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Proceedings

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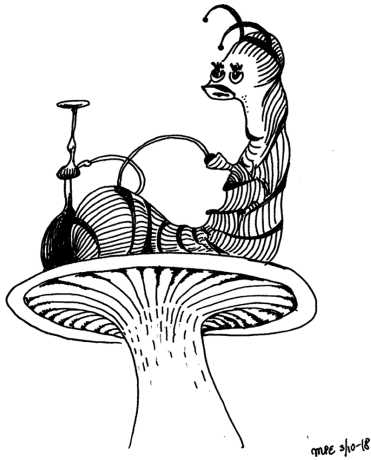
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Preface

Authoring Our Own Disciplinary Identity as the Interactive Digital Narrative Field Matures



“Who are you?” said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation.

-Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

ICIDS is the premier international venue for sharing research and practice in interactive digital narrative (IDN) and related work across industry and academia from intersecting fields such as narrative and literary studies, computational linguistics, artificial intelligence, and procedural generation, and media studies, as well as related research in games, mixed reality, and interactive art and fiction. This volume contains the proceedings of ICIDS 2018 — the 11th International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling, held at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, December 5–8. It collects the contributions to the conference, as full papers, short papers, demos, workshops, and papers of the doctoral consortium. The international art exhibition, a tradition since the beginning of the conference, became formalized in 2013 and now includes a catalogue and accompanying scholarship published as a separate volume.

Entering its second decade, a major development for ICIDS is the inauguration of a professional society to support the further growth of the community and encourage thoughtful and intentional collaborative work around the project of establishing IDN as a discipline. The new society is ARDIN: the Association for Research in Digital Interactive Narrative (<http://ardin.online>) and has been formally incorporated in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, as a non-profit organization. ARDIN’s mission is to

support research in IDN across a broad range of forms, including video and computer games, interactive documentaries, interactive fiction, journalistic “interactives,” art projects, educational titles, transmedia, virtual reality and augmented reality, and emerging novel forms of IDN we have yet to imagine.

ARDIN provides a home for our interdisciplinary community and for a variety of activities that connect, support, grow, and validate the IDN discipline. The ICIDS conference represents a core activity of the community, and in the future will be complemented by a range of additional services such as an ARDIN newsletter, job posting board, support for local gatherings, additional conferences, publication opportunities, research fellowships, and academic and professional awards. This broad vision represents the ambition of ARDIN, and forms the initial plan for the ongoing project of developing the association, which includes local ARDIN affiliates and SIGs (special interest groups) as possibilities for the future. Modeled on successful organizational structures employed by associations such as DIGRA, ELO, and SASDG, ARDIN will hold regular general meetings at the ICIDS conference, where all business will be discussed in a public, democratic forum.

What can we gain by crafting our own narrative, and intentionally forming ourselves as a discipline? We can gain a common footing, which while debated (debate is inherent within all disciplines, and necessary for disciplinary health) would allow us to develop a shared understanding of our objects of study, of vocabulary and categories and of areas in need of attention. We can also decide what counts in terms of rigor, quality, and expertise in the field, both in theory and practice, and in research that blends both approaches. This also means an opportunity to ensure scholarly recognition for the kinds of activities that find no representation in the evaluation schemes of older disciplines. While we collectively develop our own standards, we should be keenly aware of the fraught history of rigor, as has been discussed by engineering studies scholar Donna Riley. In developing our own standards and values for IDN as a discipline in a deliberate and considered manner, we can push back against the history of rigor as a weapon wielded for exclusion of marginalized voices under the guise of “merit,” to develop more inclusive and forward-looking disciplinary practices.

Even as we move toward disciplining, IDN will of course continue to intersect and collaborate with other fields in productive ways. A key advantage will be a new ability to also turn inward, using our own understanding, vocabulary, and canon to both analyze and produce works. In particular, we know that the games lens is not sufficient for understanding IDN, just as the AI lens and literature lens are also lacking as a comprehensive, nuanced understanding of IDN.

Reflecting Janet Murray’s inspired call for a “kaleidoscopic” approach to IDN as a discipline, which is articulated in the Foreword to this volume, we likewise suggest a way forward that values the complexity inherent in IDN, both as a possibility for what Murray discuss as “flexibility of mind,” as well as the generative possibilities for IDN to represent and address the increasing social and cultural complexity of our world. The current impulse in the IDN community to come together via ARDIN reflects not only the many decades of progress in the field, but also the current cultural moment of profound and dangerous fragmentation, and a deep desire to ameliorate that social fracture with a move toward a unity that recognizes multiplicity and honors difference, while still seeking common understanding.

We intend for ARDIN to support the evolution of the IDN community in a self-conscious, reflective manner, and in particular to preserve the welcoming “big tent” qualities of the community, especially when reaching out to further communities and engaging areas in which we may have had blind spots in the past. For example, it was pointed out at the community roundtable at the close of last year’s conference that the group had very little representation from eastern Europe. This year, we started to address this blind spot by connecting to the “Zip-Scene Conference — Analogue and Digital Immersive Environments” organized by Ágnes Karolina Bakk at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest. Concretely, this means coordination of dates, call for papers, as well as the presentation of results such as the Best Paper Award from Zip-Scene being shared at ICIDS. We wish for such connections to proliferate.

In collaboration with the ICIDS Steering Committee, we have developed a new review process, implemented for the first time this year. This review process ensured double-blind reviews, with each submission receiving three reviews, provided by Program Committee members, as well as a summarizing meta-review, provided by associate program chairs. To encourage specific, thorough, and constructive reviews, we designed and implemented a new review form and guidelines. We also provided authors with the ability to comment on the reviews as a further check on the fairness and quality of the process. To encourage and recognize quality across all categories of submissions, in addition to the traditional Best Paper Award given to full papers, we have added awards for Best Short Paper, Best Poster, and Best Demo. While the review process continues to evolve, we are encouraged by the many positive comments we received, and we will recognize the hard work of our Program Committee with the Best Reviewer Award, also new this year. We are extremely grateful to the members of the Program Committee, and thank all of them for their dedication and hard work, and in particular the associate chairs for making this new process possible: Marguerite Barry, Mark Bernstein, Maria Engberg, Joshua Fisher, Chris Hales, Charlie Hargood, Sandy Louchart, Lara Martin, Alex Mitchell, Frank Nack, Christian Roth, James Ryan, Marie Laure Ryan, Benjamin Samuel, Mariet Theune, David Thue, and Maurice Suckling.

In addition to implementing this new review process, we also achieved a record number of 119 submissions across all categories this year. Out of the 56 submitted full papers, we selected 20 full papers for inclusion (an acceptance rate of 35%), and from the 29 submitted short papers, we chose 16 short papers for inclusion (an acceptance rate of 55%). In addition, we selected 17 poster submissions, 11 demos, four as workshops, and 11 doctoral consortium contributions. The ICIDS 2018 program featured research from 181 scholars, with affiliations at 66 institutions and 25 countries worldwide.

This year’s accepted contributions have been arranged in this volume in eight sections under the parent heading of “Interactive Digital Narrative Studies: Analyses and Practices.” Section 1: **The Future of the Discipline** includes papers addressing the current milestone moment in the IDN community in different ways — from the viewpoint of history, looking forward to the future, and even through a satirical lens on IDN and the power of anti-narrative forces in society. Submissions in Section 2: **Theory and Analysis** provide a collection of critical and analytical frameworks and taxonomies for understanding the field at a range of scales, from the discussion of the

micro-genre of “storylets” to methods for sharing IDN design knowledge across the community. This section also includes both qualitative and quantitative analyses of IDN user (or reader, player, or interactor) responses and reception, including a range of foci from interpretation to cognition. Sections 3, 4, and 5: **Practices in Games, Virtual Reality, and Theater and Performance**, respectively, present a selection of works squarely situated in the maturing IDN discipline that connect with these adjacent disciplines. Section 6: **Generative and Assistive Tools and Techniques** and Section 7: **Development and Analysis of Authoring Tools** include research on narrative and plot generation, improvisatory computational techniques, conflict detection, and robotic storytelling, as well as novel authoring systems and critical analysis of authoring tools and systems, both at the case-study level and with a broader view across the IDN field at large. Finally, submissions in Section 8: **Impact in Culture and Society** focus on the ways in which IDN research resonates in broader contexts, beyond the academic field or industry. These works discuss research in IDN and ethics, including gaps in participation within the field itself, case studies on IDN at cultural heritage sites and museums, IDN for change, and IDN in current complex contexts such as the global migration crisis. This final section was developed as a new category for the conference this year, in recognition of the advancement of IDN as a discipline with effects in the larger world, and in an attempt to begin to gather scholarship that critically reflects on the entanglement of impacts and roles of the IDN discipline in the wider world.

Looking to the future, the IDN field presents us with many compelling horizons, both in pure research as well as in cultural and social contexts, and across a variety of industry applications. The record number of submissions received at the ICIDS conference this year is also a testimony to the growing interest in the field. ARDIN is poised to further increase the visibility and reach of research in IDN. Building on Janet Murray’s powerful metaphor of the kaleidoscope, we invite readers to take this entire volume as “one turn of the kaleidoscope,” one instance, one temporary assemblage of the intriguing research in IDN, and an exciting herald of things yet to come.

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