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Digital Literary Arts Extravaganza

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Digital Literary Arts Extravaganza

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EVENT DESCRIPTION

To complement the panels of DAC and to emphasize the centrality of the Arts at this conference, we have organized the DAC Literary Arts Extravaganza, featuring exciting and dramatic works from the world of electronic literature. Conference guests were invited to see, hear, and engage in the performance of digital-born literary art works that embody the innovative ideas in this year's panels and that will no doubt be the subject of panels in future DAC conferences. Genres include: live video sculpture, locative media narratives, networked fiction, Flash poetry, and works that words only cannot yet describe. Below are the artists' descriptions of the works and related links.

Travis Alber and William Gillespie, "Morpheus, Biblionaut"

"Morpheus, Biblionaut" is a work of speculative electronic fiction narrating the distortion experienced by an astronaut-poet who has taken it upon himself, on his solo mission to the nearby star system Alpha Centauri, to read the entire canon.

Is it relativistic effects, insanity brought on by total isolation, or a computer error in his database of electronic literature that causes the failure of his literary mission? The work explores Einstein's model of the universe and interrogates the problem of a textual canon in an increasingly networked, unstable, electronic reading sphere. The story also takes deep space as a point of departure to reaffirm human being's dependence on an increasing threatened terrestrial ecology.

John Cayley and Daniel Howe, from "The Readers Project"

"MISspelt LANDings" presented and performed by John Cayley

Words drifting under the moon, on the Sea of Textuality. Letters lacing the surface of its waters, like that light, misspelt landings, tracing hidden texts in other dimensions of language for other islanders.

The Readers Project is a collaboration between John Cayley and Daniel Howe to make systems of quasi-autonomous, digital poetic Readers. These Readers are active, procedural entities with specific reading behaviors and strategies. We release these Readers onto arbitrary inscribed surfaces - be they conventional, complex or composed - surfaces that may be either explicitly or implicitly, visibly or invisibly, constituted by their inscribed text or texts. The Readers follow the traces of linguistic or poetic structure - symbolic idealities - that define their specific focusses of attention. Since these are derived from a partial, aesthetically implicated analysis of human reading, the Readers explore and

reveal certain contours and outlines of linguistic materiality's 'other dimensions' in way that we propose as both significant and affective. We aim to make our Readers aesthetic, artistic, literary.

The Readers Project is a long-term on-going collaboration, but it has already, in its early stages, produced process-generated readings that are performable as projected visualizations and as vocalizations - produced by further audio processing and/or live human performative, reiterative reading of the Readers' behaviors.

Jeremy Douglass, "EJ-ing"

"EJ-ing" and is a short performance of electronic literature done in DJ or VJ club performance style, with projected text, visuals, and music being generated by a laptop and the text being controlled by the EJ using sliders and touch sensors. The content is a short tutorial / meditation on the act of electronic-lit-jockeying -- how (and why) to live-remix electronic text. In particular, "EJ-ing" explains how to use the tools it is presented with -- the Scratch simple visual programming language and a cheap open hardware interface like the Pico Board or Arduino + Danger Shield.

Caitlin Fisher, "Circle"

"Circle" is a short interactive augmented reality piece prose-poem about four generations of women. I wrote an earlier version of the piece as a database narrative film but have recently reworked the piece as an augmented reality work, using custom AR software. Augmented reality technology enables an interplay between the physical and the digital by overlaying digital information (still images, video, audio) on physical objects. In this piece, the power of robust, multiple, simultaneous fiducial recognition with sound activated through proximity has been made easy to work with through the addition of a MAX/MSP interface. It's a unique authoring environment and a wonderful medium for the production of digital literature.

My presentation will simply be suggestive: I will walk though the piece with an industrial camera and the resulting work will be projected on the wall for the audience to experience. In this sense Circle is a magic mirror AR installation (rather than a true immersive experience in which the reader wears an HMD) - the audience will see me interacting with the paper symbols and, at the same time, they will see me, via projector, interacting with the same pieces of paper only this time they will hear spoken word and see still and moving images at multiple scales overlaid on the symbols.

Fox Harrell, "Loss, Undersea"

Loss, Undersea is a multimedia interactive narrative project in which a character moving through a standard workday encounters

a world submerging into the depths. As a user selects emotion-driven actions for the character/avatar to perform, the character transforms – deep sea creature extensions protrude and calcify around him – and poetic text narrating the loss of humanity and the human world undersea.

david jhave Johnston, “Glia jelly with network sauce”

A selection of web-based language-works (interactive, poetic and stylistically genre-diverse) rendered at higher resolution and adapted for a performative context, including the Flash-based, beat-matching word-firing poet tool “Soundseeker” (2008) and “Softies” (2009), a typographic manipulation software under development at Concordia Univ. OBX labs.

Nick Montfort, “Five Uneasy Pieces”

“Five Uneasy Pieces” is a presentation of and reading from digital writing systems of several different sorts: “The Purpling,” a poem using only the most basic capabilities of HTML; “The Marble Index,” an interactive fiction written in Curveship; “Taroko Gorge,” a generator of nature poems based on the experience of and written in Taiwan’s Taroko National Park; A Python story generator that assembles elements ambiguously and asks the reader to resolve what characters are doing based on syntax, power relations, and assumptions about gender; and ppg256-2, a tiny Perl poetry generation described in detail in Nick Montfort’s DAC 09 paper “The ppg256 Series of Minimal Poetry Generators.”

All of the author’s released/published creative digital work is available on his site: <http://nickm.com>

Judd Morrissey, “The Precession”

The Precession (work-in-progress) is a data-driven poem, installation, and live performance that makes use of social computing and real-time text collection to create visual-poetic arrangements based on inquiries into architecture and the night sky. The piece mixes original writing, real-time interruptions, and algorithmic composition in an evolving ecology.

The primary poem is composed in Twitter and readers are invited to follow or respond. The poem also dynamically interrupts or enhances itself through the use of three kinds of foreign texts: text from the network that is thematically appropriate (semantic), text that has been recently composed in the vicinity of the site where the poem is being performed (geographic), and machine-composed text that integrates the original and foreign sources in unpredictable ways (algorithmic).

For the performance at DAC, audience members will embody these movements of foreign text by vocalizing realtime interruptions in choral clusters throughout the reading. Audience members with wireless internet will be directed to a url where they will receive instructions to stand and speak at regularly timed intervals.

The Precession considers as a primary generative source the Hoover Dam and its themes of improbable engineering, group labor, and progress. In particular, the work responds to a sculpture conceived by Oskar J.W. Hansen and permanently installed at the site of the Dam. Hansen’s 1935 work depicts two towering winged workmen seated within a complex celestial map. The map

preserves the visible night sky on the date of the dam’s dedication and also contains the data for one to accurately trace the position of the polestar relative to earth over the course of 26,000 years.

The overall project is a collaboration with Mark Jeffery scheduled to premiere as a multi-screen installation and live performance at Chicago’s Hyde Park Art Center in November 2010.

<http://www.theprecession.org>

Brian Kim Stefans, “Scriptor”

The “Scriptor” series of animated, algorithmically generated poems using hand-built typefaces that, themselves, are animated on a point by point basis; this gives the impression that they are being doodled by a pencil on the screen. While the technology, which I’ve created entirely in Actionscript 3.0 (the programming language of Flash) is a bit hard to explain, let’s just say that the resultant images are somewhere between the scrawl-like paintings of Cy Twombly, the graffiti works of Jean Michel Basquiat, Ramond Pettibon’s comics, and the Lettrist designs of Isidore Isou, but animated at 24 frames per second so that, like in Stan Brakhage movie, each frame is its own composition, only viewable for an instant but part of a larger web of designs. Versions of Scriptor have been shown in gallery settings in New York City and Los Angeles, and in conference settings in Vancouver, Redcat (Los Angeles), Barcelona and UC Irvine.

Jeremy Douglass, Juan B. Gutiérrez, Jeremy Hight, Mark C. Marino, Lisa Ann Tao, “The LA Flood Project”

A flood has hit Los Angeles. It is spilling deeper across streets, yards, roads; a disaster is unfolding across the city and voices are being heard on cell phones from the epicenter and beyond.

The LA Flood Project (work-in-progress) is a locative media narrative that presents a simulated epic flood hitting the greater metropolitan area of Los Angeles, covering over every neighborhood, every subsection, the rich behind gates and plate glass and the poor on the benches and street corners. And while everyone must share in the experience of the flood, the unwritten yet clearly encoded rules of the city, decide who can go where, who lives, and who dies.

The LA Flood Project is a Rashomon-style multi-POV narrative experience that unfolds across LA, spilling over our cast of characters and the participants. The Flood dredges to the surface the unspoken laws and logic of the city. It reveals hidden boundaries even as it spills over them.

The LA Flood Project transforms the city into an experiential narrative space. It ties crisis histories to longitude and latitude and encourages participants to experience the narrative in the geographic space that surrounds them. In those spaces, they will encounter characters, description, and additional participants caught in the various stages of the flood.

The piece is being built on the Global Poetic System (<http://www.geopoet.net/public/about.aspx>), designed originally for ePoetry 2009 in Barcelona by Gutiérrez and Laura Borràs Castanyer.

The LA Flood Project will be the first of the urban crisis narratives housed in citychaos. Updates about the project are available at <http://laflood.citychaos.com>.

Special Honor:

During the event, we also honored Irvine-based electronic literature pioneer, M.D. Coverly (aka Marjorie Luesebrink), for serving as a vital force in shaping the field of electronic literature

as both a creator and an organizer. On her website, <http://califia.us/>, visitors will find information about her rich narrative works, including *Egypt: The Book of Going Forth by Day* and *Califia*.