

Where do you see the future of AR going?

There will be a day when you can walk down the road wearing your regular, normal looking, prescription glasses, and there will be AR enabled applications popping up all over the place. Like a line on the ground leading you to where you want to go. Any text on anything you look at can be instantly translated. You'll be able to find out the physical dimensions of anything you look at. You'd be able to query someone's social media from looking at them. Imagine having someone's age, profession, marital status, height / weight, etc floating above them in 3d space. Games could be very immersive - imagine replacing all the visible surfaces with something else - a dungeon office, forest bedroom, volcano kitchen etc.

Tutorials will be amazing - for example if you're trying to fix a car, or build a PC, or cook something. Imagine instructions like "get cumin from cupboard", then you open the cupboard and it identifies the cumin and puts a rectangle around it. Then you're able to measure how much to add just by looking at it.