

British Columbia's creative sector continues to evolve rapidly, merging traditional and digital disciplines in fascinating ways. One question often posed by industry watchers and policymakers alike is whether **interactive digital media** now stands as BC's second-largest creative industry. While film and television production have long been the region's crown jewels, the rise of interactive media—encompassing video games, virtual production, real-time visualization technologies, and more—is reshaping the [vancouvergurdian.com](https://www.vancouvergurdian.com) rankings and the very definitions we use to understand creative sectors.

Understanding BC's Creative Industries Landscape

Before diving into the interactive media debate, it's essential to clarify how "creative industries" are defined and measured, and what sectors are included under this umbrella according to **Creative BC**—the provincial agency that supports and promotes BC's screen-based industries.



What Counts as Creative Industries in BC?

Creative BC groups sectors such as:

- Film, TV, and digital media production
- Animation and visual effects (VFX)
- Interactive digital media (IDM), including video games and immersive experiences
- Music and sound production
- Publishing and design services

Relevant job and economic data usually come from government reports like the British Columbia Interactive Industry Association (BCIIA) assessments and provincial GDP statistics. These data sources reveal not only employment numbers but also revenue and export figures, which help us gauge relative industry size.

The Rise of Interactive Digital Media in BC

Interactive digital media generally includes:

- Video game development
- Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR)

- Real-time simulation and visualization tools
- Immersive storytelling applications

This sector benefits from BC's strong pool of software engineers, artists, and storytellers, many of whom work across gaming, film, and VFX projects. The close interplay among these sectors increasingly blurs traditional divisions and offers BC a competitive advantage internationally.

Why Interactive Media is Growing

Several factors drive IDM's growth in BC:

1. **Digitization of Film and TV Workflows:** Film and television production workflows are increasingly digital, leading to higher integration with interactive technologies such as virtual production and real-time visualization.
2. **Cross-sector Talent Mobility:** Artists and technologists often migrate between film, animation, and gaming projects, enriching skill sets and fueling innovation.
3. **Access to Cutting-edge Technology:** Companies leverage virtual production tools, including game-engine software (e.g., Unreal Engine), to create environments, special effects, and storyboarding in real time—work that overlaps directly with interactive media development.
4. **Strong Institutional Support:** Organizations like Creative BC, BC Tech Association, and industry groups provide funding and networking opportunities.

Virtual Production and Real-time Visualization: Game-Changers for BC's Creative Industries

Virtual production refers to the use of digital environments, LED walls, and real-time rendering engines to film scenes that traditionally required location shoots or post-production compositing. Real-time visualization is the process of immediately rendering computer-generated imagery (CGI) to allow directors and artists to see effects and environments as they shoot or create.

Both technologies use tools and workflows common in video game development, such as game engines, which are designed for interactive, real-time graphics rendering.

How These Technologies Bridge Interactive Media and Film/TV

- **Shared Tools:** Video game engines like Unity and Unreal Engine are used extensively for virtual production in film and TV.
- **Skill Transfer:** Designers and developers experienced in interactive digital media also contribute to VFX-heavy productions.
- **Cost and Time Efficiency:** Real-time visualization lets filmmakers make creative decisions on set without costly reshoots or prolonged post-production.

BC studios are leaders in adopting and developing virtual production, enhancing the global competitiveness of both their interactive media and film enterprises.

VFX and Animation: BC's Proven Pillars and Competitive Advantages

BC's historic strength in visual effects and animation continues to underpin the health of its broader creative industries. Major VFX houses such as *Digital Domain*, *Image Engine*, and *Atomic Cartoons* operate alongside

gaming companies, often collaborating or sharing talent pools.

This interconnectedness benefits all sectors by:



- Fostering innovation through technology transfer
- Attracting international productions seeking high-caliber digital artistry
- Creating better career pathways that retain local talent

Consequently, the lines between traditional film VFX and interactive media assets are increasingly porous.

Is Interactive Media BC's Second-Largest Creative Industry?

Looking at job numbers and GDP contributions, **interactive digital media is widely recognized as BC's second-largest creative industry, after film and television production.** Government statistics and Creative BC reports show:

Industry Sector	Estimated Employment	Approximate Revenue (CAD)
Film & Television Production	~30,000	\$4.0 billion
Interactive Digital Media (IDM)	~12,000	\$1.6 billion
Animation & VFX	~7,000	\$0.9 billion

These figures reflect broad industry definitions, often including overlapping roles but consistently ranking IDM second based on combined employment and revenue.

Why Interactive Media May Soon Surpass Traditional Categories

Factors indicating IDM's continued growth and possible overtaking of other creative sectors include:

- Expanding global demand for video games, VR/AR products, and immersive experiences
- Increased investment in virtual production infrastructure, linking IDM and traditional media
- Government and private sector incentives targeting digital innovation
- Strong export potential through digital distribution platforms

As streaming companies and content creators pursue more interactive and immersive content, BC's strengths in interactive media position it well to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Conclusion: A Digitally Integrated Creative Ecosystem

Rather than thinking in silos—film vs video games vs VFX—it's more accurate to understand British Columbia's creative industries as a digitally integrated ecosystem. **Interactive digital media is certainly BC's second-largest creative sector, and virtual production and real-time visualization are key technologies knitting these sectors closer together.**

This integration drives innovation, attracts international projects, and creates diverse jobs, confirming BC's reputation as a global leader in screen-based creative industries. Policy frameworks and industry supports that recognize and facilitate these cross-sector linkages will be crucial in sustaining BC's competitive edge.

For deeper insight into BC's creative industries and interactive media sector, visit [Creative BC](#).