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# Interactive Storytelling

7th International Conference  
on Interactive Digital Storytelling, ICIDS 2014  
Singapore, Singapore, November 3-6, 2014  
Proceedings



Springer

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# Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of ICIDS 2014: The 7th International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling. ICIDS is the premier venue for researchers, practitioners, and theorists to present recent results, share novel techniques and insights, and exchange ideas about this new storytelling medium. Interactive digital storytelling is an exciting area in which narrative, computer science, and art converge to create new expressive forms. The combination of narrative and computation has considerable untapped potential, ranging from artistic projects to interactive documentaries, from assistive technologies and intelligent agents to serious games, education, and entertainment. In 2014, ICIDS took place in Singapore at the National University of Singapore, marking the conference's first venture to Asia.

This year the review process was extremely selective and many good papers could not be accepted for the final program. Altogether, we received 67 submissions (42 full papers, 20 short papers, and five demonstrations). Out of the 42 submitted full papers, the Program Committee selected only 12 submissions for presentation and publication as full papers, which corresponds to an acceptance rate of less than 29% for full papers. In addition, we accepted eight submissions as short papers, seven submissions as posters, and five submissions as demonstrations. In total, the ICIDS 2014 program featured contributions from 26 different institutions in 18 different countries worldwide.

The conference program also highlighted three invited speakers: Bruce Nesmith, Design Director, Bethesda Game Studios, and lead designer of *Skyrim*; Emily Short, narrative design consultant with a special interest in interactive dialogue, and author of over a dozen works of interactive fiction, including *Galatea* and *Alabaster*; and William Uricchio, Professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT, and Principal Investigator of MIT's Open Documentary Lab and the MIT Game Lab (formerly the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab). The titles of their talks were:

- Bruce Nesmith:  
*The Story of Radiant Story*
- Emily Short:  
*Narrative and Simulation in Interactive Dialogue*
- William Uricchio:  
*Old Dogs—New Tricks: Lessons from the Interactive Documentary*

In addition to paper and poster presentations, ICIDS 2014 featured five post-conference workshops: (1) An Introduction to Game Mastering: How to Use Tabletop Role-Playing Games to Collaboratively Produce and Create Stories, (2) Managing Informational Interactive Digital Storytelling Projects,

(3) Narrative Analysis of Interactive Digital Storytelling, (4) Future Perspectives for Interactive Digital Narrative, and (5) Story Modelling and Authoring.

In conjunction with the academic conference, an art exhibition was held at ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands. The art exhibition featured a selection of 10 artworks selected from 39 submissions by an international jury.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the time and effort invested by our authors in preparing their submissions, the diligence of our Program Committee and art exhibition jurors in performing their reviews, the insight and inspiration offered by our invited speakers, and the thought and creativity provided by the organizers of our workshops. Special thanks are also due to our sponsors and supporting organizations, and to the ICIDS Steering Committee for granting us the opportunity to host ICIDS 2014. Thank you!

November 2014

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## Supported by

ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands

## **Invited Talks**



# The Story of Radiant Story

Bruce Nesmith

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**Abstract.** Early in 2009, the designers at Bethesda Game Studios were asked to create a dynamic story system. It had to withstand the rigors of an open world where the player could do just about anything—a highly ambitious goal that could make or break the project. This is the story of how Radiant Story came to be created: its pros and cons, the successes and failures of Radiant Story and how it was finally implemented in The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim.

## Biography

Bruce is the Design Director for Bethesda Game Studios where he has worked for the last 10 years. He contributed to the last three Elder Scrolls titles, Daggerfall, Oblivion, and Skyrim, as well as Fallout 3. He was the lead designer on Skyrim. Prior to joining Bethesda, Bruce worked at TSR, Inc. writing Dungeons & Dragons game books and adventures. He is particularly known for his work on the original Ravenloft boxed set and supplements.

In the course of his long career, Bruce has been a programmer, writer, designer, quality assurance technician, tech support, producer, manager, creative director and departmental director. He has created board games, card games, dice games, roleplaying games, strategy games, young adult novels, hint books, as well as video games. He's even played a few.

# Narrative and Simulation in Interactive Dialogue

Emily Short

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**Abstract.** This talk draws on examples from Emily Short and Richard Evans' Versu project, including released games *Blood & Laurels* and *House on the Hill*, together with analysis of an unreleased Versu reworking of Short's classic interactive fiction *Galatea* and several non-Versu pieces, to discuss procedural techniques for modeling conversation flow and character behavior.

The talk looks at reviews and player feedback to consider the success of these techniques along multiple axes: as means to provide satisfying gameplay and challenge, to improve reader experience of pacing, to reduce authorial workload, or to more perfectly achieve a particular authorial vision. It further considers which of these techniques work best when the systemic aspects exposed to player attention and which are most effective when concealed.

The discussion concludes by proposing some broad questions with which to think about potential interference between interactive narrative techniques appearing in the same work.

## Biography

Emily Short is a narrative design consultant with a special interest in interactive dialogue. Emily is the author of over a dozen works of interactive fiction, including *Galatea* and *Alabaster*, which focus on conversation as the main form of interaction. Most recently, she worked with Richard Evans to develop the Versu engine to create stories with AI-driven characters. She is also part of the team behind Inform 7, a natural-language programming language for creating interactive fiction.

# Old Dogs - New Tricks: Lessons from the Interactive Documentary

William Uricchio

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**Abstract.** The ‘new’ documentary – interactive, participatory and often referred to as Web-docs or iDocs – is deeply indebted to interactive fiction and storytelling techniques and to games. Despite its recent arrival on the interactive scene, it has found its way to new distribution platforms; new publics; and mainstream recognition in the form of Emmy, Peabody and World Press Photo awards. Can we benefit from any lessons learned?

iDocs face familiar problems – from tensions between lean-forward and sit-back experience, to the paradox that the more open the form, the shorter the user’s stay. But because they are already contextualized in the real, and rely on showing as well as telling, they have some special affordances that this talk will explore. How might we rethink the role of monstration, of showing? Can we make use of rapid developments in visual recognition (LSVRC 2014), story generating algorithms (Narrative Science), and personalization algorithms (The Echo Nest) to generate personalized stories on the fly? Can interactive documentary storytelling give anything back to an area from which it has borrowed so much?

## Biography

William Uricchio works with interactive documentary and games. Principal Investigator of MIT’s Open Documentary Lab and the MIT Game Lab (formerly the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab), William and his team explore new forms of non-fiction storytelling and their implications for authorship, participation and the once stable text. William is professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT as well as at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. A specialist in old media when they were new, he is currently exploring the cultural work of algorithms. Guggenheim, Humboldt and Fulbright awards behind him, William will spend 2015 in Berlin thanks to the Berlin Prize.

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