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Startup aims to change how films are made

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An Atlanta startup believes it can change the way film franchises are made, and it has enlisted the help of a founder of a massive Los Angeles studio to help get its idea off the ground.

Big Hollywood studios often snap up the film rights to a book before it even hits bookshelves, but that doesn't always spell success at the box office. **Gramarye Media Inc.** wants to discover manuscripts before they publish, workshop them into interactive e-books, test them on readers and collect data to see which ones have audience potential. It will then partner with studios to develop the most promising concepts into franchises like "The Hunger Games."



ELLIE HENSLEY

Gramarye Media's John Adcox, from left, Alice Neuhauser and Don Dudenhoeffer.

"Studios are out there hunting and gathering for books, comics, games," said Gramarye Media CEO and co-founder **John Adcox**. "But they're kind of stabbing in the dark."

Gramarye's model could save studios money and increase the originality of films, television shows and gaming in an environment where Hollywood too often blows millions on disappointing sequels.

"Right now their climate is a lot of sequels and a lot of remakes, because they're perceived as safer," Adcox said. "There's a built-in audience and brand awareness."

Gramarye, a Middle English word for "magical learning," launched in 2016 in Georgia Tech's Flashpoint accelerator, where it developed a list of over 40 criteria that successful franchises like "Harry Potter" and "Star Wars" have in common, including "found family." Once identified, the manuscripts will undergo a one-year incubation process to develop what Adcox calls an "eBook 2.0" under the guidance of Gramarye's mentorship team.

"We can actually farm potential story franchises and provide actionable data that tells you not only what to adapt, but how to adapt it," Adcox said.

A key member of the mentorship team is **Alice Neuhauser**, Gramarye president and co-founder of Manhattan Beach Studios, an L.A. media campus with over 25 stages.

"It's just an intriguing way of looking at the process," Neuhauser said of Gramarye's model. "For a creative industry it tends to be very fixed in the way it's been done. I just think we need to be more creative in how we make this business work."

Over the next six months to a year, Gramarye will roll out its first e-books with games, videos and sounds to a select group of readers and assess the response through algorithms developed by Chief Creative Officer **Don Dudenhoeffer**.

"We'll find out when we go too far, how much music is too much," Adcox said.

When the company has enough data to understand which stories have the potential audience base to be successful movies, TV shows or games, it will look for a studio partner. Eventually, the goal is for the company to found a production company to make some of the films itself.

"That's why we're looking to partner with a studio in town that has stages, but no content," Adcox said.

Gramarye recently opened a \$3 million funding round, and once that is closed it plans to hire about 15 employees. Adcox said it has gotten a ton of investment interest from major Hollywood studios. If possible, the company would like to remain in Atlanta.

"A lot of the interest we've gotten in investment have been people who want to move us to the West Coast and sort of suck us up," Adcox said. "But we really want to stay here and that's what we're fighting for."

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