Karunatree
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Karunatree is a new approach to digital media learning. As an interactive online game targeting young children, Karunatree emphasizes the understanding of environment sustainability as well as taking action in response to what has been learned. These actions can be characterized as the creation of “seedlings”. Seedlings are media content created by children in order to convey a message to an audience at a specific location. These locations can be rainforests currently under threat, or local businesses that stimulate demand for products, which results in these destructive behaviors. To enable the children to take action we needed to develop a web application to upload the created seedlings onto a virtual globe for public viewing. By incorporating the Google Earth API with the Ruby on Rails framework, we were able to accomplish this successfully. One of our main concerns with this application is the usability of Google Earth for children. We have implemented numerous functions such as point and click navigations and reverse geocoding to simplify it. Because the seedlings and the current website are still in the development stages, their effect on wide audiences is yet to be determined. However, we have started the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from weeks of interaction with the girls from Girls Inc’s Eureka! summer camp. The data is composed of surveys, videos, and seedlings themselves. Our next step is to focus more on the gameplay mechanics as well as its portability. In the near future we are looking into implementing a prototype game onto mobile devices.