Defining and Capturing Web-based Interactive Fiction

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The Project

Emerging Formats:
Web-based interactive narrative – collection & creative artefact
The Process

- Identify
- Determine UK authorship
- Categorise
- Collect
- QA
- Analyse
- Create
Identify

Interactive Narrative as defined by the British Library:

- Interactivity: Experiential
- Narrativity: Non-linear, anti-story
- Non-standardised: Variety of tool usage
- Web-based: born-digital, but NOT downloadable

Identify/Determine Authorship

- https://ifdb.tads.org
- http://philome.la
- https://sub-q.com
- https://itch.io
- https://www.choiceofgames.com
- http://pr-if.org
- https://www.springthing.net
- https://readingdigitalfiction.com/writing-competition
- https://ifcomp.org
- https://intfiction.org/
Sidebar: Why is Interactive Narrative at risk?

A Collection Of Houses
by Jonny Arachnid

Surreal
2013
Website

About the Story
A short disorientating game about dealing with depression, the hidden truths in a family and the strange way in which we collect and acquire things.

This is my first game and was inspired in part by 'House of Leaves' by Mark Z. Danielewski and Resident Evil.

Game Details
Language: English (en)
First Publication Date: March 12, 2013
Current Version: 1
License: Creative Commons
Development System: Twine
Forgiveness Rating: Merciful
IFID: Unknown
TUID: qumfwv7756v69rp4
Sidebar: Gone, But Not Forgotten

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful:

🌟🌟🌟🌟 Oneirific!, March 12, 2013
by Marshal Tenner Winter (Truth or Consequences, NM)
Related reviews: dream, dreams

I don't normally write reviews and I don't normally play this type of interactive fiction, but I wanted to say that I believe the author has done the job he set out to do; to create a dreamlike environment through text. So, I won't speak of the system he used to make it or the details of the game, I'll leave that for others. I just wanted to say it's worth a play through; dreamy, well-written, strange, yet familiar. I'd be interested to see more from this author and even this particular medium of IF.

Was this review helpful to you?  Yes  No  More Options  |  Add a comment
Categorise

294 works by 114 creators!

- Hypertext
- Parser-based
- Choice-based
- Multi-modal
- ????
You're tapping away at the keyboard working on a game. You haven't seen the cat in the last 30 minutes.

Suddenly, you hear a 'meep' from behind, followed by two more!

**Ignore the cat.**
**Say 'hello'.**

**Interaction: clicking links**

Hosted on itch.io

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Categorise: Parser-Based

Interaction: Typing commands

Hosted on iplayif.com

C.E.J. Pacian, Castle of the Red Prince, Inform 7, 2013,
Categorise: Choice-Based

Interaction: Making choices

BUT: Paywalled

Hosted on Choice of Games


Hosted on creator's personal site
Categorise: ???

Interaction: Move Nina to advance story

BUT: Does this count?

BUT: Is this a game rather than interactive fiction?

Web-based: Hosted on itch.io

Categorise: Avatar-Based

HOWEVER: Creator identifies the work as interactive fiction

Interaction: Making choices

Categorise: ‘Other’


Some things you may have noticed so far...

- Lack of standardization
- No central location(s)
- No collection method for commercial works
Collect & QA

Collection Tools:

UKWA
UK WEB ARCHIVE

Webrecorder
Collect & Revisit the Web
You're tapping away at the keyboard working on a game. You haven't seen the cat in the last 30 minutes.

Suddenly, you hear a 'meep' from behind, followed by two more!

Ignore the cat.
Say 'hello'.
Even after you ended your studies into the arcane, the nightmares continued to get worse.

You see Amaranth in three dreams - a small and distant land that claims some vague portion of your ancestry - and the synest of a prince who rules it. You use everyone you have ever loved, everything you have ever cherished, cherished and feared and feel - lashed by his corrupting shadow.

The Real Prince must die. You realize that now.

Only then will the dreams stop.

Castle of the Red Prince
An interactive land of darkness by C.E.J. Pacian
Released 7/26/2010
Informed build 4560
[If you have not previously visited Amaranth, in short, or otherwise, type ABOUT and press return.]
Amaranth
Wild terrain surrounds a quaint and shadowed village.
A sheer cliff rises over the town, upon which is perched an ancient and crumbling castle.

EXPLORE or X the land to find the means to the Real Prince's undoing.

AUNT'S AND BUTLERS
AN INTERACTIVE NOVELLA FOR THE ELECTRIC COMPUTER

Drawing Room
It's pretty good lighting; it be fine, but you do wish you had a bit of light to go with it. It's nice; but not too nice. After all, you're a bit stuck here. The idea is to keep the old man from the old door. This is where the old man is kept. It's nice, but not too nice. After all, you're a bit stuck here.

There is a bench at your front door. You should probably dress the unpleasant and wipe your mouth as you exit.

An exercise room.
As you exercise through the crowded, one feels more like the being led the living room, the sitting room and (shudder) the lounge. Here in the exercise, one feels a drawing room. Not a great site, but there you are. It is, by your standards, a very large space, large, with a velvet patch in one corner and a grand piano in another.

You can also see a bedroom.
An entry-levelweet.


Collect & QA: Choice-Based


Collect & QA: Multi-modal
Collect & QA: Avatar-Based


‘Run’ button

Settings which affect capture
Collect & QA: Contextual Information


### Collect/QA Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation Tool</th>
<th>Additional Notes on Content</th>
<th>Recommended Capture Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any</strong></td>
<td>Works containing significant video, audio, or visual elements</td>
<td>Webrecorder [any browser]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any</strong></td>
<td>Work which requires a button press or text entry to start rather than a click</td>
<td>Webrecorder [any browser]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Twine</strong></td>
<td>Most images in Twine works capture successfully with ACT, particularly if image URLs are added. Some may require Webrecorder if javascript or dynamic images are used.</td>
<td>ACT in the first instance, Webrecorder with any browser to eliminate issues with images. Webrecorder with Firefox v49 to eliminate issues with javascript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RPG Maker</strong></td>
<td>If the work has an opening page which can be started by clicking, ACT will be able to capture successfully, if not, use Webrecorder</td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bitsy</strong></td>
<td>While Webrecorder is generally recommended for Inform 7, ACT can work equally well depending on whether it is click to start, or space bar to start, and where and how it has been uploaded.</td>
<td>Webrecorder [any browser]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inform 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Creation Tool**

<table>
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<td><strong>Emulated BBC Micro (online)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Webrecorder [any browser]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adventuron</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ink/Inklewriter</strong></td>
<td>Basic Ink works capture well with ACT, those which have been heavily customised may require Webrecorder</td>
<td>ACT in the first instance, Webrecorder with any browser to eliminate issues with styling such as dynamic or hover text elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Texture</strong></td>
<td>Only compiled works can be captured fully, although any CS works can be captured to some degree with Webrecorder (Firefox v49)</td>
<td>ACT (compiled) Webrecorder [uncompiled – errors likely]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ChoiceScript</strong></td>
<td>Only compiled works can be captured fully, although any CS works can be captured to some degree with Webrecorder (Firefox v49)</td>
<td>ACT (compiled) Webrecorder [uncompiled – errors likely]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flash</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Webrecorder [Firefox v49]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot be captured with either tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genarrator</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot be captured with either tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construct 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>ACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Javascript Website</strong></td>
<td>Depending on the nature of the dynamic content, it may be best to run the site through ACT to ensure CSS code, images, html index files etc are captured and follow up with Webrecorder to see if more of the 'feel' of the site can be obtained.</td>
<td>ACT &amp; Webrecorder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall findings:

- **Webrecorder:**
  - 😊 Great for video, audio etc
  - 😞 Time-consuming, manual

- **ACT:**
  - 😊 Large scale, easily scheduled, automated captures
  - 😞 Limited success with some formats
  - 😞 Sometimes differences between QA output & live environment output
Analysis

- Top 3 genres:
  - Slice of Life
  - Fantasy
  - Science Fiction
- Genre-mixing very common
Analysis: Themes

- Public Transport
- Tea
- Mental Health
- Pets (Cats)
- Interactive Fiction (Metanarratives)
We used to walk past this data vendor on the way to and from school. They had a sweets printer there and when I was good, Mum would give me spare tokens for sweets.

My sister never got any because she felt we were too poor.

She had a part time job, but she gave most of what she earned to Mum. Anyway,

We used to walk past this data vendor on the way to and from school. They had a sweets printer there and when I was good, Mum would give me spare tokens for sweets. One time it was really sunny and I was holding my token up to make it glint in the sun, and it slipped straight out of my fingers and rolled along the road and off the kerb and down a storm outlet. And you know what my sister did? she didn't say anything, just took some of her own tokens and went in and came back out with a big bag of fudge.

End playback.
Recycling

The train is more quiet than usual on the way to work.

The election results won't be known until later in the day.

The speculation in the papers is that there will be a new government.

Maybe they will be able to fix the job market.

You've never paid that much attention to politics yourself because you find it boring.

It's going to be a long day.
I get the feeling
little, the terrifying maglev
shushing is just as disconcerting, somehow.

a haunted mine!
investigate
pile in
weave your magic

Recycling

Thank you for listening!

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