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Tech Firm Aims to Link Kids, History

Zypre launches virtual reality treatment of Wright Brothers' flight.

Special-effects whiz **James Knight** has spent his career working on blockbusters including “Avatar” and “I Am Legend,” but his latest project is focused on a much smaller screen - virtual reality headsets - and a different sort of audience - school kids.

He’s developing virtual reality experiences to teach kids about history, starting with a VR re-creation of the Wright brothers’ historic 1903 flight. He hopes the project will lead to a take-off for his new firm, West Hollywood’s **Zypre**, which he co-founded with investment banker-tuned-producer **Jonah Hirsch**. “Just as the Wright brothers were pioneers of flight, we feel like pioneers in virtual reality education. The teaching possibilities of this technology are endless,” said Knight, who aims to sell Zypre-developed virtual reality experiences to schools around the world.

Hirsch said VR headsets might not be common in schools yet, but he thinks they will be soon, creating a big market for Zypre. “We believe that within five years, virtual reality helmets will be as much a part of the classroom as textbooks,” he said. “That’s why we’re busy developing further historical VR experiences.” The company plans to sell licenses to its experiences, with school districts paying between \$2,000 and \$10,000 a year, depending on their size, to use them as educational tools. Zypre showcased its VR experience earlier this month at San Diego’s Comic-Con, where it won rave reviews.

Bankrolled by Fortune 500 technology company **AMD** and science investor **Frank Fornari**, the firm spent six months and a low-six-figure budget to create visuals for the experience, “First,” which allows users wearing the VR headsets to feel like they are among the spectators witnessing the dramatic countdown and take off for Orville and Wilbur Wright’s history-making moment in Kitty Hawk, N.C.

- Sandro Monetti