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Pictelín Conference

Creative Media and Games Studies:
Developing Design, Play and Storytelling
Dundalk Institute of Technology, Co. Louth,

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Themes: *Media, Culture, Community and Society*

Abstract:

Kickstarting fan action: Crowdfunding and the Veronica Mars fandom.

TV drama Veronica Mars aired for three years on the CW TV network until its abrupt cancellation in 2007. In early 2013 the series creator Rob Thomas launched a campaign on the online crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. Through this campaign in excess of \$5.7m was raised to fund the production of a Veronica Mars film. The film was released earlier this year.

In this paper I examine the Veronica Mars fan community through an analysis of the comments section of the Kickstarter campaign. The comments are utilised extensively by backers to interact with each other, create group solidarity, build excitement for the project, and increase group efficacy. This paper represents part of a larger PhD study on how the online construction of group identities and ideologies impact on group actions. I consider how identity and ideology are integrated into fan narratives within the Veronica Mars Kickstarter community, and examine how these narratives impact on the relationships within the group and influence the action that the group takes.



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Abstract:

Animation, GIFs and WebComics: an Inquiry into Medium-Specificity.

As animation becomes increasingly 'pervasive', appearing in all kinds of new contexts, hybrid forms are emerging that test some of our assumptions about visual media. For example, the increased reliance by Hollywood on the use of CG animation in 'live-action' cinema has provoked much debate around the conventional 'film *or* animation' conception of the moving image. Another example of animation's incursion into new territories, the animated GIF, has become ubiquitous on the Web, at the same time as it returns us, in its brevity, its reliance on looped movement, to the pre-cinematic optical toys of the 18th and 19th centuries.

WebComics exist in many forms, but increasingly artists have been introducing animation, often in the form of GIFs, into the context of a medium always defined partly by its very stasis, its need to represent movement graphically because its elements cannot literally move. In the work of Stevan Živadinović these elements also converge with another key historical component of childrens' popular culture, the pop-up book, itself a kind of proto-animated form, indeed an 'interactive' one. The notion of an illustrative image from the page of a book coming to life is also a popular trope of the classical animated cartoon, emphasising the animated image's graphic qualities as well the 'magical' moment of transformation (a moment often central to the narrative function of animation in WebComics).

This paper will examine contemporary work by Živadinović, Jen Lee, Connor Willumsen and others, assessing how the introduction of animation technologies impacts on traditional, essentialist definitions of comics, which may have to accommodate new elements such as movement, sound and, regarding changes to modes of reader engagement, authorial control over duration. Indeed, these innovative works seem to challenge the very notion that each art form "has its own exclusive domain of development" (Carroll, 1985), suggesting non-traditional functions for animation (animation as illustration) and for comics (comics as animation).

Reference:

Carroll, Noël (1985), *The Specificity of Media in the Arts*, Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 19, No. 4

Biography: Michael Connerty lectures on the BA (Hons) Animation, at the National Film School, IADT, Dun Laoghaire, specializing in the histories of animation, comics and film. His curatorial work includes programmes for the *Darklight Digital Arts Festival* and the *Jameson Dublin International Film Festival*. His current research interests include Victorian comics and early U.S. animation.



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Abstract Title:

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark – the evolution of creation and creativity between DJ and audience.

In certain circles, the DJ has achieved iconic status (Fitchener). However, this status is reserved for a very small contingent of a much larger group of creative workers. Beyond, there are differing levels of status accorded to DJ's (Elafros), including descriptions of 'musical waiters' (Brewster & Broughton), or passive 'record players' (Langlois).

This paper draws upon face-to-face interviews with eight 'non-celebrity' DJ's, conducted during 2014. In this paper we explore our findings using sociological theory, in particular Pierre Bourdieu. These theories are used to explore how the DJ engages in creative and independent thinking, the internalization of particular standards, and also their governing habitus and disposition in relation to their field of work as affected by their relationship with a 'live' audience.

More generally, these findings illuminate issues of creative autonomy in cultural production and how autonomy is framed and understood in a capitalist economy (Banks), particularly in the relations between work, play and fun. Here, the DJ's dependence on the audience to provide both social and economic capital affect the performance of the DJ in a role that is closely aligned with their self and the pleasure of cultural work. It also raises questions relating to concepts of fun and play and their association with goal achievement and rules of play (Avedon and Sutton-Smith).

It is conceived that both DJ and audience are involved in the production of fun in the context of 'live' cultural production. In this sphere of immediate contact there is a dynamic of instant and evolving creation through communication, mediation, and orchestration.

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Abstract Title:

One Ocean: No Limits - from no-budget to broadcast: a documentary case study

One Ocean: No Limits (www.1oceannolimits.com) is a one-hour no-budget independent Irish documentary produced and directed by Sarah McCann, who also performed major camera and editing roles. The film was acquired upon completion by RTÉ (broadcast date TBC) and is currently being screened at international festivals, at which it has been nominated for awards including Best International Feature Documentary.

In order to present the journey of the film from no-budget to broadcast, this paper utilises the classical 3-act narrative structure to compare and contrast the key plot points of both the narrative of the film itself and the narrative behind the making of the film. Both are peppered with high and low points, protagonists and ancillary characters who develop throughout, inciting incidents, personal relationships, rising action and dramatic twists, culminating in final resolutions and new beginnings.

In doing so, the presentation allows for an insight into a case study of the current Irish independent documentary filmmaking process – a process that can sometimes be as interesting and challenging as the content of the films themselves.

Biography:

Sarah McCann is the Head of Section of Creative Media and the previous Programme Director of the BA in Video & Film Production in Dundalk Institute of Technology. Sarah is also documentary filmmaker and has had her work screened in festivals in Ireland, the UK and the US. Prior to making her own documentaries, Sarah worked for a number of years as a production co-ordinator and production manager on short films and documentaries for Irish and UK broadcasters and funders, including a BAFTA award-winning animation.



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Abstract:

Discourses Around Video Games within Newsprint Media in the USA and Ireland Between 2001 to 2014

Themes: *Games Studies & Media, Culture, Community and Society*

This paper presents the findings of an undergraduate thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of a degree in Sociology from Maynooth University. The aim of the study was to investigate how violence and videogames are represented in a sample of American and Irish newspapers between 2001 and 2014.

The dissertation proposes that the print media play a role in disseminating ideologically-driven discourses (Devereux: 2007). The media can also, however, generate objective and ideologically-neutral discourses that can produce a more informed debate about the consequences of video game consumption. This research employs the conceptual tools of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to identify the ideological discourses embedded within newsprint texts (Fairclough:1995 and Van Dijk:1993)

Drawing upon a sample of newspapers identified via the Lexis Nexis database, this research found that in the USA there has been a significant shift away from the more negative discursive representations of video games since previous work by Williams (2003). In Ireland, however, discourses surrounding video game consumption remain consistently negative. Irish newsprint deploy forms of rhetoric that highlight conservative and fear-based assumptions surrounding video games. Whilst this also holds true within some American newsprint, the results confirm that there has been a change in discourses around video games there, a fact that demonstrates the media's capacity to generate ideologically-neutral texts and to change over time.

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Abstract:

The invisible labour of community managers in online games.

Themes: *Games Studies & Media, Culture, Community and Society*

Globalisation and technical change have had a significant impact on work in the cultural industries (Deuze, 2007). In the digital games industry content production and consumption is dispersed internationally and increasingly virtual. The industry combines a range of professional occupational roles in design and programming alongside a range of non-professional workers in testing, quality assurance and support. Networked and mobile digital games are creating new forms of play and new forms of work. Community management is a new form of games work that is outsourced to near to market locations, including Ireland (Kerr and Cawley, 2012). Community managers are part of surveillant assemblages involving technologies, legal documents and game players (Kerr et al. 2014).

Industry surveys of the industry rarely include community managers so many questions remain about their skills, their working patterns and their work-life balance. Do the workers in these occupations replicate the highly gendered demographic patterns of the wider games industry or are these customer 'facing' service roles going to lead to the feminization of the games industry?. Is this type of service work creative and autonomous? Is it precarious? What role does technology and automation play?

This paper draws upon an ongoing project on the work of community management in the digital game industry. It presents initial findings from a content analysis of international community manager job advertisements combined with a small number of face to face interviews with community managers who are located in Ireland. The author draws upon a cultural industries approach but the work is also informed by the sociology of work and of science and technology.

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Abstract:

Did someone say algorithm?

Generative algorithms can be found at the core of much of today's music and media technology. The increasing popularity of interactive authoring environments such as Processing, Pure Data and VVVV seem to be in part a result of the ease at which generative processes can be explored. Yet despite its ubiquitous nature, many artists and musicians remain somewhat suspicious of the terms *generative process*, *cellular automata*, *stochastic modeling* and *formal grammars*.

Most artists already work in a generative manner defined by their own approach to creative and artistic problem solving; so where does this reluctance to explore deeper generative models come from? It could be the misconception that using a computer to generate artistic material means sacrificing part of the creative process to chance. More than likely however it is the use of mathematical modeling that causes artists to look the other way.

This paper will therefore attempt to demystify generative algorithms and the rudimentary mathematics that drive them. By exploring simple examples it will be shown how even the most basic of algorithms can be used to create aesthetically pleasing audio and visual material. Above all it is hoped that this paper will demonstrate that you don't need to be a mathematical savant to start working with generative processes in the audio/visual domain.

Biography:

Rory is a Dundalk based musician and software developer. His main interests lie in the development of new instruments for musical expression. His audio software is being used in universities around the world, including Berklee College of Music, Massachusetts and he was recently a contributor to "Audio Programming Book" published by M.I.T. Press. All of Rory's audio software is available for free under the GNU General Public License.

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Abstract:

App games, the benefits and pitfalls of the ‘game concept document’

The aim of this paper is to show how the creation and implementation of a *game concept document* can greatly enhance the efficiency of game app development. This document outlines the work to be undertaken in developing a game concept as part of the *Newzmonkeys* game app .

In addition this document is used as the basis for early stage prototypes and makes design decisions as needed. The document would include market research for similar games, concept development and prototyping. The document would investigate basic game mechanics that potentially could be used in the game, to create a *paper prototype* based on this research and finally create *artwork* that would cover the fundamentals of the design document. This paper prototype and supporting artwork could be used to help validate the entire project in potential customer / end user surveys. Finally after implementing such a document, what are the experiences for game companies like Newsmonkeys.

Keywords

User-Centered Design, Environmental Design, Stylized, Design, Older Adults, Game Graphic Design, Paper-prototype, Game concept document



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Abstract Title:**Teaching through Emotional Interaction**

Engaging technically proficient learners can be a serious challenge. These so called Digital Natives, first coined by Prensky (2001) come to the classroom well equipped with knowledge of the 'Internet of Things' (Callaghan 2012). Their lives are saturated with social media, gaming, computers, mobile devices and endless accessible information. This generation is active, tuned in and display zealous learning behaviors within the stream of rapid communication technology (social networking, mobile texting, instant messaging etc.) but fail to transfer these skills into an academic environment when learning. According to Prensky Digital Natives apply a narrow range of technologies when approaching academic learning as opposed to outside the classroom (2001; 2008).

This research will examine the possibility of inciting and harnessing technology acceptance into a highly interactive digital artifact using emotional design, gamification and digital storytelling in order to help progress students into a richer utilization of technology for learning. The Digital Artifact developed will form the structure of an interactive virtual publication. This research will attempt to leverage existing frameworks to explore both the conscious and unconscious anatomy of emotional influence (Jordan 1999; Norman 2004; Desmet & Hekkert 2007; Demir 2008) in the design of the artifact.

Emotion plays a serious role in how we interact with design. If a person makes an emotional connection with a design it can enhance their cognitive and emotional experience and therefore could possibly enhance their learning experience (Um & Plass 2010). Gamification mechanics will be used to help foster engagement while digital storytelling with form the narrative structure in an attempt to explore the creation of a digital artifact for deep learning within a creative environment.

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