Abstract:
Virtual reality (VR) has been envisioned as a tool for learning, as a means of youth engagement, and an opportunity to enhance formal education and learning. At the same time, VR is seen as an elite, cutting-edge technology not yet available to the masses. Public libraries are key locations for making VR technology more accessible to the public, for exploring its role to support community engagement, and for understanding its potential for informal as well as more structured learning opportunities. In 2018, Washington State Libraries, Oculus, and the University of Washington Information School came together to explore the role of VR technology in the public library. In this seminar, we share the findings from our exploration of the role of VR for community engagement and informal learning in Washington State Public Libraries, drawing from research in educational technology and library science. We explore the physical space of the public library as a location to engage the public, and especially youth and non-dominant communities in otherwise unattainable experiences using Oculus Rift.

About the speaker:
Jin Ha Lee is an Associate Professor and the MLIS Program Chair at the Information School in University of Washington, and the director of the GAMER (GAME Research) Group. Her research interests include: music, game, and multimedia information seeking and retrieval, information organization and access, and knowledge representation. The GAMER Group explores new ideas and approaches for organizing and providing access to video games and interactive media, understanding user behavior related to video games, and using video games for informal learning. She is a recipient of the Fulbright Award for Graduate Study as well as the Jean Tague-Sutcliffe Award and the Berner-Nash Memorial Award for her dissertation research, “Analysis of Information Features in Natural Language Queries for Music Information Retrieval: Use Patterns and Accuracy.” She holds an M.S. (2002) and a Ph.D. (2008) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.