

**How do readers interact with hypertext fiction?
An empirical study of readers' reactions to interactive
narratives.**

Volume 1: The thesis

Volume 2: Appendices (this volume)

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Appendix One

afternoon a story

1 18/1/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *Afternoon, a story*
5 DA Think Aloud (DA/T)
6
7 DA: The first thing is, from the point of view of being a former web designer, what a
8 rubbish piece of design. You don't know where you're supposed to be clicking, I assume
9 you click on the 'y'?
10
11 DA: *(reading on-screen instructions)* You press the return key when you want to go
12 forward?... right... The first thing that springs to mind is 'you're in a forest and it's dark',
13 you know.
14
15 Researcher: Choose your own adventure?
16
17 DA: Absolutely.
18
19 Researcher: Is your reference point web design then, or game? You've mentioned both.
20
21 DA: I think a combination of both really. I mean when I was knocking up websites the
22 thing that was frustrating was that I wanted to do more involved or sophisticated designs, in
23 terms of structure, not necessarily in terms of how pretty the pictures were. The idea was
24 almost in terms of a narrative for a website, so... attractive websites, you quite often play
25 with them.
26
27 DA: The game aspect can be a distraction though. In the big corporate websites that have
28 games on them, you can be deflected from finding out about Macdonalds by the number of
29 times you hit the burger with the fry for example.
30
31 Researcher : Are you seeing this in any way as book?
32
33 DA: At the moment there isn't a lot of the element of book in it in that traditional sense. It
34 might be more a case of 'well, what is in here?' Which might be more like those old
35 text-based games, where you wander from room to another. Probably more a sort of psuedo
36 techy approach than a literary one. *(DA reading instructions)*
37
38 Researcher : Any comment about the way the instructions are being presented?
39
40 DA: Irritating....uhhh.... precious, a bit pseudo poetic. *(clicked to next screen)*
41
42 Researcher : Where do you think you are now?
43
44 DA: I imagine myself to be at the beginning, because I'm in a window that says 'begin' at
45 the top. You sort of felt the instructions were winding down and there was enough in there
46 to make you want to go on with it. There was enough in there to make go on, even despite

47 the prose style. Not to my taste but there was enough of the idea in there to make you think
48 it would be worth persisting.
49

50 DA: If you hadn't been here I probably wouldn't have read the instructions quite so closely.
51 I was hoping there would be a secret hyperlink in there somewhere, a little place that you
52 could suddenly dive off on. I'm looking for anything that might take me off into a little area
53 or a corner.
54

55 DA: That's a bit boring, clicking and finding a slightly more detailed version of the snippet
56 of the story. I was hoping it I'd get a something that engaged in the wider world. This had
57 its own little link, it didn't go to the wider world, it didn't go to the web. The hope that
58 somebody might have ripped off Flan O'Brien. It's more of websitey thing.
59

60 Researcher : Now you're aware that the links are all going to be internal...
61

62 DA: More and more it's going to depend on what you feel about the quality of the novel or
63 the writing, that's going to make you want to click on a link.
64

65 Researcher : (*DA clicked 'mastadon'*) I note that everyone finds that word and clicks on it.
66

67 DA: It's usable, but faintly irritating, because you've got absolutely no idea of structure at
68 all. If we go back to games, you know what you've got to do. In this I still don't have much
69 of an idea about what's going on. I'm clicking in the hope of something more exciting than
70 I've got a feeling for the links or what might be there.
71

72 DA: It's terrible to admit, but possibly a map or a timeline.... Possibly a bit more at the
73 beginning and then you can make a more informed choice about where you're going.
74

75 Researcher : At the start you could be kind of guided a bit until you find your feet?
76

77 DA: Yes, guided and possible just plain text not going straight in with the hyper links.
78

79 Researcher : Not necessarily that interactive at the beginning, just getting you into it and
80 then you'd have more confidence to branch.
81

82 DA: I mean, when you a buy a book, you go to Borders and you have a reason for buying
83 one and at the moment I haven't got a reason for buying this book. You know, I'll have
84 read the back or, or it's a writer that's lovely to read, you'll have a reason...
85

86 DA: Just in this case because it's an unknown quantity, I think I'd like a bit more packaging
87 or blurb, or...
88

89 Researcher : You haven't used much of the available toolkit, apart from clicking on words.
90 You've used the Y/N buttons, and the back button, but not the links or the history. Any
91 reason why?
92

93 DA: I think you start off by taking the line of least resistance... and because hyperlinks are
94 the line of least resistance that's where you go first. Probably after you've read for a while
95 you start looking elsewhere, but to kick off with you go down a path that starts to bring you
96 results immediately. If these phrases hadn't taken me anywhere I'd have clicked
97 somewhere else.
98
99 Researcher : You don't want to have to be worrying too much about the machinery works.
100
101 DA: Not at the moment. It hasn't set the scene for you, hasn't set it up. Possibly if it had
102 given you more of a blurb you'd have a better idea of why you might want to click on
103 'storyspace or 'history'.
104
105 Researcher : Do you feel you've got to grips with the way it's going to work?
106
107 DA: I'm reasonably confident... (*clicked on 'links'*). I'm quite interested to know how I go
108 down a link. Go on then, I'll follow the link.
109
110 Researcher : You just discovered another way of navigating.
111
112 DA: You come into it with certain expectations that big scene is going to be there for you
113 and in this case it's not. I was maybe hoping maybe more on the lines of advent calendar, or
114 one of those Dutch paintings where you've got fifteen things hidden in the picture.
115
116 DA: It's not a game yet. It might have the potential to become a game. At the moment the
117 writing is a little bit painful but that's not necessarily the end of reading it.
118
119 ENDS

1 Wed 11/1/06 Bournemouth University

2 *Afternoon, a Story*

3 DL Think aloud (DL/T)

4

5 DL: If I just press return.... Right so, at the moment, it's a case of you read something and
6 then you go on, or...?

7

8 Researcher: Well, did you click the 'yes' or 'Y' because you thought it meant yes?

9

10 DL: Yes

11

12 Researcher: You made that assumption.

13

14 DL: I read 'do you want to hear about it?' and I answered 'yes'. Then if I click on
15 'poetry'...Ah!

16

17 Researcher : You clicked on a word and found that that took you somewhere as well?

18

19 DL: Yes... right, so it's any word? OK...

20

21 Researcher : I note the surprise.

22

23 DL: Yeah, uh... It's hard to get any sense of direction on it.

24

25 Researcher : You found a 'yes' button, and an icon that seems to take you backwards?

26

27 DL: Yes, it seems to work. (*Exploring words and toolbar*) So, that would be that line,
28 which I don't necessarily understand....

29

30 Researcher : We can assume that when you take it away you can spend more time trying to
31 engage with what the story's actually about, but for now it's just making sense of how the
32 interface is working, and how to make this 'book' work.

33

34 DL: It's different! It's one of those things that, being used to having a book, you read in that
35 way, and ... The clicking on something is.... I assumed, I wondered if the bits in brackets
36 were something you could click.

37

38 Researcher : Yeah, what you're doing seems to be you're looking for visual signals as to
39 what you're supposed to do.

40

41 DL: Yeah. I guess I'm expecting it to do something else but I'm still trying to read it as a
42 book. There's something different about it, but I'm not sure what. It's like, you're clicking
43 o something like this, and you get a line (*when the link opens a new page*), and that makes
44 no sense to me. I haven't read this in detail but that makes no sense to me.

45

46 Researcher : How does it make you feel to be confronted with a next page that might or
 47 might not be 'the' next page? You've already seen two or three versions of the 'next page'?
 48

49 DL: Yes... disoriented to be honest, because I'm used to the solid book that has 'you start
 50 here' and you work down. It's almost like learning Hebrew, is it? Where you read right to
 51 left, you're moving in a different direction, I'm not sure....
 52

53 Researcher : I notice you keep clicking the back button, you keep wanting to go back.
 54

55 DL: Yes, I suppose, because I'm not sure of what's next... I suppose because I focus on
 56 that, because I haven't read all of that word for word, I don't know if I want to go too far
 57 from it.
 58

59 DL: The interface looks straightforward, I haven't looked at any of the ones at the top (the
 60 menu)....um (*trying some menu items*) I see. OK.... Well....(*brings down 'Links' list*) I'm
 61 not sure what this refers to...
 62

63 DL: My assumption is that is something to do with the word 'she'.... (*trying to work out*
 64 *what the links list refers to*). I'm assuming that links to that...
 65

66 DL: I think the best descriptive term I have for this is 'disorientating'. I think that, for me,
 67 from what I've seen of it so far what's lacking is a sense of direction, that it's that linear
 68 progression... I suppose it's that conditioning from reading kids' stories that you work
 69 through, whereas it's hard to see where the links are and why there are links there and what
 70 they relate to. It's kind of like if you had a cartoon and clicked on one character and you got
 71 the speech bubble you could see what the link related to but here you don't see the relation,
 72 you don't know what that actually relates to. You're going forward but I don't know what
 73 that relates to. Does that fit into something, or is that jumping ahead so I don't know what
 74 that means?
 75

76 Researcher : There is a 'history' menu. Does that help you to orientate?
 77

78 DL: That would be that page where... that could be the link I clicked.... (*tries the history*
 79 *list*). That could be useful...
 80

81 DL: It's following that thread through. I look for a good story, that's what I look for in
 82 literature.
 83

84 Researcher : If I had said to you you're going to be playing a game, do you think that would
 85 have preconditioned your approach to the screen differently, or was seeing words on the
 86 screen enough to trigger your 'I'm reading a book' response?
 87

88 DL: I suppose, if I had gone to the first page and gone 'right this is a game' my first
 89 response would be that this is going to tell me this is what I should do next. I remember the
 90 old adventure games, but there's still no signpost of what I should do or what that relates to.
 91 There might something about how far one string would go before you get back to the

92 beginning, but I think it's still a sense of it's still disorientating in the sense of where I'm
93 going.
94
95 Researcher : Even I tell you it's a game, it's still disorienting?
96
97 DA: Even if it's just a text based game, which I remember, it's still not, looking at a page,
98 that doesn't.... *(clicks on a word)* Ah that makes a bit more sense! *(reads on and clicks*
99 *again)* It doesn't make sense to me at the moment. I don't know if it will after a bit more
100 reading.
101
102 *(clicks on 'mastadon')* That wasn't I expected from a mastadon!
103
104 ENDS

1 17/1/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *afternoon, a story*
5 HC Think Aloud (HC/T)
6
7 *(HC using return key to change screens: reading instructions)*
8
9 Researcher : How do you feel about that preamble?
10
11 HC: I'm not sure...have I started now? Am I still on preamble? So now why are we talking
12 about closure? We haven't started yet?
13
14 Researcher: It wasn't clear?
15
16 Researcher: Is your first instinct to read, or roam around?
17
18 HC: For me, I think I need to read the page. If I go off somewhere else, I might not get back
19 to where I need to be. I think I have this cautious sense. I haven't tried these other buttons –
20 I'm cautious with computers. But maybe on the second or third time I might.
21
22 HC: If I wanted to go back to that poetry like I've lost it.... *(showed her the back button)*
23 Ah...
24
25 Researcher : *(HC trying to click on words in arrow brackets, thinking they might be links)* I
26 think that's his weird version of speech marks.
27
28 HC: Ah, I can! I can click on anything! It still looks like a page of print – I mean, that could
29 be a page in a chapter, it doesn't look any different.
30
31 Researcher : Would you like the links to be made clear, highlighted or a different colour as
32 they would be in a website?
33
34 HC: I think I prefer it like this. I was expecting something all-singing all-dancing, you
35 know. My prejudices are perhaps making me nervous. We've been reading for a lifetime...
36
37 HC: I'm worried that before long I'm going to end up with a brainstorm... I've suddenly
38 got a mastadon here! I've got a bit lost from my 'winter walk'... Am I going to end with a
39 coherent whole or.... This is more like reading poetry than a novel. I think the language as
40 well as the small chunks. A novel might have some very literary expressions or phrases, but
41 you still expect some exposition. I've got images, imaginary images not images on the
42 screen...
43
44 Researcher : If you hit the return key you can go from page to page easily...
45
46 HC: I think left to my own devices that's what I would do.

47
48 HC: (*reading the text*) This is a different voice that's speaking... and I don't understand it..
49 it doesn't seem to have much to do with Sibelius... This is very odd... it's not quite an
50 interior monologue... is it two people talking about somebody else?
51
52 Researcher : I think you do gradually begin to see the connections.
53
54 HC: It's like that in novels sometimes. I've been reading *The God of Small Things*. I finally
55 began to make sense of it, but I nearly gave it up at the beginning.
56
57 HC: This is really playing around, with the language... We're getting quite a few
58 characters now... so the image in my mind now is well away from this woodland glade
59 (*from the first pages*).
60
61 HC: It makes it very difficult to discuss it with other people: we're used to having different
62 interpretations of the same page, but having different pages....
63
64 HC: The voice has changed –that was bit like sitting in a pub, listening to snippets of
65 conversation.
66
67 Researcher : It might be worth looking at the history button.
68
69 HC: Does that reflect what I've read?
70
71 Researcher : Yes.
72
73 HC: Oh that's nice, so I can get back to things – otherwise it might have been a bit
74 frustrating. I think you can click on every word...?
75
76 Researcher : It's also worth looking at the links button sometimes.
77
78 HC: Lots of technical information... What's a guard field?
79
80 Researcher : I don't know!
81
82 HC: So we obviously haven't got what we might call plot...? We've moved away from the
83 idea of something like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* where you can choose the ending,
84 and we've also moved away from the convention of having lots of different voices telling
85 their view on the story... it's more the reader's view. At the moment I haven't got a sense
86 of character either, which is a key ingredient!
87
88 HC: It's all a bit new. If it were speaking to me instead of me reading it, that would give me
89 a sense of direction. I haven't got those clues here really. What's going to convince me it's
90 worth going on? What am I going to get out of it? Obviously it has novelty value, so I might
91 play around with it for a while...

92 ... but the satisfaction one gets out of a novel, and different genres of novels, or a series
93 where you get a sense of what the character did next...
94
95 This reminds me of *James Joyce*... (*commenting on a phrase*) who's going to understand
96 that in the general public?
97
98 Researcher : (*pointing her towards the top of page menus*) When you quit it will ask you if
99 you want to save your place.
100
101 HC: That's a bit meaningless isn't it? Ah, the history will be saved for next time.
102
103 Researcher : That's your complete history and that will get bigger as you read.
104
105 HC: I don't remember all those though. Interesting that what he calls page titles... I'm used
106 to chapter headings. Someone who's more computer literate might think of all that (*the*
107 *various menu and navigation tools*) There are things on a screen that I don't always think, I
108 don't always see.
109
110 HC: Is there an estimated reading time? Because you when you pick up a book you can see
111 of it's a whopper. Usually know what you're going to get. How do I select? Even the title
112 doesn't help me.
113
114 HC: We've come a very long way from the beginning... 'do you want to hear about it'.... I
115 almost want a pen and paper to make some notes... with those Russian novelists you
116 almost want to make a chart of the characters. I'm trying to resist putting it into a frame of
117 what's already established, I'm trying to keep an open mind. But we do react to things on
118 the basis of what we know
119
120 HC: I was expecting images and pictures...
121
122 ENDS

1 17/1/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *Afternoon, a Story*
5 KH Think Aloud (KH/T)
6
7 KH: Does it recommend that you copy it onto the desktop?
8
9 Researcher : With Mac, it does.
10
11 KH: To me, for a start, that's already a technical barrier. You should be able to load,
12 double click, work. (*opened file and clicked 'y'*)
13
14 Researcher : You got the instruction page up by clicking on the 'yes'?
15
16 KH: Yeah.
17
18 Researcher : Was that immediately obvious what that was all about?
19
20 KH: Yes and no – it sounds like it's the answer to a question, but they haven't asked a
21 question... it should say 'help'.
22
23 Researcher : Yes, something more intuitive.
24
25 KH: I assume that the book (*icon*) will take me back to the story... I'll try and go
26 back... OK, the return key is just turning pages and I understand there's interactivity
27 within the pages if I click.
28
29 Researcher : You got that from the instruction page?
30
31 KH: Yes. (*tried to type into the text, but instead the page turned to next lexia*). It gave
32 me an I-beam which means I ought to be able to insert text. I thought that gave me the
33 chance to write something, but actually it turned the page. It gave me a flashing I-
34 beam which is what you get in a word processor.
35
36 Researcher : You're using a word processing kind of approach at this stage?
37
38 KH: Yes because it reminds me of word processing.
39
40 KH: That looks like a question and so my instinct is to click 'yes'. OK that was
41 right...I got a different page but I can click back here (back arrow)
42
43 Researcher : So far, you've found three different ways of turning the page
44
45 KH: Yes, but by accident because I was told that clicking the return key would turn
46 the page. I don't know whether it's the next page in the sequence that the author wants
47 me to read or whether it's the next page that I've completely...lost track with. I'm
48 concentrating much less on the text than if I was reading the story... there are things
49 that are attracting me and I'm pushed out of the story by the things that you've got to
50 interact with.

51
52 KH: I got 'yes 1' by interacting with the text itself, but I'm not sure what that means.
53 As a heading, I'm not sure, it's almost like data labelling rather than story labelling.
54
55 KH: (*clicking around*) That's interesting. Because this old isn't it, 14 years old? The
56 back arrow should go back through the trail which you took, not the trail of the story
57 space, and I'm not sure now whether it's taken me back though the story space or the
58 trail. I've got no way of knowing. At this point I don't mind because I'm exploring. I
59 might when I come to sit down and read it, I might find that frustrating. I'm trying not
60 to think of it as traditional text, I don't have a traditional expectation.
61
62 KH: This is a generic interface?
63
64 Researcher : Yes, for Eastgate Systems.
65
66 KH: To me, as a designer, the interactivity should be knitted into the story as an
67 integral part of the story.
68
69 KH: I'm getting lost now..... I could just use the return key....
70
71 KH: Are they still publishing this? In that case they could improve the interface.
72
73 ENDS
74

1 17/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *afternoon, a story*
5 RS Think Aloud (RS/T)
6
7 RS: Here I'd like to now more about what the story is, like it's the front cover of a book but
8 it isn't giving me the flap. So I'm hoping that I can do that and go 'oh what's this about?'
9 and it will tell me about that author. I think I now know, having read his, that I'm supposed
10 to do this or that, but it ain't that clear. So I think I need directions, so I'm thinking I click
11 'y'... But that's not about the story I suppose...
12
13 Researcher : It's not your fault, it wasn't clear. (*researcher showed RS the 'Y' and back*
14 *button*) It should be clear to you.
15
16 RS: (*reading instructions*) Ok, that's new to me, and I'm thinking already interesting
17 but... I wonder if I should just go back to my book, is what I'm really thinking. He's not
18 talking my language here, but anyway. I know you don't want me to, but I'm thinking
19 Sartre, the idea of 'you are your decisions'. It's very much making feel that's what I'm
20 gonna get now.
21
22 RS: Ok, so I've read this now and I'm not sure what to do next if I'm honest... Am I just
23 being an idiot here...?
24
25 Researcher : You're reacting to what you're getting and that's what I need to see.
26
27 RS: (*reading instructions still*) To stop reading go to 'reader menu'. Don't know where to
28 go now... I'm lost...
29
30 Researcher : Part of the problem is you're not clear what you're supposed to do.
31
32 RS : I'm not clear at all. Back, back, perhaps I can go back.....
33
34 Researcher : It's taken you five minutes to try and work out where the story starts...
35
36 RS: I'm already, I can't click on that, I thought I'd be able to click on that. I do want to hear
37 about it, I just don't know where to go now... keep pressing enter?
38
39 Researcher : They should just say that's the easiest way to begin, because then you do start
40 to get a story.
41
42 RS: What I'm doing now is I'm trying to read the story but half of my mind is thinking
43 'what do I do next?' and these signs are distracting me because I'm thinking should I read
44 these first, do they mean something that will make more sense of this text? And of course
45 the more I read the more I realise no I don't have to. It has distracted me from really getting
46 into, I don't feel I'm into the story yet.

47 I'm starting to think is this is a way of saying someone is talking (*the angled brackets*). I'm
48 not 100% sure because if I read them I think I should be putting an accent on them. If this
49 were a book I think they'd soon not be distracting, so I do think it's just adding to the
50 unfamiliarity of the whole experience and therefore making me less sure about whether I
51 should keep on doing this.

52
53 RS: And what I've done now is I've flicked to the next page, as it were, and I've
54 immediately looked at that, and I know shouldn't... I'm starting to get a bit more
55 comfortable with these things...

56
57 Researcher : I think they're just speech marks.

58
59 RS: Can I make this bigger, can I increase the text size? I would like to be able to. Not with
60 a book, but here because I'm familiar with changing the font, not the type of the font but the
61 size... There must be so many better ways of making this clearer. Anyway I've tried, and
62 by trying I've lost the thread of the story. Now to be honest, having read that, I feel I've go
63 to do that. It made be go two back. I remember where I was now. Even in novels I will
64 re-read, I will go back and, particularly if I've been distracted, I'll go back and try and
65 catch up again.

66
67 Researcher : I'm partly trying to see if the habits we've got from reading books are
68 destroyed by this or if they are still there.

69
70 RS: I think I'm trying to make them still there. It's obviously harder to do, for me it's
71 harder, and I think I'm trying. Let's find my route back again. But it's harder to find the
72 route. I'd look for key words but it's harder to find key words because I'm searching
73 around.

74 I'm starting to get into it and starting to wonder if it's my kind of novel, not because
75 of the subject matter but because of the writing style. I think the blurb you get in a book
76 often doesn't tell you the writing style. I think I'd still be finding it, if it were a book, is it
77 the style of writing, rather than... I'd have the two to compare, but.... It's a very jumpy
78 style of writing, makes me jump around a lot. What I want to know is, tell me a bit more
79 about this bit. It's quite interesting but.... It started jumping almost on the first page. There
80 was no... no attempt at scene setting.

81
82 Researcher : Can I just show you a couple other navigation things?

83
84 RS: Yes. I haven't found yet, it said you could link from words...

85
86 RS: (*researcher showed him clicking on words*) Am I going back now to where I was?

87
88 RS: (*showed history button*) That would stay after you come out of it, that would stay?

89
90 Researcher : (*showed links button*) Some people seem to like to have that list of links.

91

92 RS: What you're saying, that on this page there are two words that if you click on them,
93 they, that's where they will go? That's interesting too, that when I clicked on 'laughter' this
94 came up...when I clicked on default was it? Or, it also went there, making me start to think
95 about the way it's been constructed, that what this person's got is a whole bank of links
96 going to another whole bank of links...
97 What I was hoping for when I clicked on 'laughter', it would take me to another
98 funny part of the book. I didn't quite get what I was expecting.
99
100 RS: I certainly wouldn't on first reading, I can't believe that, my temptation would be to go
101 back and carry on... (*linear path using return key*)
102
103 RS: I wouldn't call this a book, I might call it a story. To me a book is very fixed in its
104 structure. It slightly reminds me of when I read *Slaughterhouse Five* for the first time.
105
106 Researcher : Do you get a story eventually?
107
108 RS: I think you do, but not necessarily at the time you're reading it. You get enough stuff to
109 put together a story. I'm not averse to that, doing the work, but it's not the genre of book I'd
110 always be picking, and my impression is that this is hard work. It'll be interesting to see
111 how far I go with this, because I'll stop when I've had enough
112
113 RS: One last thing, I'm already tempted to press the enter key... I'm usually a bit
114 disappointed...
115
116 ENDS

1 2/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *Afternoon, a story*
5 SB Think Aloud (SB/T)
6
7
8 SB: My immediate reaction is to roll over it to see if any rollover things come up because
9 that's something I'm used to. When I'm presented with something that's a mixture of
10 graphics and text, like this title here, it's something I anticipate happening, certainly for
11 web browsing or computer games. Having drawn a blank there, the next thing is to look at
12 the guidelines, and this is just telling me something about the file location.... There's icons
13 down here.... (*reads bottom of screen icons*).
14
15 SB: I've got a yes and no button and up here there's a directions click... not sure how that
16 happened...! (*went to 'begin' page*). I'm not sure that's what I intended to do.
17
18 Researcher : That wasn't clear?
19
20 SB: No. So.... It didn't say click 'y'. It's (*reading instructions*)... so it's 'return' and 'back
21 arrow'... so already I'm aware it's going to be inconvenient. I thought I was reading.... I
22 know that I've got to use one, a couple of arrow keys and the mouse...
23
24 Researcher : You've returned the page inadvertently..... it's not clear. That's actually the
25 back button...
26
27 SB: Ah! I read it as 'on the bar below the return key'... It's a different sort of reading: I've
28 come to read a book and I'm reading instructions. I can't do the sort of reading ahead leaps
29 you make when you're reading a book, I'm actually having to read instructions, I haven't
30 gone straight into the book. It's to do with conventions. Because it didn't respond to the
31 initial conventions I was looking for, like pop-ups, I'm now looking for what it's got
32 because it's unique.
33
34 SB: I've only just read this bit where it says it's an author's tool. So I can do some
35 writing....maybe.
36
37 SB: I'm not sure how long it would have taken me to work that (*the interface oddities*) out.
38 I'd probably have thought, 'Oh Christ!' If I hadn't worked it out for myself in a minute or
39 so I'd probably have decided not to bother, or come back at it later.
40
41 Researcher : Would it have changed your approach if I'd used the word game instead of
42 hypertext in the emails we exchanged when we were setting this session up?
43
44 SB: Yeah, I'd have been wanting to find out what the goal of the game was. With a book it
45 reveals itself as it goes along. But I am interested in reading it... I don't want, if I'm in an

46 interesting part of the story I don't want to have it interrupted by having to go back and... at
47 least I want to be familiar with where I can go, to find help.
48
49 SB: *(reading some of the text, and changed the window proportions)* If I press the right
50 mouse button I go backwards and if I press the left one I go forwards. That's unexpected.
51 I'm trying to set things up so I've got control. When I read a book I'm used to have control
52 over everything, the pace, being able to go back and re-read if I've forgotten it, I can leap to
53 the end if I want. It's a medium where you can choose. It has the wonder of being a
54 convention you can play around with. I find this interesting - I know what's conventional
55 and I'm interested in what's new. I'm interested in whether it feels different to the way I
56 read books. The best form of virtual reality is still the book. You can do anything with
57 language.
58
59 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional)...master data sheet...

The hypertext piece you read: *afternoon, a story* (A/Q)

Feb 2006 6 respondents

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user? **Yes = 6** No=0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n= 4

Online games n= 3

PC games n=3

Mainly for email and browsing/ information seeking **n=5**

Shopping n=3

Other: music, web design, graphics, writing for pleasure, research, work

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being engrossed in a book? **Yes = 6** No=0

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=6

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=5

An author you already like n=6

An author you have never tried before n=5

Recommendation from a friend n=6

Review in the press or media n=5

Anything else?...lit. crit, enticing cover, film version, classics

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=5

Familiar everyday language n=2

Interesting characters n=6

Emotional moments n=2

Exciting action n=1

Surprise n=4

Tension n=5

Satisfying conclusion n=3

Anything else? laughter, challenge, relaxation, stimulation, friendship, 'someone else feels that too' moment

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=0

A deep, heavy read n=1

Both n=5

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n=0 No n=0 Don't mind n=6

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes=6 No=0

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends? Yes=6 No=0

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=1

Uninteresting plot n=5

Too familiar storyline n=1

Uneventful n=0

Dull characters n=3

Poor writing n=5

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else? Disturbing content, rarely give up

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=1 No n=0 Don't mind n=5

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

Yes n=1 No n=1 Don't mind n=3

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=1

Physically uncomfortable n=2

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=1

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=4

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=4 Large n=0 Either n=1

3 Was the navigation system easy to learn? Yes n=3 No n=3

4 Was it obvious where links were? Yes n=1 No n=5 'not immediately'

- 5 Could you move in any direction as you wanted? Yes n=3 No n=3
- 6 Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were? Yes n=4 No n=1 'no home page'
- 7 Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times? Yes n=0 No n=6
- 8 Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times? Yes n=0 No n=6
- 9 Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read? Yes n=1 No n=1 Irritated n=4
- 10 Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)? Yes n=0 No n=6 'but it receded as I read'
- 11 Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use? Yes n=3 'sort of' No n=3 No menus offered n=0
- 12 Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling? Yes No No visual elements present
- 13 Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text? Yes No N/A
- 14 Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment? Yes No N/A
- 15 Did the multimedia elements aid or disrupt your engagement with the story? Aid Disrupt Neutral N/A

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

- 1 Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)
- Reading a book n=1
- Watching a film n=0
- Playing a game n=2 'without clear rules'
- Solving a puzzle n=3
- Something else? 'Reading poetry, between book and game'
- 2 What about the hypertext carried you along?
- Artistic/ appealing language n=1
- Interesting characters n= 2 'occasionally'
- Emotional moments n=1
- Exciting action n=0
- Surprise n=1

Tension n=0

Satisfying conclusion n=0

Nothing n=2

Anything else I've forgotten? 'Interest in use of medium, trying to find satisfying conclusion'

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=3

Uninteresting characters n=3

Over-complex plot n=1

Confusing plot n=4

No excitement n=2

No sense of an ending n=3

Anything else that you didn't like? No feel for the characters, no sense of character, it didn't make sense, text size and style and layout dull

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?* Yes n=4

No n=2

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=3 No n=0 Disrupted reading n=2

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=4

Word that seemed to signify something n=3

Animated image N/A

Icon n=0

Attempting to follow the story n=3

At random n=5

Any other factor? 'Sort of testing process'

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?* Yes n=1 No n=5

8 *Did you re-read any sections?* Yes n=6 No n=0

9 *If 'yes' to question 8, was that:* intentional n=2 accidental n=1 both n=3 'trying to make sense of it'

10 *If you did re-read sections was that:* interesting n=4 exciting n=0 annoying n=0 frustrating n=4

11 *Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?* Yes n=2 No n=4

12 *Did you feel satisfied with the ending?* Yes n=0 No n=4 'what ending?'

13 *Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?* Yes n=0 No n=6

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

Yes n=3 No n=2 'possibly', 'not if like afternoon'

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium n=4

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=0

Anything else? 'they can't all be this uninteresting, 'would get used to no endings'

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring n=2

Confusing n=2

Unsatisfying story n=2

Did not operate easily n=1

Anything else?.....

1 16/3/06
2 Bournemouth University
3 *afternoon, a story*
4 Discussion A1/D

5
6 Present: DL, HC
7

8 Researcher : You said you enjoy the sensation of being lost, in the sense of engrossed, in a
9 book... the other thing you all said is you like being challenged and stretched by a story,
10 which might not be the same as passively drifting along. Is it possible for you to say a bit
11 more about that part of the reading experience? Could you explain how you like the feeling
12 of being lost in a book but also like being challenged?

13
14 HC: I can think of several different examples where I've been challenged by a text that's
15 been difficult, for different reasons. When I was reading Solzhenitzen's *Cancer Ward* I
16 was very confused at first and I had to make a list of who all the characters were. So
17 sometimes you have to persevere with a book at the beginning if it's difficult in that sense.
18 Also, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* after the first chapter I had to start again because I
19 was lost, and I had to read it again and read enough to get a feel for who the characters were
20 and what was going to happen. That sensation of being lost in a book, I think the test of a
21 really good story is when it stays with you, when you're thinking about it in between. Some
22 books don't last with you in that same way.

23
24 Researcher : So for you, HC, the two parts of that experience is one says you have to work,
25 making notes, to get into the story, and the other is being lost. Do they work together?

26
27 HC: They can work together. I don't think they compete.

28
29 Researcher : Is it possible to be lost, engrossed, swept along, and quite consciously doing
30 other things?

31
32 HC: Yes

33
34 DL: I'm slightly different. I see reading fiction as relaxation. It's not that I don't want to
35 think, I get annoyed with classic literature which is overly complex at times.... I like being
36 lost in the story... with something the *Da Vinci Code*, you don't have to really, really think
37 about it but also you aren't quite sure where it's going. So that why I like being able to
38 think about what's happening. Not so much think about what's going on, why is it being
39 written.

40
41 Researcher : If you were reading a print novel what would make you stop?

42
43 DL: It's more a case of if I feel I have no relationship with the characters, I have no interest
44 in what is happening, nothing compelling, I think no it's just not for me... It depends what
45 the world is that I'm supposedly in, I think characters are important – I'm usually driven by
46 relationships between characters. That was one thing that didn't come out particularly well,

47 who all these people were; and I didn't feel I had any knowledge of who they were, why
48 they were, why they were thinking the way they were thinking it was very hard to get
49 behind that, whereas you get the sense of who people are.

50
51 Researcher : That could happen with a print novel too?

52
53 DL: I've read all sorts of books. Some of the books my mum used to have were the very
54 sort of, the characters were very one-dimensional, they were just there to do something,
55 and I never liked novels of that kind. I like the well-rounded character that don't
56 understand what's going on, that have to be explained what's going on, so you can actually
57 imagine the world they're living in.

58
59 HC: You need to care about the characters, and that might be positive or negative. You
60 might be hoping someone's going to get their come-uppance because they're horrible. You
61 want to know what's going to happen to them. And I like the idea that you can't predict it.
62 If the story's too formulaic and you think you know exactly what's going to happen, you
63 lose interest. Even something like *Harry Potter*, which does attract criticism, you're not
64 quite sure what she's going to do with it next, there are twists and turns and surprises.

65
66 Researcher : What would stop you reading on?

67
68 HC: Flat uninteresting writing, weakly drawn characters, inconsistencies to the plot...

69
70 Researcher : What was the effect of having links which enabled you to choose which page
71 you went to next? As an operational issue what did links do to you?

72
73 HC: I thought they had some potential, but perhaps they didn't deliver what I was
74 expecting. I got used to it in the end because I realised that if I kept going – on some of
75 them, if I then went back I'd get the page I'd come from back again, but each link gave me
76 the same information, but then some pages didn't, they gave me different information. So I
77 felt a bit more experience, a bit more used to coping with it. But I was expecting things that
78 were perhaps relevant to the characters, and sometimes I couldn't see the relevance of what
79 I'd got. So I was bit disappointed. That's why I kept trying, thinking I'd get something
80 more interesting.

81
82 Researcher: Did you think the links would take along that linear path, or that they'd take
83 you out of it and then bring you back?

84
85 HC: I think so. Perhaps we're used to watching TV drama where it isn't always linear, you
86 jump back in time, you jump forwards, you jump from character to another character. But
87 you have a sense of how everybody fits together and I never quite got that with the
88 hypertext. I never got a sense of who people were and it didn't matter to me.

89
90 DL: Have you seen *Pulp Fiction*?

91
92 HC: No I haven't.

93
94 DL: Well, it's where the two main characters die I think in the first set of three stories, and
95 the two characters appear in all three, die in the first one and reappear on the last one.
96
97 HC: And by the end you've pieced it all together.
98
99 DL: No, by the end I didn't care to be honest! That is, in a way it struck me as being quite
100 similar to the experience. What I would have liked, what something going right back to the
101 computer games, before they had all the great effects... there was one game that was one of
102 these role play games where you had this series of characters and you set them off... you
103 could click on the characters and they would tell you all sorts of information about the
104 characters and you went back to the page to decide what they could do, and I think that
105 would have been more useful, to click on someone's name and find about who that person
106 was.
107
108 HC: Yes.
109
110 Researcher : So almost like footnotes in a printed book?
111
112 DL/HC: Yes.
113
114 Researcher : You'd still know where the story was. Are you saying with *afternoon* that the
115 links jumped you somewhere else altogether?
116
117 DL: You don't know where you are. Often it was a single line or a statement that meant
118 absolutely nothing...
119
120 Researcher : In terms of what you'd just read?
121
122 DL: Yeah, there was no link to it. And you're not sure who was speaking. Sometimes it was
123 the first person that was being used. What? Who? You had no idea.
124
125 Researcher : Did you feel eventually that you did begin to collect enough information about
126 the characters...?
127
128 HC: I thought that was happening but then it didn't. There was a little hint that kept me
129 going for a bit, but then in the end I... But you put in mind of the Alan Ayckbourn trilogy,
130 *The Norman Conquest*, where you've got three plays, set with the same characters, one in
131 the house, one in the garden, one somewhere else, and the characters going in and out of
132 those different plays designed to be seen in any order. So when you go in as an audience to
133 watch the first one, there's always times when other people in the audience are laughing at
134 something that's said, and you don't know why it's funny. Or people go off stage and you
135 don't think any significance of it, but it's when you've seen all three you realise that when
136 those characters go off stage from the one you're watching they're actually going to
137 another play, and then you're laughing at things that other people don't know what you're
138 laughing at, because you've got the build up. And I think perhaps I was hoping for

139 something like that with hypertext, where in the end it would all come together... and it
140 didn't.
141
142 DL: The thing about the Ayckbourn plays is they were very, very cleverly constructed, and
143 you got into the characters.
144
145 HC: Absolutely.
146
147 DL: The first time I watched one and missed the other two, and I went back when they were
148 re-shown, and started off watching a different one, and it was one those 'oh yes!'. I had to
149 watch the one I'd already seen just so I could remember it all.
150
151 Researcher : So, with *afternoon*, did he just go too far with fracturing the story?
152
153 HC: I think so, it was too fractured. Well, there wasn't a story was there, really?
154
155 Researcher : Could you conceive of this working, if when you did jump, it took you
156 somewhere that was better related to where you'd come from?
157
158 DL: Yeah. At the very start actually, there was... the fact for me that wasn't a start, it was
159 just – you went into a page and then it was just a series of pages, it was almost like 3D: the
160 pages of lots of books all thrown together. Reading on the web, on the computer itself...
161 you can't take it with you. In a book you will get, there's space, there's paragraphs or
162 something, but those will slow it up to make sense, you'll see them all fit together. I love
163 Terry Pratchett and he had one where he's got a monster thinking, all the way through the
164 book – you only meet him right at the last chapter, but all the way through there's these
165 comments, and you go back to the main story, and all the time you're seeing the main story
166 unfold and you know these thoughts are eventually going to feed into this. With that I just
167 didn't get the sense that anything was gong to come together. I didn't know who the
168 characters were, what their names were actually. There were just these different sort of
169 vignettes or whatever that...
170
171 Researcher : It's hard because with James Joyce there will be some sort of continuity-
172
173 HC: You're into *somebody's* mind yes, or Virginia Woolf...
174
175 Researcher : This is much harder...
176
177 DL: It is, but does that have to be because it's hypertext? It might just be because this is
178 badly written...
179
180 HC: That's what we're trying to find out.
181
182 Researcher : Do you think it was badly written in terms of its prose?
183
184 DL: I think so

185
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HC: I think it probably was...

DL: I don't think it was at all engaging. The style of it...I don't want to say it was completely badly written, but it was just badly constructed. It didn't seem to have any order, flow, narrative that wanted to make somebody engaged. When you are reading pages and pages which had no real thread going through them, you get sick of it, you lose interest, you know...

Researcher : So the physical aspect wasn't so much of a barrier for you, you're happy to read on screen.

HC: You get physical issues with different books – it can too big or too heavy, or the typeface can too black, but ... A good book can take me out of a bad mood but this made me more irritable! I kept persevering but I was getting more and more tired.

DL: It just struck me I wasn't just testing an interface, that somebody had tried to do something very, very clever, but I'm not sure they actually managed to do it.

HC: Perhaps they tried too hard.

DL: Maybe yeah. It struck me that someone was trying to say this is something completely new, rather than... that overtly postmodern idea that there is no reality, no beginning, no ending, it doesn't matter... but actually it does! That's not what I want to read. I want to read a story that I can engage with and get involved with.

Researcher : Do you stay in book mode, or did you go into some other frame of reference? because you mentioned gaming... Did you find yourself looking for it to behave in other ways, because some people have said the moment it's on a computer I forget it's a book and I expect it behave like a website, for instance. Were you aware of that? Were you still in literature mode but it just wasn't working as literature?

HC: It wasn't working as either, was it? Because I was expecting it, if you go into website mode you're still expecting the links to make sense, and you have a choice of links to click on, so I can get a bit more information on this aspect and then I go back... but that didn't work either.

DL: I don't think for me there's a massive difference, and that might be because I'm so used to using computers, I'll quite happily scroll down a page to read something, or go sideways across a page– it's fine, I can understand that. It wasn't that, I just found no reason to want to continue reading it.

HC: I think that's the crux of it, you're not engaged with it, you don't care about the people, you don't know who they are, and you can't remember much about them... I'm just trying to think. I got the sense that possibly there was a couple and a son had been killed, and there

230 was something about a secretary and a message... someone was trying to leave a secretary
 231 a message. I never got beyond that.
 232
 233 DL: There was one bit of, I don't know where they were, I presume they were in a hotel
 234 somewhere, and there was some interaction between the characters at first but that
 235 disappeared. I was trying to go forwards and backwards, but that didn't seem to make
 236 sense.
 237
 238 HC: There wasn't a forwards and backwards...
 239
 240 DL: There were those two arrows you could use which took you places.
 241
 242 Researcher : Did you use the History menu? Did you find that?
 243
 244 HC: It wasn't useful... it just made you think 'oh I've been all over the place'.
 245
 246 Researcher : Obviously something you're talking about is disorientation...
 247
 248 DL: I've read so many different stories and I wouldn't always say 'this is the start of the
 249 book'...
 250
 251 HC: It can start *in media res*.
 252
 253 DL: It just didn't have, it wasn't something that... when you open a book you open the first
 254 page and read the first paragraph and that normally tells me if there's something there I can
 255 get into.
 256
 257 Researcher : What are you picking up on?
 258
 259 DL: The style of the writing, an essence of the story, how it's gong to be written, perhaps
 260 something like a character in it, what you're likely to expect. If it is something that makes
 261 you think I want to know what happens next, I'd be likely to buy it. Whereas if you think
 262 'oh right, Ok' I'd be less likely...
 263
 264 Researcher: Is there something about the packaging, the presentation of the book itself,
 265 with a blurb that gives you a glimpse into the story?
 266
 267 HC: But that's quite a recent thing with books and paperbacks. Don't you ever go into
 268 second-hand bookshops and see old novels where there might be illustrations but no blurb?
 269 They've got perhaps a cloth binding, and an old fashioned sense with the typeface...
 270
 271
 272 Researcher : It's very interesting listening to you because you're very open to differences
 273 within the book form, it's not as if you're only reading one kind of book or one kind of
 274 writing... Can you conceive of an interactive book, perhaps even an adaptation of a film,
 275 with pictures and sound and things you had to do, that would work for you?

276
277 DL: I think something that drives a narrative along.
278
279 HC: It depends how it's done. It's like the difference between a novel and a television or
280 film adaptation - it's a different form, it's a new translation and they can be satisfying.
281 Then you've got to overcome that issue of your mental image or your fixed image from a
282 previous television adaptation to the latest film, but sometimes you can live with that, and
283 that can work. I think it's just trying to imagine a completely new form that's still at its
284 beginning, its full potential hasn't been exploited.
285
286 DL: I think you don't want to lose that narrative, you need to be able to go somewhere but
287 then come back to it, so you've got that familiarity of where you are.
288
289 HC: Something that keeps you tied to the narrative thread. This gives you very little to help
290 you...
291
292 DL: For me it's that engagement side of it. It's the same with a book – if I picked a book
293 up and every time you turned over a page there was there was no sense of how this linked
294 with the previous I wouldn't read it, and I don't think it matters particularly what the
295 medium is. It can drift about and you can interact with it in different ways, so you can
296 choose, as in a book it would, like Charles Dickens' descriptions, you could probably trim
297 down Charles Dickens and have the descriptions there to choose, but have the story in a
298 different way.
299
300 HC: And I know somebody who reads like that as well. I remember discussing
301 *Middlemarch* with my hairdresser, and she couldn't cope with all the philosophical bits and
302 the discussion, she only read for plot. So she skipped all those bits, and those big 18th
303 century novels would certainly lend themselves to that. And of course that's what a TV
304 adaptation does, you see it all instantly, you don't have to read the description.
305
306 Researcher : So maybe the problem with this is that he's thrown everything at it...?
307
308 HC: It's trying to do too much.
309
310 Researcher : It's got links, it's got small chunks of text, fractured story, its poetic,
311 philosophical...
312
313 HC: What about the author's controlling voice? Let me ask you a question. How do you
314 feel about books where you have alternative endings? I remember when I first *read The*
315 *French Lieutenant's Woman* I didn't like having the alternative endings, because you think
316 'I want to be told why...'
317
318 DL: If it's clever and satisfying and engaging, fine. If you are supposed to take a book
319 seriously, even it's an amusing book like a Pratchett book, becoming engaged with the
320 characters, you want to have an ending you feel the author has taken you through the story
321 to get to the ending.

322
323 Researcher : Do you think then that this author has abandoned the sense of being an author?
324 There is a structure, if you went back to the original files, we could see how he's organised
325 the pattern of all the links. But did you get any sense that he was the teller of the story, or
326 designing something?
327
328 DL/HC: No.
329
330 HC: That was the problem.
331
332 Researcher : I wonder if you both read the same story?
333
334 HC: Not in the same order I suppose.
335
336 HC: I think I got to the point where everything seemed a bit familiar, I'd seen that bit
337 before.... And then I gave up.
338
339 DL: I think I gave up before I got to that point. I found it very difficult. I tried three or four
340 times when I had nothing else to do... and I found it more annoying than the marking! At
341 least that made some sense to me. I'd love to see some more of it (*other examples*). But if
342 it was like that, no. I felt that it was badly constructed and lacking a story, and the only
343 thing that I've read like that was, when I was ill I read Mills and Boon, and that was the
344 same – it has a narrative but you don't care about any of it. It's just very bland. It's that
345 same sort of, they weren't one-dimensional characters, they didn't really have a dimension
346 at all.
347
348 Researcher : Sound bites really.
349
350 DL: Yeah.
351
352 HC: You asked if we had the same experience, but if we both go and watch a film or go to
353 the opera we're both going to notice different things....it depends what sort of training
354 you've got, or what your interests are or what you're looking for. Sometimes you do come
355 away and go 'did we actually watch the same thing?'
356
357 Researcher : But you'd have been reacting to the same text at least.
358
359 HC: At least we'd know we did, but this time we didn't.
360
361 DL: Even if we'd walked out of watching two parts of the Ayckbourn trilogy we'd have
362 gone 'oh yes, this character' and we'd have actually talked about the overlaps and
363 discussed it. But there was no sense I really got of the story.
364
365 HC: Perhaps we haven't got the skills to discuss it yet, because we haven't seen enough of
366 it. We've been reading for a lifetime. When I was child I would read anything that came my

367 way and it's only by reading the rubbish, exposing yourself to the bad as well as the good,
368 that you start to know what is good.
369
370 Researcher : I just sense that the writers think it's the next best thing and not a dead duck,
371 and haven't done enough to try to bridge that gap.
372
373 DL: If you are developing a new medium you need some form of familiarity. If you're
374 going to take someone who's used to reading a book, and say right read this, you need to
375 take somebody along gradually, you can't introduce them to something that's completely
376 different and just expect people to accept it as being, 'ooh it's new so it must be great'.
377 Because I sometimes think that people who do that – 'wow isn't this great?', don't actually
378 understand it at all.
379
380 Researcher : *The Emperor's New Clothes...*
381
382 DL: Yes. Just throwing something in that does nothing that reminds us of our reading
383 experience, and says this is a book I think is counter-productive for the medium. Oh this is
384 new so we can do what we like, is not... you are suggesting that this is a book, not a book
385 but something to read, and it needs a start, something in the middle and a finish...
386
387 HC: You need to find something in it that's memorable because what have we retained of it,
388 because when your email came round saying 'afternoon' I'd forgotten that was the name of
389 it. It's only that first page, 'I may have seen my son die' and I wanted to get back to that to
390 find out and we didn't get that.
391
392 ENDS

1 23/2/06

2 Bournemouth University

3 *afternoon, a story*

4 Discussion (A2/D)

5
6 Present: SB, DA, KH
7
8

9 Researcher : One thing that came up in the questionnaires was that you all liked the idea of
10 roaming around getting lost, engrossed. You started out with the idea that reading is that
11 kind of experience, but I got the strong impression from the questionnaires that that didn't
12 really happen with this piece. So I wonder why that didn't capture that mood in the way a
13 great novel might.
14

15 DA: It was such horrible writing. It reminded you of those wretched John Updike novels,
16 um, where people are going around in snow with their collars turned up.
17

18 KH: I thought the writing style was all right...I made a comment about it being very male
19 though.
20

21 SB: That's funny, I thought the opposite. It reminded me of, it just made me think of, it
22 writes in the present tense and I find that an extremely hard way to read. The reason I
23 thought it was female was because I heard a programme on *Woman's Hour* where they
24 were talking about that as a way of writing. I found I couldn't get into it, I like a book to
25 kind of grab me on the first page, and this didn't. But the writing style I found was hard.
26

27 Researcher : If the writing style had been your kind of thing, would that issue of how it
28 started have been a problem for DA or KH?
29

30 DA: I agree with SB, the structure as well – it didn't engage you. In a way I was clicking
31 through it, quite quickly at times, in a desperate attempt to be engaged with it. Sometimes
32 in a different way, sometimes you'd make your own little games and almost play those
33 within the structure of the text...
34

35 Researcher : What, you began to wonder what might happen if...?
36

37 DA: Yeah
38

39 Researcher : Because in your questionnaire you said part of the intrigue was wondering
40 how it would work, how to read the hypertext.
41

42 DA: Yes and eventually I did end up playing with the hypertext the more I read the novel.
43

44 SB: I got sort of bored and began to click randomly and thought I could put together a sort
45 of story from what arbitrarily appears?
46

47 DA: I was doing that to certain extent as well, sort of making up connections in my head,
48 sort of almost making up a new narrative out of it.
49
50 Researcher : Was that your experience KH?
51
52 KH: I think so. I don't think I came to it with the expectation it would be anything like a
53 book though, but that could partly be because I know about hypertexts. My first experience
54 of multimedia was hypertexts, 'hypercard 1' or whatever it was at the time, so... it seemed
55 very dated to me.
56
57 Researcher : That piece was published in 1987, and the reason I chose that for the study is
58 that it is the one that is always referred to as the classic hypertext fiction. I'm not saying it is
59 the way forward, but it had to be in the study. So, the interface was dated?
60
61 KH: Yeah, the interface, just visual things like the size of the text, the fact that it's black
62 and white, it's small, all those kind of things affect your immersion, don't they?
63
64 Researcher : So there's two areas that are coming up. One is its structure as a narrative,
65 which is problematic; and the other is the interface, the thing that you're operating to get at
66 the narrative. So, did you manage to get at the story?
67
68 KH: I think so. I think I was doing what DA was doing, which was having to make
69 connections, but you do that when you read.
70
71 SB: I found it hard to work out what its genre was. I kind of, I tend to read a lot of genre
72 fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and I kind of, and I also enjoy reading literature where the
73 form is challenged, so things by Ridley Walker springs to mind, where you're subverting
74 what people already know about how to read. I was trying to work out what that was, what
75 was going on, it was like a puzzle, how to read this. But I found that there was nothing
76 driving me to find out, apart from the fact that I'd said I'd read it.
77
78 Researcher : A puzzle as puzzle would have worked, but a narrative as puzzle that didn't
79 deliver a narrative...
80
81 KH: Also it played with the idea of closure didn't it? So with a puzzle you'd know there'd
82 be closure but with this you kind of knew there wasn't because it said, it referred to closure
83 at the beginning as well. So there's that whole kind of... slightly smart-arsey...
84
85 Researcher : And you (*DA*) said that the style of the instructions were putting you off
86 before you started as well...
87
88 DA: Yeah.
89
90 KH: I think though, I'm quite interested in language, so I was interested in how the story
91 was structured, and the adjectives and the kind of language, and I started looking at it from
92 that point of view. And maybe that's because you had to because you weren't being

93 immersed in the storyline so you started looking at other things. Like you were saying, DA,
 94 you started clicking around and playing with it, and you need something else in it don't
 95 you?
 96

97 DA: You do. In a way it was too self-consciously hypertexty, wasn't it? They'd written a
 98 hypertext story rather than written a story in hypertext... even the bit of the plot that I got,
 99 that I think was on the first screen, even that is a bit of a cheap setup isn't it really? He's,
 100 already 'I'm trying to give you these possibilities.' It didn't really...
 101

102 SB: Funnily enough I didn't even get that!
 103

104 KH: I didn't get that until quite a way through actually, that one screen. I thought it was a
 105 little bit, I was quite surprised by it, that that had happened. That not nice moment...
 106

107 Researcher : Do you know roughly how much time you might have put into it, was it
 108 minutes, an hour? We would spend maybe two or three hours with a novel and allow it to
 109 build up in our minds, even if it was confusing, but with this I get the sense that people
 110 don't want to give it that amount of time.
 111

112 SB: I think it was about 15 or 30 minutes to start off with and then I went back to it. I found
 113 it hard to determine how long it was – with a book you know where you are, and with a
 114 book you know how much you've read, you can slow down or speed up –
 115

116 Researcher : Depending on how much there is to read...
 117

118 SB: You know how much there is *to* read and that was difficult, not knowing how far I was
 119 through a story.
 120

121 DA: After I got through with playing with it, it was one Saturday or Sunday evening, I was
 122 doing something else, and I had it minimised and every now and then when I got stuck with
 123 what I was doing I stopped and played with it a bit more, or should I say *read* it a bit
 124 more... and I was just as comfortable doing it in a very broken up way as I was sitting there
 125 and reading maybe 100 pages as you might do with a novel and you won't want to put it
 126 down after every single page. But with this I was quite happy to put it down after a page
 127 and go off and do something else.
 128

129 Researcher : Do you think that hypertext of this kind therefore couldn't deliver that kind of
 130 page-turning draw?
 131

132 SB: Based on this, in a way my approach is different because I came at it from a gaming
 133 perspective. I play a lot of computer games of particular kinds, and I came at it not wanting
 134 a computer game, thinking this is meant to be a hypertext novel, which is different.... I've
 135 experienced narratives in games which can be extremely good and I'm assuming this is
 136 something different, this is presented as something different therefore I'm not going to treat
 137 it as a game – my expectations are for something else, because it can be done well in games.
 138 Because this is 'literature' I expect it to be deeper and more satisfying, and it wasn't, so I

139 was disappointed. That was one of the things I found quite surprising because I thought
140 'well there's these games people are doing, there's popular stuff and I think it's a new art
141 form, and it's a good way of communicating' but there are these people doing it with words
142 and that's kind of perceived in my own mind to be more serious, and therefore I expected
143 that the content and the way it was communicated would be more sophisticated and it
144 turned out to be trivial.
145
146 KH: I think I looked at the language aspect of it which you can't get in computer games.
147 You can have immersion, but you can't have... there's not so much written and spoken
148 text-
149
150 SB: There's more in the games I've played than there was in that.
151
152 KH: Was there?
153
154 SB: Yeah definitely.
155
156 Researcher : More written text?
157
158 SB: Oh yeah.
159
160 KH: What games?
161
162 SB: *Alpha Centauri* is the one I'd compare it to.
163
164 Researcher : What makes it a game and not literature then? If that example has got text and
165 is deep and satisfying, why would you call that a game and not...?
166
167 SB: I think basically because of the way it's sold. I don't there's a term for interactive...
168 whatever it is that's coming as an alternative for movies.
169
170 Researcher : In your game, do you take a role?
171
172 SB: Yes, you're a major protagonist and that's the difference. One of the things again, in
173 this you're a reader and not a role player. I think that's a significant difference. When
174 you're a reader you're not a protagonist. It kind of overlaps - when you start doing
175 something like playing games with it, or trying to generate your own stories then you're
176 beginning to move into this area of authorship and audience ambiguity.
177
178 Researcher : Your expectations were from game... can you (KH) remember what your
179 expectation was?
180
181 KH: I think it was hypertext. I knew Hypercard, so it was a hypertext experience,
182 reasonably sophisticated, I did expect it to be quite sophisticated. And in some ways the
183 language was, whether you liked it or not. It was quite writerly (*sic*) so the person who
184 wrote it had some skill with writing, I think that was apparent, whether it turned you on or

185 you liked it or not. So in a way I started expecting limitations, and just took it on face
186 value.
187
188 Researcher : DA, do you know what your expectation was?
189
190 DA: Partly I sort of having been a gameplayer as well, I was partly looking for that game
191 thing...but my expectation was I think was probably more, maybe something... it's hard to
192 say more like a traditional novel because you think of things like *Tristram Shandy* or *At*
193 *Swim Two Birds* – you think of those slightly unusual novels in the way that they will go off
194 into little corners of their own. I was expecting something a bit more like that. This was too
195 whiffly and dreamy from the outset. It reminded me of, going back to the game narrative
196 thing, it reminded me of 'you're in a forest, it's dark, there's a rock sitting by your foot,
197 what now?' It wasn't you anymore it was...
198
199 Researcher : So there actually were all kinds of conventions that could have been in there
200 that might have made all of you a bit more comfortable or more engaged, that for all of you
201 weren't there. It's almost as if this form couldn't satisfy any of you, because it wasn't quite
202 anything - it wasn't a book, it wasn't a game exactly, it wasn't literary enough. It feels like
203 it's falling between every possible stool....
204
205 SB: To me it was too unstructured. I like to be able to identify a structure fairly rapidly, to
206 be able to organise how I respond to it. It felt to me like I had too many options as to where
207 I navigated, it was, I would have had to build up a strategy as to how to explore it, and I
208 hadn't anticipated needing to do that. If I had come across a different content in a similar
209 form, now I would go into it very differently, my expectations would be different. Because
210 I was looking for a moment of closure and when I come across something that sort of
211 wrapped up a kind of story, I stopped.
212
213 Researcher : So, what might the writer have with the way you worked the story – menus,
214 links, interface – to make that closure or sense of story or structure more...
215
216 KH: I think one of the big things that's missing is you need to know roughly where you are,
217 how much you've seen and how much you've still got to see. Those really simple
218 things
219
220 SB: I thought if I had something like a health bar which told me how much, not how many
221 pages I'd read but how many were left..
222
223 KH: Exactly...
224
225 SB: It wouldn't need to tell me which way I had to go to get it but just so it told me I'd
226 covered all the options...
227
228 Researcher : All three of in the questionnaires said you were happy with a certain level of
229 challenge or puzzle, but this defeated you. One of the things you said was 100%

230 problematic, you didn't know where you were in the site or the narrative... It would have
 231 been possible for the writer to give many of clues about that, but he didn't...
 232

233 KH: Hypercard has lots of fantastic backtracking and trails... even in 1987 he could have
 234 done that. I knew that, so you know that that writer has deliberately chosen to make it that
 235 confusing, as part of the 'new reading' experience... but it just feels annoying.
 236

237 SB: It's the context, I think it's how you visualise it because when you're reading you're
 238 imagining something. They're symbols so you create something from them. If I'd been
 239 presented it like a series of notes, I've got one of these things you can buy a Conan Doyle
 240 mystery and you get all the bits and you work it by finding all the clues, if it had been in that
 241 story of context like a series of emails or disconnected documents that I then had to make
 242 sense of, then I've have known it was chaotic and I had to make sense of it. But because it
 243 was presented to me as a novel, a darn short novel form my point of view, that affected my,
 244 I was prejudiced by what I was anticipating I would get.
 245

246 Researcher : If it had been presented as a 'new media narrative' would that have made any
 247 difference at all in practice? Because I'm partly guilty because I've used the term
 248 'hypertext' which immediately makes you think of text as you say. I didn't say this is a
 249 'multi-media' narrative' or a 'digital fiction' – there are lots of terms being used...
 250

251 KH: Doesn't it say when you open up that it's a hypertext novel? That straightaway puts
 252 you in a particular... the thing about the Conan Doyle thing is you, the genre if like that,
 253 you have to solve the clues, so the structure and the genre are fitting together really well.
 254 With this there wasn't such a good match between the genre which is supposedly a novel,
 255 and the structure. The two were at odds with each other.
 256

257 DA: You want some sense of context don't you? The great thing is open-ended games at
 258 the moment - you want to play *Grand Theft Auto* but you want to go off and do things that
 259 the game doesn't necessarily propel you in the direction of, you want to leap out of your car
 260 and see if you can beat somebody over the head with a baseball bat just for the hell of it, but
 261 you're doing it within a context... but here, with the Conan Doyle you're doing it knowing
 262 one thing will lead to another, but with this I never achieved that sense of one thing leading
 263 to another. I thought oh blimey he's off again!
 264

265 KH: You know the book *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Janet Murray talks about you have to
 266 have rules for the story world, they have to be consistent and then people can interact and
 267 tell stories and have characters within that world, but it's really important that that world is
 268 consistent, understandable, has rules...
 269

270 SB: That's role-play gaming...
 271

272 KH: But it's any kind of interactive story making, where she talks about having pools of
 273 writers, where they can write different episodes and different bits of the story, but they
 274 obey this overarching world.
 275

276 Researcher : In the world of games those rules seemingly have become very quickly
277 established to the point where young people go into a game they know what's going to
278 happen. Those rules have become known to everybody who buys a game, but with this
279 every single author creates his or her own interface, his or her own structural pattern
280 –they're all trying to do their own things, and if I'd shown you twenty pieces I think they'd
281 have all been as tricky, because they're all trying to do something different. Would your
282 argument be that 'OK this a great idea but you're going to have rein in a bit until we've got
283 some conventions, and then you break some conventions, but we need the conventions
284 first'.

285
286 KH: They're writers who shouldn't be doing that – writers should be working with people
287 who do understand.

288
289 SB: I disagree entirely. No, I think the writers should be doing just what they're doing. As
290 soon as I know they're experimenting, I'm happy. What you said is 'this is a classic' so I
291 thought this has got to be good. Because the impression was 'this has got to be good' so
292 you've solved it...otherwise why would they think it was classic? I would be interested in
293 looking at other stuff, and I have looked at other stuff previously and although I must admit
294 it didn't engross me enough to remember what it was about, it was easier to use than this
295 one. But it hadn't picked up my interest as much as games and other virtual environments
296 and interactive art has. Rather than waiting for a convention to appear they should... I
297 mentioned concrete poetry, and if I was looking at it from that point of view, concrete
298 poetry is different, every piece you come to is different, if I was saying OK when I come to
299 this and it's called hypertext fiction and every one you come to is different then I'd be
300 happy.

301
302 Researcher : One thing that you all said in the questionnaires is that you all actually quite
303 liked the activity of linking, and I was expecting you to say that you didn't.... it seemed a
304 bit contradictory in a way...I thought you'd say it thwarted any train of thought you were
305 getting going...

306
307 DA: For me that was because it wasn't necessarily working in a traditional story way for
308 me and therefore what I was really enjoying was 'where's this click going to take me?'. In
309 fact the linking was the most enjoyable part because sometimes there was the surprise
310 element in where you were going and where you were going to end up. Every now and then
311 you'd think 'I didn't expect that!'

312
313 Researcher : Couldn't the writer make it possible for links to be fun but make the places
314 you go to not as totally disorientating as they were? I'm going to give you choices but I'm
315 going to make sure that wherever you go will still make sense to you in some way so you
316 don't totally lose the plot.

317
318 SB: I think there was some structure to it because a lot of time when you followed a link it
319 was following a thought that someone was having which was independent of what was
320 actually happening in the story... so it wasn't totally unstructured. I just found the content

321 unsatisfying, I wasn't very interested in what was being written about and so that's where I
322 found the structure more interesting to look at.
323

324 KH: I think the longer I spent with it the more satisfying it was because storylines did begin
325 to come out. I started to get the feeling of different characters and some personality coming
326 through...
327

328 Researcher: Would you have stuck with it as long as you did if you hadn't been doing it for me?
329

330 SB: I don't know... I might have stuck with it longer...
331

332 DA: I wouldn't. I'm sure I wouldn't. I was pretty turned off pretty early on and thinking, I
333 was, your mind immediately starts to wander as to how this might have been done better,
334 and things you've seen that have been done better and how you would have written it
335 better...
336

337 Researcher : So, from your own perspectives, if we accept his style and the kind of story
338 that it was, which you might or might not like and we can't do anything about, what could
339 this writer/designer have done to draw you into it and make it a more enjoyable experience?
340 Because, you've all been blocked by something in there. You accept some good bits but
341 there's something in here that's not working... I'm trying to see what might be the way
342 forward for this kind of writer who wants to give you choice, who wants to give you a
343 certain level of non-linear structure without completely destroying your reading pleasure.
344

345 KH: I don't think you can call it a novel for a start. You prepare people for what they're
346 about to see, so you manage their expectations differently. For me I would have had sound,
347 I would use typography in a creative way, even if you wanted to keep quite text based,
348 some sound... there was some recognition of typography, and that was nice. Because it's
349 so hard to read on the screen, you can't cuddle up with it...
350

351 SB: I mean, the simple thing, when I'm reading a book I read the blurb on the back and I
352 usually open the book and read a bit just to see whether I like the writer's style. And I
353 wasn't able to do that. Packaging basically, and that would have given me an insight into
354 what I was coming up against. That would be the simple answer, I wouldn't necessarily
355 want to change anything else.
356

357 KH: That gives you that expectation.
358

359 DA: I think both KH's and SB's suggestions would improve it. The other that springs to
360 mind is, it's difficult but bigger chunks...
361

362 Researcher : Often the convention is small chunks of text in this medium...
363

364 DA: Having mucked about with it I know that big chunks are worse to read, however I
365 think it would be worth taking the risk to experiment with bigger chunks in this case, just
366 because it would give you a bit more orientation..
367

368 Researcher : Is that because if you're given something to read you want to be able to read it
369 and not be stopped and started so frequently?
370

371 DA: It's this context thing, you want to have a bit more of a handle on what the context is.
372

373 SB : I read a lot aloud and I've learnt that when I read I found myself discovering by
374 reading aloud that I'm actually reading quite a long way ahead... and you can't do that with
375 this. I'm pretty sure we must do that anyway. I realise that I am anticipating, I'm reading
376 ahead.
377

378 Researcher : It's interesting... you don't worry about that if you're reading a website for
379 information, but that's because it's a different activity. With this you're wanting to be taken
380 along a bit by the author.
381

382 KH: It would be worth doing some research to see how people do read conventional text,
383 and if that scanning ahead is part of the pleasure.
384

385 Researcher : Certainly skilled readers do that but unskilled readers don't... children
386 sometimes can't do that, and when they read out it's quite expressionless because they
387 aren't reading ahead, to know how it should sound by what's coming next.
388

389 KH: David's idea of having more text would solve that problem to a certain extent.
390

391 Researcher : It might also ease people from one expectation to another, because you're all
392 saying that what expectation you came with affected how you reacted. If someone comes to
393 this with 'book' in mind, a bit more text and a bit less interruption might help them.
394

395 SB: I think one has to understand just what the author's going for: if they're going for pure
396 text then you're dealing with something different than someone who's going for
397 multimedia.
398

399 Researcher : It might be that this isn't going to work as pure text...could you have pure text
400 on a computer screen with nothing else that someone's going to want to sit down and read?
401

402 KH: If it's a great story you could.... Or if you had more text it might solve this problem of
403 reading ahead but you might get tired in about ten minutes rather than twenty.
404

405 DA: It possibly creates more problems than it solves.
406

407 SB: It might be interesting to see how people who've used computers since they were kids,
408 all their life, read. I think there's a difference there.... I like books...
409

410 DA: I'm sort of aware of the history of it, I think I might have read bits of it before, and it's,
411 there's an awful lot of theory but there's no real criticism is there? What we're trying to do
412 now is criticise it. This idea is central to an awful lot of theory, but no real criticism. The
413 old cultural studies trap of if somebody out there likes it it's as good as Shakespeare.

414
415 SB: What's really funny is I thought it was written by a female.... Because I did my thesis
416 on interactivity I'm trying to map what I discovered onto this situation, and what I keep
417 coming back to is the side of things that in a digital environment you can simulate anything
418 that exists, and this didn't feel... I didn't feel like a participant, I felt like someone who was
419 being prevented from finding stuff. I didn't feel as if I had a lot of control over what was
420 going on. My conclusion when I did my thesis was that when you're doing something
421 interactive you're composing the degree and manner of control that the user is given at any
422 moment. It's a composition, and the emotions of frustration that we got are just one
423 movement or one kind of. One of the things you can do with music. If you look at
424 something like this it's as if you've got the same thing going on all the time and it needs to
425 be looked at in terms of a composition where the degree and manner of control you have as
426 you go through it changes.
427
428 Researcher : So, if you're offered control it's really got to be there or otherwise it become a
429 block?
430
431 SB: If he's intentionally wanting to confuse you, he's succeeded. Bit like in games they're
432 giving people control to start off with while they learn it and then it gets harder and harder
433 and harder. If you're doing an interactive composition you can move towards and from
434 control – the manner and degree of control can change. If the form reflected the nature of
435 the story... I gather there's an accident in it... if you're in a situation where the way the
436 accident is represented by the way you have more or less control, then you're producing
437 something interactive, and this isn't.
438
439 ENDS

1 8/3/06
2 Bournemouth University
3 *afternoon, a story*
4 **discussion (RS/D)**
5

6 **Present: RS**
7

8 Researcher : Did you have a sense of this being a narrative? Did you for example, have a
9 sense of an ending?
10

11 RS: I skipped around a bit when I knew I was going to have to curtail the time I was going to
12 dedicate to it, because I knew you wanted to talk... so what would I have found when I got
13 there? Whereas with a book you can just turn to that last page, the last three pages, I don't
14 normally do that, but you can go 'let's just see', I never felt that I could do that with this,
15 even though I skipped and tried to do it.
16

17 Researcher : Was that for very obvious reasons such as you couldn't see the size and scope
18 of the book as you would if you had a book in your hand?
19

20 RS: Yes I suppose physical reasons but also because I'd started to get very, not a lot, but
21 started to get into the links and hence of course by not keeping going with all the potential
22 links you don't know where you'd go and where that would take you, onto a link onto a link
23 onto a link... So, no real sense of an ending was achieved, but having said that I haven't
24 finished yet, even in a conventional sense I haven't finished it.
25

26 Researcher: If you do spend more time with it you might or might not find an ending you're
27 happy with. Actually the writer himself says that endings, closure is a suspect quality.
28

29 RS: Well that was the one positive I'd say that came of this experience for me personally,
30 which is an increased sense of wanting to be comfortable with that view that that author
31 said; but knowing that I'm not but wanting to, because you're socialised into a sense of
32 wanting it, but the more you engage with the world that you realise how random so much of
33 it is, therefore to try to order it I'm realising 'but is this just me ordering it?' And in a way,
34 I like to feed into my own, not just reading, but the kind of plays I want to go to or the kinds
35 of conversations I even want to have.
36

37 Researcher: It's quite an attractive concept – you get into the feeling that this should be
38 great, this should kind of really say something about life...
39

40 RS: Yeah, as I say that's the best thing that's come out of for me is a kind of a
41 reinforcement of a view that I want to start pursuing more, and I therefore this could help
42 me pursue it. As it happens it wasn't, it's not a great experience of that, it's not the kind of
43 thing that I could then say to other people, 'if you really want to know what I mean... do
44 this'. If you don't mind me going off on a tangent, a friend of mine is doing his family tree,
45 and I want to encourage it because he's really into it - we were talking about it, and I was
46 trying to explain to him that you must realise what you're doing is, you're not revealing a

47 story that's been there waiting for you to reveal, you're inventing a story of... he said
48 something like 'ah so that's why I'm not musical', because of this because of that in a very
49 reductionist manner, and I was trying to say how about looking at it this way. And I used
50 *The History Boys* by Alan Bennett to try to get across that view that how we construct
51 histories... he believes that that meaning is the meaning and he's found it. And as I say the
52 best thing about being involved in this project is it reinforces that kind of view. But I would
53 never have said to him, 'have a go at this and reflect on it'.
54

55 Researcher : You mentioned earlier about linking... pretty well everybody I've spoken to
56 wants to follow these links because they're there and they're offered and you want to try it.
57 How did it feel when you hit a word and followed it....?
58

59 RS: It didn't feel good, it didn't feel comfortable, and one of the things I found myself doing
60 was making sure I went back. So to me it wasn't a link that took me wherever it took me
61 and off I went, it was a momentary departure from the linear. Not always momentary
62 because sometimes I'd link and link quite a bit. I think there was one word that, for some
63 reason 'beautiful' comes to my mind, I'm not sure if it was even that word but it had that
64 meaning, and I decide I'll go and I'll keep seeing if I go to beautiful or words that have in
65 my view an association with the idea beauty and off I- But I was very conscious of 'now
66 I'll go back and carry on', whereas I'm not sure I do that with for instance my normal use
67 of for example Google or my more serious use of... My normal ramblings online I very
68 often take a break and then come back, and I won't even think 'where did I start this?', it
69 wouldn't matter. But here it matters. Maybe it is because I'm used to reading conventional
70 books. Maybe it's better to introduce this earlier in your life rather than after forty years of
71 reading.
72
73

74 Researcher: So, it's interesting that you didn't mind digressing off the story path, but
75 wanting to get back there.
76
77

78 RS: There was always that attempt to, I even thought I'd better jot down something to be
79 able to go back.
80

81 Researcher : That ought to be built into the software.
82

83 RS: If that's what people want, to maybe more comfortably follow those links then yes.
84

85 Researcher : When you Google are you doing what your friend's doing with his family tree,
86 that is searching for information that you will piece together to your own satisfaction?
87

88 RS: That's mainly what I'm doing.
89

90 Researcher : But when you read a story you're expecting the author to piece something
91 together for your satisfaction?

92 RS: I'd accept that except that I am happy to read, you now I think I mentioned Kurt
93 Vonnegut who will leave gaps, leave puzzles, leave things hanging – I'm very for that. But
94 nevertheless you're right, I'm still very conscious of an existing link has been made with
95 all of these characters, all of these narratives, all of these plots.

96
97 Researcher : That's the author's job-

98
99 RS: Yes, so not just loads of plots they are the sub-plot of the plot.

100
101 Researcher : Yes, I understand that. So did you have the sense of this being an aesthetic
102 object? When you read a novel you know this is a piece of art somehow (we could argue
103 about what art is) but you would say 'yes this is a wonderful construction, a wonderful
104 thing that someone has made'.

105
106 RS: Or not...

107
108 Researcher : Or not.

109
110 RS: But you'd use those value criteria...

111
112 Researcher : And you didn't feel you'd be able to say that about this?

113
114 RS: I struggled.

115
116 Researcher : But it's such an interesting point, because you know there is an author there,
117 you know that someone did create something, and yet you couldn't sense it.

118
119 RS: I'm sensing more a technician, not a very good one I'm afraid; and I'm sensing a
120 graphic designer, again not a very good one. So I'm putting my head on a web development
121 criteria rather than piece of art, and of course I understand online art exists, it doesn't have
122 to be tangible. But no, I was in a different mindset. I don't know, again familiarity, more
123 time may overcome, but this didn't.

124
125 Researcher : I think you're saying you were open to it, but somewhere in the presentation
126 of it, in the technicality of it, that that was creating a barrier. There may have been an
127 aesthetic object in there but you couldn't find it.

128
129 RS: I struggled, and yeah you're right, technically it seemed quite inept to me. Had I got
130 one of the others, with more multimedia elements, the answer to the idea of it having an
131 aesthetic quality might have been higher, but it might not have been the text itself, in terms
132 of its crafting, all those other things might have been.... But I don't know.

133
134 Researcher : What's coming out very strongly is that if it were a book you'd read it to the
135 end, or not, and you wouldn't worry about whether it was a book or not, but with this
136 you're being bothered by what this is as a thing.

137

138 RS: That got in the way of being able to go this is the kind of genre I like or these are the
139 kind of characters I like or this is an intriguing plot. Being able to do that, all those other
140 things got in the way of me being able to do that. If I had made more effort and time and
141 perseverance, all those things that seemed a bit odd, then maybe I would have done. In
142 fairness when I go to an art gallery I do realise I'm that sometimes I'm too lazy. I do realise
143 I need to work harder, for example I have been round with the guide and the experience is
144 totally different, and of course there you're getting the guide's view, even if you just take
145 snippets of it home with you, now I can make more sense of it.

146
147 Researcher : I was thinking that hypertext reading seems to be much better suited to
148 information gathering, that kind of reading, research, than it does reading fiction...

149
150 RS: Having said that, for my own serious research although Google is useful, I still
151 primarily read books and print out journal articles and read from the paper. I rarely will
152 engage with anything in any depth on screen, personally. I'll collect it, but I'll print it. So
153 although I totally accept they are different, I'm, when depth's needed I'll still print it off.
154 Yesterday I was at home, trying to write something I was going to write up today, and,
155 paper surrounding me, highlighter pens, and right, the orange seems to go together, the
156 yellow seems to go together...and then from that I'll construct my argument. No way am I
157 capable or experienced to do that online.

158
159 Researcher : I have to have paper copies of everything... Could you imagine, if we assume
160 you liked the writing, and you felt there was a good story in there, could you imagine
161 anything this author could have done to make this more accessible to you?

162
163 RS: But still online? Certainly the navigation, the navigation was awful. Rather boringly
164 perhaps, I might have liked things like an ability to go to a page where I can see all the
165 potential links and a sense of the overarching theme to those links for example. Maybe a
166 sense of overall purpose to it, before jumping in. maybe a preamble about, I know the
167 person is trying clearly not to impose, but offering potentialities of it all. Here's one
168 potential here's another, so that you could go I'm already getting what I can do before I get
169 into the story, because that would allow me to really try to immerse myself in the story,
170 knowing I could do all those things. Rather than what I was doing, half of me was
171 wrangling with 'what can I, can't I, should I, shouldn't I do?' as well as trying to engage
172 with the story.

173
174 Rsrcher: Using a book is automatic, you don't think 'oh I must turn the page now' whereas
175 with this you'd have almost had to have a conscious thought, 'where shall I click?'...

176
177 RS: There was much more, more effort. I put here (*questionnaire*) it was hard work.

178
179 Researcher : But what you're saying is, some sort of visualisation of the whole thing..?

180 RS: Yes, maybe, it doesn't have be a diagram... a way of mapping the novel's potentiality.

181
182 Researcher : Someone last week said something like when a website's loading up, you get
183 a loading bar, and when the bar's filled up you get the website. He said if you had

184 something like that which slowly filled up so you could see how much was left that would
185 make sense of it.
186
187 RS: That would help with one of the first points I made with not having a sense of how
188 much there was to go. I suppose because there was a sense to it, I don't actually know if it
189 ends in a neat way or not, but because I wasn't in a neat place I didn't know if I was there or
190 the...
191
192 Researcher: Or maybe something more specific, that said there are 150 pages and I'm here?
193
194 RS: Except because of these links... maybe I've over thought it, but maybe you can never
195 end because of links, because you can always keep going. I imagine it could be big enough
196 to get a sense of 'this could never end', not with this but I can imagine it.
197
198 Researcher : In any other narrative form they all start and end – whether it's time or space,
199 you have a sense of knowing tat the artist's vision is over.
200
201 RS: Yes and it may leave you with deliberate questions but nevertheless they are deliberate
202 and they are left with you, as opposed to... it's made think of a great idea where the curtain
203 comes down in the theatre and someone says 'it's still going on in here by the way,' but
204 you've got to go now!
205
206 Researcher : That's what this felt like to you...
207
208 RS: I wasn't sure... I knew it was still going on but I wasn't sure, because I want to go
209 'how long more?, five more minutes?' But this one, no one said 'no you've only seen five
210 or ten percent of this', and then I'd be more annoyed or intrigued I suppose, and I wasn't
211 quite sure.
212 You asked how it could be improved... a much more multimedia, visual approach,
213 I'm not sure that would overcome all of my personal... It's more a mind map that would
214 help me, giving me a scope rather than no scope at all. His intention is saying release
215 yourself from the need for a scope, and I can do that, but I'm afraid....
216
217 Researcher : I keep thinking why wouldn't it be possible to create something that had all
218 those signposting aspects and map making aspects that you need, and would still give you
219 freedom to move...
220
221 RS: Maybe what they've done then is to jump from this to this without recognising for
222 many people anyway, that's too big a jump.
223
224 Researcher : I think so. The gap that you've identified is the gap that the academics and
225 writers aren't properly acknowledging. Most readers will need some of the old stuff to help
226 them get into it.
227

228 RS: It definitely had potential for me, but I wouldn't go out and buy one. I'd read another
229 one, but with caveats. If you said here's another exactly like, but a different story I'd be
230 honest and I say no thanks Jim. Tell me the story I'd say, tell me the ending.
231
232 ENDS

Appendix Two

LOveOne

1 14/03/06
2 Strouden Park Library
3
4
5 *L0ve0ne*
6 AL Think Aloud (AL/T)
7
8
9 Researcher : One of the things I'm interested in for my research is whether people that like
10 reading and like stories, can adjust to reading stories on a computer firstly; and whether
11 they can adapt to reading where you click on links rather than turn pages. Because those are
12 the two big things that seem to come up that can seem quite disorientating. So what I'd like
13 you to do really is to have a quick read of the opening page and then have a wander and see
14 what does what, and then if you get stuck I'll help out. So just really think aloud – whatever
15 you see or think just tell me really.
16
17 AL: (*reading opening screen*) Right, well having read all that, um, I really wouldn't have a
18 clue where to click on next.
19
20 Researcher: It's not particularly clear where the story starts actually, is it?
21
22 AL: No... I mean, I'd probably click on that one, simply because it's the first one.
23
24 Researcher: Are you familiar with the term 'frames'?
25
26 AL: No.
27
28 Researcher: Have a quick look at it...
29
30 AL: OK.
31
32 Researcher: See what it gives you. That's all you can do really, is explore it. So if you click
33 on frames you get instructions down one frame and then you get the story appearing in the
34 other frame. That tells you how to do it.
35
36 AL: Right, so I would think, it says click on any link there, and I would think, well, you
37 must do it in order. But, not necessarily...
38
39 Researcher: Exactly. You don't have to click it in any order...
40
41 AL: No.
42
43 Researcher: ...and that's one of the big things these writers are saying, that there is a story
44 but you will find it according to your own choices.
45

46 AL: I get the idea though. I mean, you're, there's a lot more onus on us, isn't there, to
47 explore, and some people wouldn't like the fact that you have to make decisions, would
48 they?

49
50 Researcher: That's true. Some people do like it because it gives you the sense of exploring.

51
52 AL: Yeah...

53
54 *(library computer crashed –stopped recording)*

55
56 ENDS

1 14/03/06
2 Strouden Park Library
3
4 *L0ve0ne*
5
6 CL Think Aloud (CL/T)
7
8
9 Researcher : What I'd like you to do really, is just to explore initially, for five minutes,
10 what's there and get used to how it works so you can then be at home and read it in your
11 own time. Then in two weeks' time we'll all get together, the five or six of us that have read
12 the piece, and discuss what you felt about it. So, do you want to just have a wander, and see
13 what you make of it?
14
15 CL: Sure.
16
17 Researcher : Just really, basically, think aloud. Whatever you see or do, any thoughts, just
18 tell me as you go.
19
20 CL: *(reading for a few moments)*
21
22 Researcher : Have you any sense of where the thing begins?
23
24 CL: It looks to me here this is just an intro, yes?... That was slightly uncomfortable to read,
25 in terms of obviously it's this title bit, so. It's a bit... the typography. It's not clearly trying
26 to be clever, but it makes it unreadable. Just irritating. And I don't think it would get any
27 less irritating if somebody comes, an avid hypertext reader, to run into stuff like that in the
28 middle of the sentence.
29
30 Researcher : That's a design issue which could be hammered out, I guess.
31
32 CL: I can see what they're trying to achieve, but it's just distracted, yes.
33
34 Researcher : Do you use computers a lot?
35
36 CL: Yes, I teach ICT.
37
38 Researcher : So roaming around the screen and looking for links is second nature to you?
39
40 CL: Yeah. So I was going to play with these bars here.
41
42 Researcher: By all means. *(Carl reading screen)* Can I just ask you, do feel as if you're in
43 'book' mode?
44
45 CL: No, not at all. I'm trying to find the story at the moment!
46

47 Researcher: Are you in 'website' mode?
48
49 CL: Yeah. This looks like a story so I'm treating it....
50
51 Researcher: Sure. (*Carl reading*) Can you just say what you think's happening?
52
53 CL: Uhh, I'm trying to figure it out. I mean, uh, actually no idea. This is the first hypertext
54 fiction I've, normally it's facts, facts, facts with extra facts pyramided out from the first one.
55 This structure is completely new to me in terms of something here at the beginning which I
56 chose, I switched from looking at that second one to looking at the first one because it's my
57 experience to take it in a straight line. It looks to me like there's an endless string of things.
58 The colour coding I'm not clear about yet...
59
60 Researcher: But you're aware that the colour coding's indicating something. It's not
61 obvious what that is yet.
62
63 CL: Right, it's blue, and that's obviously a link onto... yeah, so it goes to...
64
65 Researcher: Just have a look at 'framed contents' just so you see what that does.
66
67 CL: (*clicked on 'frames'*). Oh Ok...
68
69 Researcher: That'll give you some instructions, which you might feel you shouldn't need.
70
71 CL: (*reading the instructions*) Not sure what the frames give you if you continue with it.
72
73 Researcher: If you go back to the home page... In a way I ought not to be telling you this, it
74 ought to be obvious, but it isn't. So if you click on 'framed contents', some people quite
75 like this because it gives you a list of the whole story, if you like...
76
77 CL: Ah Ok...
78
79 Researcher:... and they blue out as you follow them.
80
81 CL: That blue on black is unreadable. In fact, it's worse than unreadable, it gives you that
82 slightly hovering...
83
84 Researcher: It clashes.
85
86 CL: Yeah.
87
88 Researcher: Especially on this monitor, which is quite small. But I was going to ask you, do
89 you feel, from the point of view of safety and security, do you quite like to have that list of
90 what's in the book?
91

92 CL: Um, currently yes, you're looking at the first five minutes of me coming across this.
93 I'm more, um, intimidated by how long is it? You pick up a physical book and you have an
94 idea, between five and 500 pages, how long it's going to be. Um, and apart from anything
95 else, how long is this going to take me to read it? Is this going to be a month of bedtime
96 reading or is it something I can just about get through on a single sitting? There's no, even
97 with that there, there's no idea at all about how long. If that's the length of one piece, then
98 it's clearly not that long, but if it carries on sub-branching, and I'm not sure if these blue
99 ones.... Maybe, are the blue ones critical and the red ones extra?
100
101 Researcher: Well, I thought at first they blue out when they've been followed, but I'm not
102 sure that's true...
103
104 CL: Well, that's purple as a... and now I'm not sure where we are, if that's the...because I
105 used one of the internal links within the page. Does that actually occur here (*in the framed*
106 *contents*) or... so, doing that, that's 'love20.htm', (*reading URL in link bar*) I'm obviously
107 down here somewhere... so 'in the warm desert sun' is that link there.... What I want to
108 know is whether that now...no, it doesn't, it jumps to it....back again
109
110 Researcher: So what you're doing, you're testing to see if the links are consistent...
111
112 CL: Well, I'm a bit of a nerd, I'm just checking...
113
114 Researcher: No, what you're doing is fascinating because I think it's what a conscious
115 reader wants.
116 CL: So, (*testing links and colour changes on linked words*) 'honey and cream', that one, so
117 that one goes there, and...back. It doesn't seem to go back to where it was... maybe it does.
118 That one did seem to change colour. It correctly unpurples that bit, but it doesn't re-purples
119 the new one so you can see where you are there.
120
121 Researcher: So you want this really to update as you...
122
123 CL: Well, yeah. I know a bit of hypertext so I know it would need completely re-writing to
124 do that, because... it could be done in any language that would allow to display, if not
125 hypertext.
126
127 Researcher: Dreamweaver, one of the basic packages for doing web pages could do it...
128
129 CL: Not really, because they normally only control within the frame you're in. It can create
130 a completely new content, so it could write a different page to here, it could write a
131 complete page there that has that thing blued out quite easily, but then you've got the
132 phenomenal task of writing 120 different pages... I'm not getting too detailed?
133
134 Researcher: No you're not, I understand completely. Because what you're looking for is
135 the intuitive balance between this and this, aren't you? You're wanting that (*contents/links*
136 *changing colour appropriately*) to be a guide to this (*story*) which is what you do in your
137 head when read a book.

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CL: Yeah, but it wants to... ideally, even more than that, that's not so very different. If this is going to refer to that somehow, a pointer that's big, big enough, might work... do you get it? If someone's switching frames on, they obviously want to navigate. So to say where you are at the moment makes a hell of a lot of sense. I'm not sure, this seems to be fairly uh... I'm not sure whether this is a sort of linear book turned into a series of links, or whether this really does jump around an awful lot.

Researcher: Well, as far as I know it's never been presented in print... um, there is one that I thought of using that has been published as a book...

CL: So the aim today is just for me to get to there and then, so I know what I'm doing and then go home and read it... how long is it, have you read it?

Researcher: I don't know that I've read it all yet. I haven't worked through it using the contents. My preference is just to roam fairly randomly.

CL: That's kind of the other curious thing – when does a hypertext book end, in the sense of, um, there's a slight concern of leaving it uncomfortably hanging, whereas the destination of most books would be you've really arrived and wow! There's the slam dunk. And I can see that this would be more true to life but slightly less true to being able to put the book down and finish with the damn thing.

Researcher: Yeah, not an obvious artifice if it doesn't. Yes, you're quite right, what I wanted today was to get people to the point where they see how the interface works. I think some of those issues you're touching on you're going to feel more strongly when you've tried to engage with the story. Because obviously what I'd like you to do next, if you're still willing over the next couple of weeks, is to take it home and read it, because you'll stop worrying about the system, and see if you get that sense of a story.

CL: No, I do want, I'm almost excited to play with it now and...

Researcher: Yeah, I'm glad you've got that sense, because I've got the same feeling. I can't say that all of them I've been fulfilled, but the excitement is there that this is a new way of writing, a new way of telling a story. It must be doing, something good must be possible. But what I'm trying to find out, which is where my research gap is, is how this really works with readers, rather than what academics tell us is wonderful.

CL: I mean, my first impression, having written some websites as well, is that there are elements of this particular one that just don't fit good web design, and you're more web designing now than book designing.

Researcher: I agree with you. This was written in 1994...

CL: Have you worked out what the red ones, or would you rather me find out what they do?

184
185 Researcher: I think the red ones are links you haven't yet followed, and the blue ones are
186 links you have followed. But I'm not totally convinced now...
187
188 CL: Yeah, here we go, you're right. So at least it's storing a record there of what you've
189 been to.
190
191 Researcher: Within that frame...
192
193 CL: Yeah. And then if you refresh it does it...? Do they all go red again? I'm wondering if
194 there's a way of...ah yeah...
195
196 Researcher: Starting over?
197
198 CL: Yeah, it doesn't...
199
200 Researcher: Within the session it's storing...
201
202 CL: I want to restart the browser to do that.
203
204 Researcher: That's an interesting point, because if you wanted tomorrow to come back and
205 see what you've already read, you'd lose all of that memory. Would it hold it for you...?
206
207 CL: Probably. Shall we just do it again? Can we restart this, or does it take the ladies ten
208 minutes to restart this computer?
209
210 Researcher: I think we can shut Explorer down. If we don't log out we'll be all right.
211
212 CL: No, it's still there.
213
214 Researcher: It's held it. So we'd have to switch off probably.
215
216 CL: It must be in the History or something. It's not going to go back to the site and get
217 History, something it's already got in History ...
218
219 Researcher: It's just held it within the session of this computer, hasn't it? In the cache, or
220 something like that?
221
222 CL: I'm trying to remember... 'delete files'... 'clear History'...
223
224 Researcher: I see what you're trying to do. See if it gives you an unused version, as it were.
225
226 CL: There we go. So it's stored locally, which actually means it will remember it from one
227 session to the next because it's in the computer's History...
228

229 Researcher: Oh Ok, and you'd want it to do that really, or most readers would because
230 they'd want to say, 'I read that much yesterday' ...
231
232 CL: Yes, and then, but then anyone's who's using the computer will be adding to that
233 History, so you'll be... it almost needs a log-on for the person who's reading it, so you
234 don't go, 'Oh look, I've read that', 'Oh no you haven't.' You've got no way of telling
235 whether you have. Or, you've got no way of telling whether *you* have or whether someone
236 else has.
237
238 Researcher: Yeah, which is what happened earlier because people were, yeah-
239
240 CL: So there's the blue, and it tells me unless you are into nerd mode when you're trying to
241 tick off numbers of...
242
243 Researcher: There are some technological problems and some of the pieces come on CDs --
244 one of the pieces that I looked at with another group does store your place in the story. It
245 runs on its own little software application, it doesn't run on the internet, it comes on a disk
246 and it will store your place. But they don't all do that. Some of them, it's like starting from
247 scratch every time, which is a bit frustrating sometimes. We're in the early stages... I wish
248 I was going to be around for another hundred years to see what they come up with.
249
250 CL: Well, it may die a death...
251
252 Researcher: It might do, but I hope not...
253
254 ENDS

1 14/03/06

2
3 Strouden Library

4
5 *L0ve0ne*

6 JP Think Aloud (JP/T)

7
8 Researcher : I'm just recording it so that I can remember everything that we talk about.
9 Now, the idea is that these pieces are intended to be read on the computer and because
10 they're so different from books, my research is trying to find out whether people that are
11 keen readers and writers can adjust, and adapt, and whether there is in fact something here
12 that can develop into the future. It's all very new at the moment, and it's gonna seem very
13 unfamiliar to you, so don't be worried if you think 'oh no this isn't going to work for me' –
14 that is part of what I'm trying to learn.

15
16 JP: I understand.

17
18 Researcher: I'm trying to find out what does block people and what people quite like. And
19 it might be that you like something of this but not all of it, so don't be worried about saying
20 'ughh, I hated it' or 'I liked that but didn't like that', because whatever you feel, whatever
21 your response is, that's the information I need to get.

22
23 JP: I understand.

24
25 Researcher: And I'm speaking to lots of different people, students at the university and so
26 on, lots of age ranges, so I'm getting lots of different ideas. So the first thing is, probably a
27 good idea to write the website address down, then you'll be able to find it when you're at
28 home. (*Joan copies down URL*)

29
30 JP: That one at the top.

31
32 Researcher: Yes, and I chose one I knew would work on any computer. It's Eastgate,
33 they're a American publisher.... Now if I just go to... when you first get to the website
34 that's what you'll get that page, that's what you'll first get. So if you just want to quickly
35 read that, so you get the gist, so you know where you are... (*Joan reading intro blurb*). In a
36 minute I'll ask you just to explore, but just to point out a few of the feature: where you see
37 these underlined words, they're links – you get the little hand symbol. And anywhere you
38 see a hand will be somewhere you can click, that will take you somewhere else just as if
39 you were on a website.

40
41 JP: I understand.

42
43 Researcher: So instead of turning pages with this book, you'll click on links.

44
45 JP: Yes.

47 Researcher: And just so you see the differences if you take that selection, 'framed contents',
48 you'll get that page. And this shows you all of the pages or the sections in this story. So
49 there's about 150 pages, it's not a very big book, and none of the pages are very long,
50 they're all very short pages.
51
52 JP: You could go for all red or all blue.
53
54 Researcher: Well, actually what's happened is, because Mary's already looked at it some
55 of these have changed colour, and what happens is the red ones change to blue every time
56 you look at them.
57
58 JP: Ah yes.
59
60 Researcher: So it gives you an idea of where you've been which is quite nice. So when you
61 get to this page, when you're at home, maybe try these different options. If you want to go
62 to the publisher's main page, that's Eastgate, this is where you see some of their other
63 pieces - they're quite a big publisher in America. And you're familiar with using the
64 internet, are you?
65
66 JP: I know how to go back.
67
68 Researcher: Yeah, you can just use the back button. So to start really, you probably want to
69 go to 'and you read these words' and this gives you the first page to read. Or if you prefer to
70 have the framed contents, so that you've got that list always present, that's what you'll
71 need to do. So what I'd like you to do now, really, is just to, with the mouse, is just have a
72 wander and see what you find. And any comments really, at this initial stage just for five
73 minutes while you get used to it-
74
75 JP: If I follow all the red, follow one thing, how do you get back to that bit at the beginning
76 where you do 'frame' and 'non-frame'?
77
78 Researcher: Ok-
79
80 JP: Just go back, do you?
81
82 Researcher: I think the best thing is to go back or, it usually has a 'home' option which it's
83 not having there, so go back.
84
85 JP: Do you have to keep going back to that to say 'frames' 'no frames' or you know?
86
87 Researcher : Yes, you have to go the home page always.
88
89 JP: So eventually when you've tried all of it, you read all of it, you'll have read it all?
90
91 Researcher: Yes. So why don't you try just for five minutes, have a wander and see what
92 makes sense and what doesn't?

93
94 JP: I'll try 'no frames'...
95
96 Researcher: So when you have no frames you'll just get the text, without that contents page
97 at the side.
98
99 JP: Oh I see. And then that 'home' brings you back...
100
101 Researcher: That's it.
102
103 JP:... to here again. If you go to 'frameless contents' –
104
105 Researcher: Now you just get the contents without the actual text, so that's just a list of the
106 contents. That doesn't seem particularly useful to me, because you can't read the story at
107 the same time.
108
109 JP: How do you go back?
110
111 Researcher: It doesn't seem to have a 'home' button?
112
113 JP: So that's 'framed contents'? Where's the story? In the 'frames' or the 'no-frames'?
114
115 Researcher: If you have 'framed contents' that's, or you can just have 'read these words'
116 and click on there and that's the beginning of it. Then you don't have the contents but you
117 can still move around, you can still go from page to page.
118
119 JP: So, if I click on that? Oh I see. Does that carry on then, on the same story?
120
121 Researcher : Yeah.
122
123 JP: And that carries on?
124
125 Researcher: Yes. Exactly.
126
127 JP: What the last one (*underline link*) keeps carrying on again and again?
128
129 Researcher: Yes. Or you can click on that one (*underline*). They are both links.
130
131 JP: And that's the same thing that carries – I mean, that's how you're going to read the
132 story, the whole thing, by clicking on that link all the time?
133
134 Researcher: Yeah.
135
136 JP: All the way through it, like that?
137
138 Researcher: If you want to, you can do it like that, or of course you can have that contents.

139
140 JP: The piece that I'm going back to is 'walking down the street' again.
141
142 Researcher: You might find that it changes slightly, or you might find that if you keep
143 going back to the same page you might have to click on one of the links you haven't clicked
144 on before. One of the red ones... the blue ones indicate places that you've already tried.
145
146 JP: Is that true?
147
148 Researcher: Yes, and the red ones are places that you haven't tried yet.
149
150 JP: I suppose actually you fiddle about, fiddle about with it until you really understand it,
151 don't you? It seems unusual at this time-
152
153 Researcher: It is unusual, isn't it?
154
155 JP: Yes, but because I'm not really reading it that much, I'm bothering about how to get
156 together with it. So if I went there...?
157
158 Researcher: Yes, that's interesting, that (*link*) was in black on that red page.
159
160 JP: Yes. That'll break out, in a bit in the middle of the story, a large bit in the middle.
161
162 Researcher: Yeah... It's not always very obvious actually, whether you're running in a
163 straight line or not.
164
165 JP: No. Yes, it'll be a bit in the middle. That's clever, isn't it? So you go back... how d'you
166 get back?
167
168 Researcher: You can use the back button, and...
169
170 JP: ...take you back onto the contents...
171
172 Researcher: That'll take you back in a straight line.
173
174 JP: Oh yes, that's helpful... When you get these frames...?
175
176 Researcher: That'll give you some instructions.
177
178 JP: Oh that's helpful, isn't it? Oh, I think I'm good at this, because I do a lot with reading...
179 but I think I'll have to get to grips with it.
180
181 Researcher: Yeah, well I think everybody does. That's why it's quite useful to have this
182 few minutes one to one, because you can't really do this in a group, you need to have
183 hands-on.
184

185 JP: I see, they're telling you how to do it there. That's help-, I'm all right - if they're telling
186 you how to do it, I'm fine.
187
188 Researcher: You're OK.
189
190 JP: So that's all it is, is it?
191
192 Researcher: Yes. Do you feel like, if you wanted to go back to the home page now, how
193 would you do that? Let's see if you can fathom that one.
194
195 JP: I'd have to go back, like that.
196
197 Researcher: Yeah, and if you wanted to see that list of contents and the story...?
198
199 JP: Well, that's... the framed contents.
200
201 Researcher: That's it.
202
203 JP: So you could pick on that bit? (*choosing section from contents list*)
204
205 Researcher: Yeah, you could follow it.that way.
206
207 JP: Or that way.
208
209 Researcher: Yes. You could run down this contents page and see the pages appear that way.
210
211 JP: It's clever isn't it? Unusual.
212
213 Researcher: Very unusual. And there are lost of different versions, which is again why I'm
214 interested to research it.
215
216 JP: If you keep clicking will you get the story straight, or will you get the story as a sort of
217 round?
218
219 Researcher: I think you might do...
220
221 JP: Is there an end?
222
223 Researcher: That's a really good question. I think I'm gonna have to leave it to you to see
224 what you think.
225
226 JP: Yeah... I shall enjoy looking at this.
227
228 Researcher: There is a suggestion of an order, because you do have this contents page –
229 there is a suggestion of it being in order, but whether that's (*the 'last' section in the list*)
230 really the ending or not, you'll have to tell me.

231
232 JP: Yes.
233
234 Researcher: I don't want to pre-empt what people think before you've read it, but it will be
235 very interesting when the seven of you come together to see what you've all made of it.
236
237 JP: I will have fun with this.
238
239 Researcher: Will you? You think you'll enjoy it?
240
241 JP: Yes, enjoyable, yes. I think I've got it together.
242
243 Researcher: You feel happy that you could wander and explore?
244
245 JP: Oh yes, yes.
246
247 ENDS

1 27/2/06
2 KL home
3
4 *Love One*
5 KL Think Aloud (KL/T)
6
7 Researcher : Ok, so you clicked on...
8
9 KL: I wanted to know what other stuff she's done, what she's writing. Because when I read
10 fiction, I read a lot of crime fiction, and 30's and 40's fiction, but there's some I want to
11 steer clear of so I liked to know if I've heard of her, or if I like the subject, or...
12
13 KL: The screen's a bit difficult to read, it's really gory colours, and I don't like the links,
14 girly colours. The links are really difficult to read, the colours jar.
15
16 Researcher : How about now you've got onto a page of text? Is that better?
17
18 KL: Yes, but I'm not sure how much I can read of white on black though. I find it quite
19 difficult. And there's so little information on it really – you expect something at the top like
20 a page number or a chapter...like a book
21
22 Researcher : Ah, so are you in book mode at the moment?
23
24 KL : Yes! I'm having problems switching over really. So they're the links, I go on from
25 them, the red bits? It's not that clear then, really... I suppose you have to used to reading by
26 clicking the red bit instead of turning the page, is that it?
27
28 Researcher : Yes, I think that's it... I've never tried hitting the return key to go forward.
29
30 KL: Maybe there should be a guide that goes with it (*there is but she didn't find it*) for the
31 first time, because you're brought up reading as a little thing, turning pages.
32
33 Researcher : In terms of the interface this pretty straightforward?
34
35 KL: Yeah... but... I read quite quickly, skim quite quickly and I'd probably like a little bit
36 more text. This is bitty, it's too bitty. It's like reading little poems, little Japanese poems,
37 whereas I'd like a bit more to go on, really.
38
39 KL: Can you turn the page from any of these points?
40
41 Researcher : Yeah, I think so. Wherever you see these red lines that's a link, but whether
42 that one takes you to the same place as that one...
43
44 KL: That's interesting because you don't actually read down a page, do you, your glance
45 goes up and down when you read, so that sort of mirrors the glance going up and down.
46

47 Why is that there? That's weird (*another link*), it splits the sentence.
48
49 Researcher: A page of red...
50
51 KL: That's disgusting. I don't know, is it a style feature? They're trying to do things
52 differently 'cos that's really... horrible.
53
54 Researcher: Are you able to get any sense of the story at this stage?
55
56 KL: I just think it's pretty sappy... I'd probably put this book down by now and think, 'Oh
57 please.' It's like a badly written *Rebecca*. I'm finding it difficult, because it's almost like
58 reading a poem. If it was a paragraph, boxed paragraph, I would feel better about reading
59 that. You're actually reading prose but it's laid out like a free text poem.
60
61 Researcher: Would it be as disorientating in a book, if that was a page in a paperback?
62
63 KL: Yeah, I think it's a lot of publishing things – books are published in prose form like
64 that, and this is in chunks, so I'd probably be skimming really quickly, and the fact that I
65 had to keep turning the page would make me sort of zone out. Unless it was really really
66 good. It's because you're brought up that prose is in chunks and poetry is little, and when
67 you read a poem you get into poetry mode because you can hear the rhythm in your head. I
68 can't hear any rhythm.
69
70 Researcher: But this isn't poetry... but it's a convention that's being disrupted.
71
72 KL: I didn't know if it was black on white might make a difference as well, because it
73 might look a bit more 'booky'. I think the actual lettering's fine, the font I'm happy with,
74 it's quite a good size. But you've got all this bare stuff around it.
75
76 Researcher: So that simple design distracts you slightly?
77
78 KL: Yeah...I think another problem is linking through because quite often you read a
79 novel ,and they bring in lots of characters and you think where the hell did he come from
80 and you flick back and find where it was. I think you could do that in hypertext really well
81 but I'm not sure how. It's like in crime when you get to the end and the great scenario
82 happens and you think where was that clue and you flick back. But I can't see how you'd
83 get that over...
84
85 Researcher: Menus, chapters always on the page?
86
87 KL: Things like indexing, or little search engines for characters' names, I think that would
88 be quite interesting. I think it would certainly work on long rambling type of stuff. I'm
89 reading *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* which has millions of characters and millions of
90 different episodes and I could actually see that working on this...
91

92 Researcher: So, have you lost too many of your reference points, paces to regain your
93 orientation, with this piece?
94
95 KL: Yeah, because I think where I'd be now is about four paragraphs of text and maybe I
96 wouldn't be as impatient as I am now... because that's not much writing at all, and I'm
97 already feeling quite...because its all beaten up it's disrupting the highpoints.
98
99 Researcher: It can't give you that page-turning effect.
100
101 ENDS

1 14/03/06
2 Strouden Library
3
4 ***LoveOne***
5 MH ThinkAloud (MH/T)
6
7
8 Researcher : I'll leave it to you but if you get stuck, I'll show you...
9
10 MH: Lovely, thanks. (*looking at opening screen*) That's interesting: Eastgate is the name
11 of presumably the website that pushes these things out?
12
13 Researcher : That's right. Yeah, they're a sort of publisher, and you can buy pieces from
14 them on disk, but some of their pieces are on the internet for free.
15
16 MH: This is obviously one of them.
17
18 Researcher : This writer has produced things on disk as well, but because this one is free I
19 thought it would be sensible to use.
20
21 MH: Yes... See, this is where I'm a complete beginner – what do they mean by 'frames'
22 and 'no frames'?
23
24 Researcher : Ok, well why don't you click on it and have a look? (*MH clicks on frames*)
25 So that's a frame, and that's a frame and by choosing 'frames' you get some information
26 in the side frame, and then the story appears there.
27
28 MH: So the story's in the black bit?
29
30 Researcher : Yeah, if you click on 'contents' just test it...
31
32 MH: Right...
33
34 Researcher : And that's a list of all the chapters really, in a way...
35
36 MH: Oh I see what you mean...
37
38 Researcher : That's quite a complicated way of doing it because you can only see the list
39 of chapters and not the actual pages. If you go 'frames' again –
40
41 MH: Yes-
42
43 Researcher : ...I think...
44
45 MH: So this is actually the beginning of the book?
46

47 Researcher : Well that's a very good question. Where is the beginning? It's not always
48 very clear, and that's where I think sometimes people do have problems. Let's try-
49
50 MH: And what are the red dashes there?
51
52 Researcher : OK, well let me just show you, let's go back... I want to take you back to
53 where you began. If you go to 'framed contents' you'll get probably the most useful page.
54 The Eastgate home page is quite worth looking at because that will show you other pieces
55 that they've got which you might want to look at. 'Framed contents' is that, and that
56 gives you all of the places-
57
58 MH: Ah-
59
60 Researcher : That's all of the places you can go to, that's effectively the whole story-
61
62 MH: Right, that's the headings for all of the chapters?
63
64 Researcher : Yeah. And then you could consider that's the beginning, or you could of
65 course start anywhere. And that's something that's a bit unusual.
66
67 MH: Ah right... I was going to say, is that, this is something that is peculiar to hypertext?
68
69 Researcher : Yeah. And a lot of them are like this.
70
71 MH: It must be very difficult to write. To produce something like that that makes sense
72 wherever you start, whether you start from the middle or the beginning... because most
73 of us progress through beginning, middle, end.
74
75 Researcher : Yes, we expect it.
76
77 MH: Yes, so that's really quite complicated.
78
79 Researcher : I think in terms of structuring it, it's probably a skilled thing to do.
80
81 MH: Yes, I should think it must be.
82
83 Researcher : If we go back again, just briefly... if you click there that seems to be the first
84 page, but of course as I said-
85
86 MH: Well no, where we started before it was totally different...
87
88 Researcher : Yes, it had a different- there are quite a few ways that you can start this: you
89 can start here-
90
91 MH: Yes, 'these words'...
92

93 Researcher : You can have these different, you can do that, you can have the contents
94 which we saw filled up the whole page...
95
96 MH: Actually that's interesting, the chapters seem to be the first sentence...
97
98 Researcher : Right, yes, ah yes-
99
100 MH: Because it said 'it doesn't seem so long ago' - somewhere it said that, didn't it?
101
102 Researcher : Yes, it did. That seems to be the beginning.
103
104 *(library computers shut down and researcher had to get librarian to re-boot)*
105
106 MH: We were looking at 'frames' and 'no-frames' – what do they mean by 'no-frames'?
107 That would be interesting.
108
109 Researcher : 'No-frames' will be just the story-
110
111 MH: Oh I see what you mean-
112
113 Researcher : ... without that list of contents. So would you prefer to have the list of
114 contents, do you think?
115
116 MH: Umm, possibly to start with actually. I mean, I find this less distracting, to be able to
117 read it without. But on the other hand, perhaps when I'm starting, so I'd have the list of
118 contents so I could play around a bit and see... What I don't know is what those red lines
119 are.
120
121 Researcher : Well, let's go back to the beginning, let's get the framed contents, which
122 was the one you think you probably prefer, and have a play now and find out what those
123 red lines do. Obviously I'm not expecting you to get into the story.
124
125 MH: So it's a little bit difficult to say whether these are in fact... it seems to be wanting
126 to, ah there we are...*(clicking contents links and waiting for page to form)*. So actually
127 they aren't really chapters, they're just main, sort of focussing on that bit of the story?
128
129 Researcher : Yes, almost like little sections, aren't they?
130
131 MH: Yes...
132
133 Researcher : So you see a line there that reflects something in the page-
134
135 MH: So, I wonder what would happen if I, can I try that?
136
137 Researcher : Yes.
138

139 MH: *(click on link)* Ah, I see, and I see now, I remember you telling us in your talk, that
140 what you do is, these give you little extra bits to the story and they explain it.
141
142 Researcher : Yes, or they might just take you off to other parts of the story.
143
144 MH: Yes, so if I go back again... *(reading the text to herself)* So if I try that... *(laughing*
145 *at the jump from one page to the next)*.
146
147 Researcher : So you clicked on one of those lines and it took you-
148
149 MH: It took me somewhere I certainly wasn't expecting! But I wonder how you get back
150 to the original bit?
151
152 Researcher : You could always use 'back'.
153
154 MH: Yes, there we are. So I've got back.
155
156 Researcher : So you know you can always go back in a straight line.
157
158 MH: Yes, but what I haven't worked out is what is the point of having these bits, where
159 they don't actually seem to have any relation to the story. Though we've gone back to
160 the heirloom again, but it didn't mention the heirloom...
161
162 Researcher : It might be that as you get used to the whole idea, you find that these links,
163 as they're called, do take you to other parts of the story and you begin to see the
164 connections, or it might be that it confuses you.
165
166 MH: *(reading)* 'Approximately twelve inappropriate men!' *(laughing)*.... 'sat around in
167 cardboard boxes'! My goodness, what site is this?
168
169 Researcher : I've not read all of it, I must admit.
170
171 MH: I wonder what happens there, then. *(clicks on link)* Now we've gone back to the
172 original. Yes, because it's black, on a black background. The colours give an indication
173 as to whether you're in the main story or wandering around the outside of it.
174
175 Researcher : Yes, that might be a way of telling you where you are, which bits of the
176 story you're in. That's interesting.
177
178 MH: Shall I just try one more? As I'm conscious that...
179
180 Researcher: Yes.
181
182 MH: Right...now that hasn't got a, that's got a black background, that's... some of them
183 haven't...
184

185 Researcher : What do you think of the idea of having, you've got four links on that page -
186 you can choose to go from any of them.
187

188 MH: Umm, I mean I think that one or two are interesting. I think the trouble is if you
189 have too many you're gonna lose the continuity of the piece. Because I'm someone who,
190 I do wander off down different tracks because I'm very curious. And therefore I'd
191 probably forget either what I'd read before or... it would be interesting to know if, well I
192 suppose the way round that would be to read it through straight first of all, then read it
193 through again and do your wandering really.
194

195 Researcher : Yes, that's an interesting point. So rather than explore right from the off you
196 might do it a simple way.
197

198 MH: Yes-
199

200 Researcher : Mind you, what would be the simple way, reading it straight? What would
201 you do to read it straight?
202

203 MH: Well, just go straight through and then... how do you do 'next'?
204

205 Researcher : Yeah, how do you turn the page?
206

207 MH: Um, 'home'? No that can't be right...
208

209 Researcher : 'Home' will take back to that very first page
210

211 MH: So, ummm, I must, normally you'd have a 'next' wouldn't you?
212

213 Researcher : Like a page-turning thing?
214

215 MH: Yes.
216

217 Researcher : Well, I suppose you've got the contents, so you could always refer to that. I
218 guess you could always go page, page, page.
219

220 MH: Yes, I wonder why it's got two 'it doesn't seem so long ago' there? What's the
221 difference? You see there are two... yes.
222

223 Researcher : But that contents might be a way of keeping track of what you've read and
224 what you haven't read for a while.
225

226 MH: Yes. So maybe these are the beginnings of new pages.
227

228 Researcher: Yes.
229

230 MH: So maybe that's how you turn the page, by going down that little lot. Maybe it's not
231 chapters, so much, because that's quite a lot of chapters.
232
233 Researcher: There's actually about a hundred and fifty of those pages. It's not a very big
234 book if you thought of it as a paperback.
235
236 MH: So, I think possibly that these are beginnings, start of each new page.
237
238 Researcher : Yeah. Lines in pages.
239
240 MH: Yes, and that's how you turn the page, because otherwise there isn't any other way.
241
242 Researcher : There isn't any other obvious way, is there?
243
244 MH: No.
245
246 Researcher : Do you feel like, if you were on your own, you would feel confident to
247 explore now, and have a play?
248
249 MH: Yes I would. I'll certainly have a play, and presumably I could always email you if I
250 get into trouble?
251
252 Researcher : Yes, please do, yeah.
253
254 MH: If I get in an awful mess...
255
256 Researcher : Yes, I'd like you to. And please feel free to be completely open-minded. I'm
257 not expecting you to say this is the next best thing.
258
259 MH: I'll be absolutely honest with you – because nothing can take the place for me of
260 holding a book, and the smell of the paper, and being able to go back to it, and also take it
261 on the beach or go to all sorts of places where you couldn't take a computer.
262
263 Researcher : No, and that's something a lot of people say, and of course what I'm
264 interested in is whether this new kind of writing which quite a lot of people are trying,
265 can develop in the future into something as familiar and as comfortable-
266
267 MH: I'm sure that young people would fall into it very easily.
268
269 Researcher : Yeah and I'm showing different pieces to different groups: I showed to a
270 Southborne reading group a piece that was very visual, that had film clips within it-
271
272 MH: That's, I'd be really interested in the animation bit. I mean. If we've got a bit with
273 animation in it-
274
275 Researcher : Yes, we have. Let me give you some links with... *(stopped recording)*

276
277 ENDS

1 14/03/06
2
3 Strouden Library
4
5 *L0ve0ne*
6
7 RF Think Aloud (RF/T)
8
9
10
11 Researcher : Are you familiar with the basic way that links work?
12
13 RF: Yes, yes.
14
15 Researcher : Ok, so do you just want to read the opening page and get the gist of it?
16
17 RF: So we can't do this, then?
18
19 Researcher : That's the start, that appears to be the start of the story. And if you click on
20 that link, these words, that's where it always begins
21
22 RF: Hmm.
23
24 Researcher : You've got some options. If you want to click on the 'home' link, it'll take
25 you back to where you were. I'll show you one or two options that you've got for how to
26 read it. So, you just want to look at that? If you see these links down here - 'frames' and
27 no-frames' – I don't know if you know what frames are.
28
29 RF: No, I don't.
30
31 Researcher : If you click on frames you'll get the story with some instructions on how to
32 use it, on the side. That's quite useful. If you click on contents, you'll get a list of all of the
33 pages in the book.
34
35 RF: Yes.
36
37 Researcher : So that's quite useful, if you back again. If you click on 'framed contents' you
38 will get text, the story and the contents simultaneously. And the reason some of them are
39 red and some of them are blue is that Mary and Joan and have already had a look at a few
40 pages and they turn blue.
41
42 RF: I see.
43
44 Researcher : So you've got that choice, about how you want to read it. If you just want to
45 read the text, you can have it like that, but you don't see the contents page changing.
46

47 RF: OK, right, well, that's the way I will read it.
48
49 Researcher : If you want those contents, 'framed contents', and that gives you an indication
50 of what you've read and what you haven't read.
51
52 RF: I see, all right.
53
54 Researcher : OK, so do you want to just have a quick read and get used to... *(RF looking at*
55 *the screen, not acting on it)* Use the mouse to explore the page-
56
57 RF: Yeah-
58
59 Researcher : - see what happens.
60
61 RF: *(reading text)* Right, return?
62
63 Researcher : So you're thinking you'd use the return key? Try it. *(tries return key)* It
64 doesn't do anything.
65
66 RF: How do I go to the next text?
67
68 Researcher : OK, so you see these red lines and these blue lines? Just try your mouse on
69 those. They are your hyperlinks.
70
71 RF: Right.
72
73 Researcher : And by selecting whichever one you want, that will take you to another page.
74 How do you feel about the idea of selecting which page you go to next?
75
76 RF: No, not at all. How do I go on now? I've got no red...
77
78 Researcher : So... there's a red one, there's a black one.
79
80 RF: That text... was after the hyperlink... strange...
81
82 Researcher : Yeah, and you could read all the way to the bottom, and you could scroll –
83 you've got a bit more text...
84
85 RF: Yes, all right...
86
87 Researcher : You could read it all the way to the bottom and then choose which link...
88
89 RF: That's what I'd do.
90
91 Researcher : But of course, *which* link you chose...
92

93 RF: It would be the last link there.
94
95 Researcher : Always?
96
97 RF: Yes.
98
99 Researcher : You'd always go for that one?
100
101 RF: Yes. I'm conventional.
102
103 Researcher : No, that's fine.... On that one you've only got one link... On that one you've
104 got a couple.
105
106 RF: (*exploring pages*) Mice ain't nice, that's my phrase.
107
108 Researcher : Yeah, you might find you can't read this without using the mouse. Do you feel
109 that if you're using the computer, you'd rather just have simple text, not too much to do?
110
111 RF: Yes.
112
113 Researcher : For me it is quite interesting to know how writers are going to deal with this
114 new medium.
115
116 RF: Well, I'll tell you why I don't want to do anything else – it's digressing from the story.
117 I'm not a bit interested in touching it either.
118
119 Researcher : No. They will build up. As you go through the story, more and more of these
120 are going to be turning blue so you can see how much of the book you've read. For you, is
121 it important to know where you are in the book? Because, obviously you can't see how big
122 this book is.
123
124 RF: It is nice to know where you are.
125
126 Researcher : You would take a volume off the shelf and see if it's a big thick book...
127
128 RF: Yes, and when you put the book down you see how far you've gone through it.
129
130 Researcher : So, it might be that you like that contents page for that – it gives you an idea of
131 what you've read.
132
133 RF: I don't like that contents page because it doesn't give me what I expect to see in a
134 contents page at all. It should have 'chapter one, 'chapter two', 'chapter three'. And then I
135 would be happy with it. Otherwise I don't want it.
136
137 Researcher : So what do you think that's indicating then, if it's not chapters?
138

139 RF: Right, well let's try something. (*clicks on link on contents menu*)
140
141 Researcher : That's changed to that page...
142
143 RF: It doesn't mean a thing to me.
144
145 Researcher : But it might do I guess-
146
147 RF: I don't know whether that follows what I was reading or not.
148
149 Researcher : No.
150
151 RF: It doesn't... not a bit interested.
152
153 Researcher : Do you think it might follow that page, 'were in bloom', if you'd read it in that
154 order?
155
156 RF: Let's do 'were in bloom'... 'the apple trees were in bloom'... That didn't follow did
157 it?
158
159 Researcher : No, not if you clicked there. So what do you think these links might be doing?
160
161 RF: For people who want to see further information about the story, background
162 information...
163
164 Researcher : That's a good point, yeah. I don't know if it is doing that. I think you might
165 find that these take you to other parts of the story. I think they might be jumping you to
166 different places in the story. It might not just be giving you background. They might be
167 jumping you down here somewhere, you can't tell exactly, can you? What's your initial
168 feeling about reading at a screen?
169
170 RF: Don't like it. I would print it out to read it.
171
172 Researcher : Would you? If you did that though, it wouldn't work anymore, because these
173 links wouldn't work then.
174
175 Roy: In that case I'd give in.
176
177 Researcher : Would you? You wouldn't try?
178
179 RF: No...
180
181 Jim: Do you think you will give it a go for the purpose of the research?
182
183 RF: I'll have a go, to see if I can change, because we're all set in our ways. So you've got to
184 see if you want to do it or not. I don't see me doing it. I'll give it a go.

185
186 Researcher : I really am open-minded. I'm not expecting you to say 'I loved it', I'm not
187 presenting it to you as the next best thing – I'm actually interested to know what you think,
188 because you're an experienced reader, you're a writer. So I'm actually trying to find out
189 from a range of people how they react.
190
191 RF: I'm not very good at reading. I don't read a lot.
192
193 Researcher : You must have at some point, to be interested in writing, I'd have thought?
194
195 RF: Oh yeah...
196
197 Researcher : But you don't read much now?
198
199 RF: No. If I read, it's usually something like an autobiography or something like that, or
200 something scientific. I'm a scientist. Uhh, and I don't read detective novels, romance, any
201 of that.
202
203 Researcher : What's your interest in writing? To write fiction?
204
205 RF: Oh yes, I want to write fiction.
206
207 Researcher : And this is fiction. This is a writer of fiction trying to do something different.
208
209 RF: As far as I'm concerned, I'm waiting till they get to the point.
210
211 Researcher : When you read it properly without me interrupting you all the time, you've
212 got a better chance of getting to the point, haven't you?
213
214 RF: Yes.
215
216 Researcher : Do you think you'll read it by clicking through one section at a time, like
217 that...or...?
218
219 RF: No, I don't, because it doesn't give you the next section after that one. That section will
220 not be followed by the next section. It'll be followed by something else.
221
222 Researcher : You could do it like that, and just work your way through, till they all go blue.
223
224 RF: It doesn't do it, does it?
225
226 Researcher : It's a way of doing it.
227
228 RF: We did it just now and it jumped over another bit of text...
229

230 Researcher : Yeah. I think that was because you clicked on a link *within* the text. They're
231 going to go to different places.
232
233 RF: Ah, I see.
234
235 Researcher : Those (*links on contents menu*) will take you to specific titled pages, and *those*
236 links will take you to unknown places.
237
238 RF: That's going to be in order, down there, is it?
239
240 Researcher : It's *an* order. It's the order that the author's presented it...
241
242 RF: Yes, but these may be with flashbacks, which I don't like...
243
244
245 Researcher : It could be...
246
247 Roy: I don't think flashbacks work in a novel at all.
248
249 Researcher : It might be flashbacks.
250
251 RF: Film's got a lot to answer for.
252
253 Researcher : I think it is hard to get used to the idea that it isn't in a specific order, you can
254 actually read it in lots of different orders. And I think that's quite unsettling sometimes.
255 Anyway, do you feel like, if you were at home with it on your own, you'd at least know
256 how to work it?
257
258 RF: Yes, we'll have a go. But at the moment I've got so much trouble with the prostate, I'm
259 not really in the mood to sit at it for a long time.
260
261 Researcher: Well if you're not, you're not. Don't worry. Just do what you want to do.
262
263 RF: I'll have a look at the website and see how I feel.
264
265 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....MASTER DATA.....

The hypertext piece you read:.....LoveOne...L/Q

6 respondents

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

Yes N= 6 No n= 0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=1

Online games n=0

PC games n=0

email and browsing/ information seeking n=4

Shopping n=3

Other.... Booking air tickets, teaching prep, typing x2, chat

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?

Yes n=5 No n=1

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=5

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=4

An author you already like n=4

An author you have never tried before n=4

Recommendation from a friend n=6

Review in the press or media n=6

Anything else? To stretch my imagination, if font and prose to my taste I read it.....

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n= 2

Familiar everyday language n=3

Interesting characters n=6

Emotional moments n=3

Exciting action n=4

Surprise n=5

Tension n=5

Satisfying conclusion n=6

Anything else? memorable

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=1

A deep, heavy read n=0

Both n=5

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n= 2 No n=0 Don't mind n=4

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes n=5 No n=1

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

Yes n=6 No n=0

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=4

Uninteresting plot n=5

Too familiar storyline n=3

Uneventful n=4

Dull characters n=5

Poor writing n=6

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else? Repetitive, lacks research, clichés

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=2 No n=0 Don't mind n=4

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

Yes n=0 No n=3 Don't mind n=3

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=1

Physically uncomfortable n=4

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=1

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=6

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=3 Large n=1 Either n=2

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=2 No n=4

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=0 No n=6

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=0 No n=6

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=1 No n=0 Irritated n=5

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=0 No n=6

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=0 No n=4 No menus offered n=2

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes No No visual elements present n=6

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes No N/A n=6

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes No No multimedia used n=6

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=0 Disrupt n=2 Neutral n=4

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=2

Watching a film n=0

Playing a game n=0

Solving a puzzle n=3

Something else? Reading meaningless piece of prose that goes nowhere; reminds me of degree-level performance art: pretentious...

2 What about the hypertext carried you along?

Artistic/ appealing language n=1

Interesting characters n=2

Emotional moments n=1

Exciting action n=1

Surprise n=1

Tension n=0

Satisfying conclusion n=0

Nothing n=3

Anything else I've forgotten? Determination to give it a chance; curiosity to see if it would make sense...

3 Were any of the following a problem for you?

Dull writing n=1

Uninteresting characters n=0

Over-complex plot n=2

Confusing plot n=3

No excitement n=1

No sense of an ending n=4

Anything else that you didn't like? Disjointed, disconnected links, no continuous story, poorly written, weird writing, confusing text...

4 Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

5 Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?

Yes n=0 No n=1 **Disrupted reading n=4** Don't know n=1

6 How did you select links?

Just clicked on any interesting word n=1

Word that seemed to signify something n=0

Animated image N/A

Icon n=0

Attempting to follow the story n=5

At random n=2

Any other factor? Spontaneous following links.....

7 Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

9 *If 'yes' to question 8, was that:*

intentional n=2 accidental n=1 **both n=3**

10 *If you did re-read sections was that:*

interesting n=1 exciting n=0 **annoying n=5** frustrating n=1

11 *Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?*

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

12 *Did you feel satisfied with the ending?*

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

13 *Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?*

Yes n=0 **No n=6**

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium n=0

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=0

Anything else? To give hypertext a fair chance; enjoyed some threads of the plot

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring n=2

Confusing n=3

Unsatisfying story n=2

Did not operate easily n=2

Anything else? Plotless and pointless

Finally....

Thank you for your help

If you want to say anything else about the experience of reading hypertext fiction, please add below.

The next step will be to meet with your co-participants to discuss your reactions. I will pay for food and drink! I will be in touch.

Jim Pope

1 11/04/06
2 Strouden Park Library
3
4 *L0ve0ne*
5 discussion (L1/D)
6
7 Present: JP, MH, AL, RF
8
9
10 Researcher : I went through the questionnaires, and it was very interesting. What I tried to
11 do was pull out what was in common, rather than what was different, because obviously
12 everybody could be different: what was interesting was what was in common. So the first
13 thing was, did you feel that you got anything from this that you would expect to get from
14 reading a good book? And I think you've answered it in your questionnaires, but now's a
15 chance to give me a bit more detail.
16
17 AL: I found it very jumbled...
18
19 MH: Yes, so did I.
20
21 AL: A bit frustrating.
22
23 MH: I couldn't follow any real story in it at all, even when I went right the way through
24 without going through each line. I just couldn't get any proper story, I didn't have any
25 satisfaction in it at all. There were certain parts of it that were quite well described, quite
26 descriptive, but the trouble is they seemed very isolated.
27
28 AL: I didn't really like having to make a decision. There were usually about three different
29 links, and you chose one and then you might have an unsatisfactory next bit. You think,
30 'Oh I wish I hadn't chosen that segment, I wish I'd chosen another one, perhaps it might
31 have more relevance to what I previously read.'
32
33 Researcher : So shall we talk about that business of having these links then? One of the
34 things about hypertext is that you're not reading it in a straight line path. That's obviously
35 intended by the author, but could you imagine any situation where you'd enjoy that? Could
36 that be interesting, or was it just a no-no for you?
37
38 AL: It depends on what sort of mood you're in and what you're expecting from the read. It
39 didn't hold my attention enough to keep going with it very long, but that could have been
40 different in different circumstances. Right in the beginning with computer games we used
41 to play text-based games, which was a little bit like that, um but it was a bit more exciting.
42 So I've done something a little bit similar.
43
44 Researcher : Why were those ones more exciting?
45

46 AL: Well, I suppose it was the story. It was a very good yarn that kept you- (*interruption*
47 *from other people coming into room*). It was bit more of a puzzle, I suppose, that's what
48 kept the impetus going.
49
50 MH: It was a bit like those books that I talked about when you first came. I remember my
51 son having those books where you had a choice of going through one of three doors or
52 something, and whichever door you went through the adventure took a different thing. And
53 I was expecting it to be a little bit like that actually, yes.
54
55 (*moved to quieter room*)
56 Researcher: AL was just talking about some interactive stories that she'd used on
57 computers-
58
59 AL: But this was in the very early days of computer games, but no pictures, but text, and a
60 little bit similar in that you picked where you go onto next, you click on something. But
61 where that scored more than the story was it did hold your interest and there were puzzles
62 to do. I'm afraid I didn't find the main gist of the story, it didn't grab me, I didn't sort of
63 want to find out more.
64
65 Researcher : Does anybody else want to say something about the story they found or didn't
66 find? I know roughly what you thought-
67
68 RF: We all had the same story, didn't we?
69
70 Researcher : Yes.
71
72 RF: I thought it was not interesting at all, so I didn't want to read it anyway.
73
74 JP: It was frustrating, it never seemed to finish, and you always want a finish. You want a
75 finish to something, don't you?
76
77 Researcher : Did any of you think you found an ending?
78
79 MH: No.
80
81 RF: I didn't bother. I didn't bother, I knew I didn't like it-
82
83 JP: I kept going through it, and every now and again they kept going on and on-
84
85 AL: I tried about three times.
86
87 MH: I made sure I went right the way through it.
88
89 AL: I even did it one morning, really early before the family had got up, thinking, 'Right,
90 I'm fresh'...
91

92 Researcher : So you all gave it a go?
93
94 RF: Yes, I certainly tried it.
95
96 Researcher : What do think the writer could have done with it to make it more appealing to
97 you? Is there something really obvious about it that-
98
99 AL: You didn't have any clear picture of any character, whereas in a book you tend to have
100 description, you know the person, you know whether you're going to like them or be
101 intrigued by them... so there was no depth to the characters.
102
103 JP: Yes, the characters kept changing.
104
105 MH: Yes, because I think in most books, what attracts you is that you feel you've built
106 up a relationship with a character, don't you? And that is what makes you identify with
107 one.
108
109 AL: You don't have to necessarily like the character, but just be intrigued, enough
110 description for you to know the character and care about going on the journey with them.
111
112 Researcher : Is caring about the character important?
113
114 All: Yes.
115
116 Researcher : Because some people are more interested in action and events than they are
117 characters, but for you is it the character that's the most important thing?
118
119 JP: I think you've got to know the person who's doing whatever-
120
121 AL: Even if you don't know right away, it's got to lead to a little bit of satisfaction.
122
123 Researcher : And you didn't get that soon enough to make you want to read on?
124
125 AL: No...
126
127 Researcher: Can I just go round and ask you, how long do you think you spent with it? RF?
128
129 RF: Quarter of an hour.
130
131 Researcher : And by then you'd had enough?
132
133 RF: Mmm (yes).
134
135 Researcher : How long would you give to an ordinary novel?
136
137 RF: About the same time!

138 Researcher : I'm not trying to pin you down! What I'm interested in is the difference
139 between this and an ordinary book, whether there are other things going on that stop you.
140 So do you think that a quarter of an hour into a standard print book you'd know whether
141 you liked it or not?
142
143 RF: Probably yes.
144
145 Researcher : How about you, JP?
146
147 JP: I think about four times, because when I was even doing the questionnaire you started
148 asking about icons, and things, and 'Did I miss something?', so back I went again, 'No,
149 there weren't any of those,' sort of cartoon things coming through, so I went through it
150 again. I did it about four times. About a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes each time I
151 think.
152
153 Researcher : So you put in, I mean, and again how far into a novel do you think you would
154 go before you'd know, 'No this isn't really for me'? ... a chapter or...?
155
156 JP: Well it depends really. I would tend to take quite a while before I, if it was said 'oh it's
157 a marvellous thing', I might 'oh I haven't found that yet', but I wouldn't discard it until I
158 thought it was really worth discarding.
159
160 Researcher : How about you AL?
161
162 AL: I had about three sessions, each about half an hour. But the book thing, in a hundred
163 pages. If it hasn't got me in a hundred pages... life's too short.
164
165 Researcher : How about you MH? If it was a novel that someone had recommended...
166
167 MH: Well, I would persevere, but I'm, it's not so much time but probably a number of
168 chapters. I'd probably give it about four chapters actually, before I gave up. I don't
169 usually give up on a book, but one very long book, which was *Tanamers*, I very nearly gave
170 up on but, because it was about a subject I liked, I went on. But with regard to this, I did
171 between an hour and an hour and a half. By the time I'd sort of gone through, and then
172 perhaps had a break, and then come back, and then tried to see a different angle –
173 so....
174
175 Researcher : You would have given up sooner if it hadn't been for me?
176
177 AL: Quite definitely.
178
179 JP: I'm sure I wasn't missing anything!
180
181 AL: I think it's only really because the story didn't grab us. I think had it been a different
182 sort of story I might have-
183

184 JP: And had it all been the same sort of story from different angles, that would have been
185 different. But they were all different stories. One story but developing different threads of
186 it.
187
188 RF: You see, I didn't find the links any use at all. I couldn't make out what they were meant
189 to be doing, the hyperlinks. They didn't sort me out at all.
190
191 Researcher : You did all discover the links?
192
193 All: Yes.
194
195 Researcher : Did any of you find that the links took anywhere that was interesting?
196
197 MH: No, I got confused. I just got totally confused, because I thought, 'Is this the same
198 character, or is it a different time-scale with the same character?' I couldn't work it out. It
199 was just that now and again the same names would crop up. But you'd think, 'Well I
200 suppose it is the same character.'
201
202 Researcher : If you imagined a story that would be told well with links, if you imagined a
203 writer who wanted to write a novel, listening to everything you're saying, and really
204 wanted to take notice of what you're saying, could you imagine a novel that could be
205 written for the computer with links, and those links would be useful?
206
207 JP: Yeah, I think developing characters all the time.
208
209 Researcher : So developing characters... what would you imagine the links doing?
210
211 JP: Sort of a background, say like he came from such and such, or memories of his
212 grandmother, something like that...
213
214 MH: Also it might describe why he was reacting in a certain way at that time, you know, if
215 someone was being aggressive or something, and then you could sort of click on and see
216 what happened in his past life.
217
218 RF: We were only talking about that last night, about the, expanding the characters so you
219 can find out more about the character. But I'll tell you this much, I don't want to do that. No,
220 I don't want to do it anyway, even if it's there.
221
222 Researcher : If you didn't want to do it, presumably you'd still be able to find a story that
223 worked? You're suggesting that you could have these as additional paths that you could go
224 down if you want to?
225
226 RF: Yes, that's right. This is what we were expecting, and that didn't happen really.
227
228 JP: More knowledge of the same story.
229

230 MH: But it wouldn't interrupt the story if you didn't want to go down those lines. The story
231 would still be there, but if you wanted to find out more about the character you could.
232 Otherwise it made sense if you just went through it anyway.
233
234 Researcher : How about you, AL?
235
236 AL: Well, it was a bit frustrating having to make a decision which link to go on. There were
237 three in each paragraph, so I think the first time I did it, I did the first link each time, and
238 then I thought, 'I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't done the first link?'
239
240 MH: It's quite mind-boggling actually, because then you get very-
241
242 RF: Well, the hyper-links didn't take you to where you thought you were gonna go, even if
243 you went to the end one! So I stopped using those and I started using the contents list.
244
245 Researcher : Did you have that contents list where you could see all of the pages?
246
247 RF: Yes.
248
249 Researcher : How did that work? Any better?
250
251 RF: Well, pretty boring. I kept on doing it and finding the, so it did carry on from the
252 previous page, but it wasn't interesting stuff... and what's more, it's not easy to read. I told
253 you this in my questionnaire – stupid the way people behave these days, they do it in
254 magazines as well, they give you a blue background with black printing on it, all sorts of
255 stupid things like that. The printing wasn't big enough. I was able to enlarge that, but I
256 couldn't do anything about the other printing in the story.
257
258 Researcher : Did you all have an issue with reading it on screen, colours, the typeface?
259
260 MH/AL: Yes.
261
262 JP: I didn't mind, I could read it all right. I think it's just the fact that what you were reading
263 was a load of rubbish.
264
265 Researcher : There are so many elements to this. One is reading on a computer, another is
266 reading coloured text, the other is having links.
267
268 JP: I do still prefer to read a book on a table...
269
270 MH: I found it interesting enough. I would have overcome my dislike of reading it on the
271 computer, but it didn't hold my attention enough.
272
273 RF: No, I go on the internet to look at something I'm interested in. I look at it on the screen,
274 I read a bit of it to see if I want to read it. I then print it.
275

276 Researcher : Do you? You wouldn't read from the screen?
 277
 278 RF: No. Never read from the screen, unless I'm just looking to see if I want to read it or
 279 not.
 280
 281 Researcher : Could I ask you if you think reading on the computer when you're using the
 282 internet, for example to look for information for a holiday, is a different kind of reading?
 283 Are you aware that you're doing something different in your brain? I'm quite interested to
 284 know if you think it's a different kind of activity.
 285
 286 JP: What, when you're looking for information?
 287
 288 Researcher : Yeah... because people are very happy to use the computer to browse for
 289 holidays or information, but they don't seem as happy to do this.
 290
 291 MH: I do think it's different actually. If I'm looking up, because I'm researching or
 292 something, I'm looking for specific information, or links to go on for that information. But
 293 for me, reading is a relaxing pleasure, and because of the fact it was on the screen, and
 294 those other things, it wasn't relaxing for me, and so therefore I didn't really get the pleasure
 295 out of it. But when I'm actually researching, because I'm interested in what I'm looking for
 296 and there's another purpose to it, you know the reason I'm researching, the purpose is
 297 there's an end result of my own research or what I'm doing. But reading a book, I would
 298 have liked it to have been for pleasure, and I didn't actually get that pleasure out of it. I
 299 think that's why I was conscious there was the difference.
 300
 301 Researcher : Do you think it becomes work because of having to make these choices
 302 because of the links, or because it's on the computer, or both? What is it that turns it from
 303 being relaxation into something else?
 304
 305 MH: I think it was partly the strain of actually looking at the computer for that length of
 306 time, also, as you say, the print, the colours of the print, umm and also I just, I just felt...
 307 strangely enough I felt pressurised and I don't know why.
 308
 309 AL: When I read, I usually read in bed, to go to sleep, and I am very relaxed, so it was the
 310 complete opposite - I was sat upright in an upright chair, looking at a screen. You know, I
 311 was probably tired, because it was the end of the day at one of the sessions, so... Yeah, it
 312 wasn't relaxing, it was like a task to do.
 313
 314 JP: I think when you read, a story or anything, you get more sort of factual background, sort
 315 of padding in the story, where they are, where they live, you get all this. Now in that story
 316 there was none of that, there was just a dramatic sort of play, in a way.
 317
 318 RF: I think it's work. I think using the computer is work. We call it play, but in actual fact
 319 it's another bit of work we've given ourselves to do. I do photographs on there, I do internet
 320 research, and all the rest of it. But to my mind, sometimes I think to myself, 'Why am still
 321 sitting here after an hour? I'm wasting my time doing this.'

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Researcher : It's very time consuming, and one very interesting thing is that you haven't lost yourselves in time with this piece, which you might do if you're doing photographs or a book.

RF: I can tell you my daughter reads off the computer, but that's because she's got a laptop, and she does it in bed.

Researcher : I'm trying to pin down what the strands of this are. One might be the physical problem that it's a computer, it's not a book and that might be barrier until we get little portable books.

RF: You're not in an armchair, are you?

Researcher : You're not in an armchair, you can't choose your own environment. That might be a problem that will always be there, do you think, until we get really beautiful... Sony are going to make an electronic book that's the size of a paperback that-

JP: When you read a story, you're in it, it's real to you.

Researcher : So this is to do with the writing?

JP: Yes. It was fanciful, it wasn't really on the nail of being real.

Researcher : So, do you think for all of you that was the biggest issue, that actually you could have stood the links, the computer, if the writing had been beautiful?

RF: It wouldn't work for me anyway. I don't like the links, don't like reading off the screen...

Researcher : So for you, a book, a story can only be told through print?

RF: Yeah. If it had been a story I was interested in, and I had known how many pages it was, I might have printed it off and read it.

Researcher : You could have printed it...

RF: I didn't know how many pages. I wasn't going to use up all my ink on something I wasn't interested in.

MH: Something I did find confusing, and I don't know if it was just my inability with computers... but, unless you had the index down on the left how could you turn the page? Do you remember, we looked at that when we were here. There was no way of actually turning the page.

367 Researcher : Unless you had that list on one side of the screen, you just turned the page by
368 clicking on the links. That was all you had.

369
370 MH: Yes, and I didn't like that. I felt a bit frustrated - it was a bit like running into a brick
371 wall, and suddenly you couldn't find the door.

372
373 RF: I've spoken about this quite a lot in adult education: mice ain't nice. I don't like
374 using a mouse. I'd far rather press 'return', and that should get you the next page. That's
375 what it will do normally. On this thing we couldn't do that, we had to use the damn
376 mouse.

377
378 Researcher : That would only work if each page followed the page before.

379
380 RF: Yes. Isn't that how we usually have it, one page after another?! I don't want anything
381 else!

382
383 Researcher : What this writer is doing is giving you something that isn't how we usually
384 have it, and that's part of what I'm trying to understand, how much we can take of what
385 we're not used to. Can we adapt to something?

386
387 RF: Computer nerds that are playing games all day long on a computer, they're gonna like
388 it.

389
390 MH: Could I just say, I don't know if anyone else found this confusing, but some of those
391 pages had exactly the same start ... and then you clicked on it, and it was as though it was
392 a different person in a different place, but they didn't necessarily link up with whatever
393 happened next. I can't remember what the first bit... how did it go? It started off with the
394 same sentence, didn't it, for about three of those pages? So it took you into a different...

395
396
397 JP: It could be cleverly done, having it like a detective story, and stories going off each side,
398 and you could say the clues are in the side bits, and you eventually will know who the killer
399 is because gradually they're giving us subtle clues. You know, that central story coming
400 through again...

401
402 Researcher : I think it goes back to what Anne was saying about those things you did when
403 it was a puzzle, that drew you along.

404
405 AL: Yes, that's right. Some of it was cryptic, and you typed in what you thought... it was
406 so long ago...

407
408 RF: You're going through a maze in that case, in those computer games.

409
410 Researcher : What do you think about the idea of having a page that has contents on it, and
411 a menu, things like that, that doesn't even look like a book? Does that throw you,
412 immediately you see that, or were you prepared to accept that because it's on a computer

413 screen and you know it's not going to look quite like a book? I'm interested in how the
414 visual design of these things either put people off or draws people in.
415
416 RF: I think it was all right to have the contents page, and let's face it if you've got a book
417 sometimes you'll go back and look at the contents page, won't you? You don't have to go
418 back, it's there all the time.
419
420 Researcher : So in fact, to have that might be reassuring?
421
422 RF: That's a good thing, yes,
423
424 Researcher : What about the 'frames', 'no-frames', 'framed contents', do you remember
425 those list of choices they gave you? And I remember on the first night, pretty much
426 everybody was a bit confused about that...
427
428 RF: I never got over the confusion.
429
430 JP: It didn't seem to make any difference if the others were over there or over here, the
431 actual what you're doing seemed to be the same thing...
432
433 Researcher : This writer could have made it easier for you, couldn't she? She could have
434 used language, and made the thing easier for you to get into. You're all suggesting things
435 that could make it better...
436
437 MH: It wasn't long enough really...
438
439 AL: It was long enough for me! I didn't even know if I'd got to the end of it...
440
441 RF: They should have given you the blinking number of words at the beginning, shouldn't
442 they?
443
444 Researcher : The only way you knew was if you had that list of contents down one side, you
445 could see how many...
446
447 MH: Once they changed colour, they changed colour as you clicked on them...
448
449 RF: It didn't tell you how many words in each bit.
450
451 Researcher : No.
452
453 RF: You know, when I get something off the internet, it usually tells you how many words
454 there are. You can look it up.
455
456 Researcher : You don't need that with a book though, how many words there are...
457

458 RF: Yes you do. You go to the back of the book, you find it's 196 pages, 500 words a page,
459 you know how many words.
460
461 MH: I don't actually work that out...
462
463 AL: Basically you've got the book, it's a thick or a thin book.
464
465 RF: I started to read *The Da Vinci Code*, the book's that thick. I started it, didn't give it a
466 quarter of an hour... didn't read it at all...
467
468 Researcher : So one thing this writer-
469
470 JP: Why didn't you read it?
471
472 RF: Didn't like it. Didn't find it interesting.
473
474 Researcher : We need to wrap this up because you need to go into your meeting now. I just
475 wanted to ask about the idea of could you summarise this to anybody? If someone said to
476 you, 'You read *L0ve0ne* by Judy Molloy, what was it about?' Could you...?
477
478 AL: I don't think I could say...
479
480 RF: No idea. I didn't get far enough into it anyway.
481
482 Researcher : So, in a way, has this writer failed in every respect of what she's trying to do?
483 I'm not putting words into your mouth, but the only thing you said that was good about it
484 was the provision of a contents list... and that's fine, because I need to understand this
485 because actually what I'm going to do at the end is publish 'this is what readers tell me
486 about these pieces. This is what writers should therefore be thinking about'. Writers don't
487 seem – fingers crossed that I'm right but this is what you're telling me – they don't seem to
488 have got to grips enough with the new medium to pull new people in. Roy might be right
489 that kids will go for it, but there's an awful lot of readers out there who might love this if it
490 was done well.
491
492 MH: To be honest with you, I think this particular piece has failed on everything, because I
493 didn't identify with any of the characters, I couldn't follow the story, it didn't have an
494 ending, and it didn't draw me into it. I didn't have any kind of feeling of empathy for
495 anything that was going on.
496
497 JP: It seemed to a story about a man called Gunther, and this girl, and they got on a
498 motorbike sometimes, and they had it off sometimes, and then there was six or seven men
499 sometimes, and they saw some lovely views.... It was a bit scary, you wondered what they
500 were doing...
501
502 Researcher : So on a literary level, if you imagine those pages printed in order in a book,
503 there wasn't really much story...?

504
505 AL: There wasn't much challenge, not enough depth.
506
507 Researcher : So, on a literary level, not really brilliant; on an operational level, the interface,
508 the thing you see on the screen, that was also confusing?
509
510 AL: No... I don't think it was... only confusing because we didn't really, you couldn't
511 really see where the links were...
512
513 JP: I don't think it was long enough for you to get completely into it before you were off
514 another story.
515
516 AL: I'm not sure if there's a choice, how many people would go for that or would pick up a
517 book.
518
519 MH: It would be easier if it was good.
520
521 JP: There is a future for something like this, but they haven't exactly got it yet. I think they
522 are doing something, and it will come together.
523
524 AL: I think as readers, actually when I think about it, we're a bit lazy, we want the story, we
525 don't really... the author has done the work, they've worked it out, we just want to read it.
526 Imagine that on a TV, to keep clicking and having different pictures coming up, it would
527 drive you round the twist after 40 minutes or so, wouldn't it?
528
529 RF: You'll be able to do that on TV very soon, with the red button...
530
531 Researcher : Thank you ever so much....
532
533 ENDS

1 28/3/06
2 (by telephone)
3
4 *LoveOne*
5 discussion (CL/D)
6
7
8
9 Researcher : Hi, it's Jim Pope from Bournemouth Uni.
10
11 CL: Hi!
12
13 Researcher : Are you able to speak for a few minutes, or shall I ring you later?
14
15 CL: No, this is good.
16
17 Researcher : Are you sure?
18
19 CL: Yes.
20
21 Researcher : Ok, right. Well, I was just looking through your questionnaire, just to pick up
22 on some of the ideas again. One thing that was interesting, I asked the question 'do you
23 typically enjoy the feeling of being engrossed in a book?' and you answered 'no' to that. So,
24 just so I understand-
25
26 CL: Hang on. Do I *typically* enjoy it? Yes I do. I didn't in that book.
27
28 Researcher : Ah, right, not in this one.
29
30 CL: Sorry, I misread that question.
31
32 Researcher : No, that's OK, that's fine. I did wonder about that, because I wondered what
33 your approach to reading was.
34
35 CL: I do normally, it takes me something to suspend disbelief, but when I do I can get very,
36 very engrossed in books.
37
38 Researcher: So what would get you hooked, if you were reading a print novel?
39
40 CL: Um, I just lose myself in the whole, what's the word? I just daydream into it.
41
42 Researcher : Yeah. Sot of get mixed up in the characters, and the events...
43
44 CL: Yeah, I follow them. I'm a kinesthetic learner, so I'm in the story, and um... I read
45 quite slowly, but I tend to on the whole read myself to sleep at night. It tends to sort of
46 merge into dreamland.

47
48 Researcher : I said ‘what do you expect from a good read?’ and you pretty much ticked off
49 the whole list. Interesting characters, surprise, action, tension... Is that because it’s a kind
50 of escapism thing for you, reading?
51
52 CL: Yes, definitely. The little I do read of fiction, the little fiction I read is complete
53 escapism, that’s the intention of it. I’ve probably read most of the books I’ve read, actually
54 on ocean passages when I’ve been sailing, to kill the time and to pass the time in a pleasant
55 dreamworld.
56
57 Researcher: In that respect, reading at a computer would be inconvenient, I guess.
58
59 CL: By itself it sort of, I spend my working life at a computer... I sort of switch it into work
60 mode.
61
62 Researcher : Yeah... Is there, you did put that you found reading at a computer physically
63 uncomfortable. Do you think that physical barrier would actually prevent that sort of
64 escapism that you mentioned?
65
66 CL: Yeah, to a large extent the text is less readable. I only discovered the other day, when
67 you get to about 180 dots per inch it becomes, it suddenly starts to get a lot more readable.
68 I feel that a screen is sort of, I would always much rather print out something off the
69 computer if I’m working on it or working on draft documents, essays and things. So from
70 that respect it was uncomfortable. From the respect of the genre of the ‘One Love’ (*i.e.*
71 *L0ve0ne*) that you gave us to read, I was left constantly with the impression of snatching at
72 straws. Trying to grasp exactly where I was in the story and because it was my first one,
73 I’m sure it’s something that grows on you and, you know, just like reading itself,
74 eventually that interface would become invisible to you. But currently it jars quite
75 noticeably and I was left, when I had apparently finished I was still feeling ‘well have I
76 finished?’, and I was clicking around trying to find unused links that I hadn’t used.
77
78 Researcher : What would have helped you with the design of the interface, then, help you
79 to feel more comfortable and know where you were?
80
81 CL: Um, I don’t know. I mean I don’t know whether you can tell me how well you thought
82 that was designed, that ‘One Love’ compared to others you’ve read.
83
84 Researcher : Well, I picked it as one that had got some good reviews but actually, given the
85 feedback from the research with the rest of your group, I can see the obvious deficits in the
86 way it was designed.
87
88 CL: From your original conversation with us, I imagined that there are some exquisite
89 pieces of work out there that really draw you in and you just lose yourself in the whole
90 dance of what’s going on in the story and what’s going on in the sub-plot. That one didn’t,
91 it was um, it was very much, it looked to me like a text processing exercise where someone

92 had tried to cleverly link passages so it wouldn't matter which order you read them in. But
93 um...

94

95 Researcher : ...In fact it did matter.

96

97 CL: Yeah.

98

99 Researcher : No, I mean, there are some examples that are different, but the interesting
100 thing is, all the pieces that I've chosen have come up against the same issues of
101 disorientation and lack of sort of story structure, and that's obviously what I'm interested to
102 know, why that always happens. But, for example, when you clicked on a link did it take
103 you to somewhere that made sense of the continuing story or was that one of the problems?
104

105 CL: It didn't completely. I mean, it was clearly, it seemed to me that each link was, or quite
106 a few of the paragraphs that you linked to, was designed to be linked to from several
107 different directions. So there wasn't always a continuity of, uh, if you like, narrative, or a
108 sense of narrative, leading from one to the next.

109

110 Researcher : For you, that's what you want from a narrative is it, you want the feeling of
111 linearity and progression?

112

113 CL: I'm not, I uh, stropily insisting that I want it, I just didn't, it was more that I was left
114 with the absence of it. I'm sure that people would create a structure equivalent to it.

115

116 Researcher : Yeah, the nearest thing to it in conventional media would be a David Lynch
117 film, something like *Twin Peaks* that roams around and gets you confused. But you still end
118 up with a sense of something.

119

120 CL: I think what was going on in terms of the disparity and why it's not a David Lynch film
121 was the fact that *you* were having to actively choose...if you're sort of led into a film you
122 do trust the director to be, confusing you deliberately, if you like. You know, the sort of
123 *Matrix* experience.

124

125 Researcher : Yeah. That's very interesting. So actually, the fact of your involvement kind
126 of adds to the confusion in a way.

127

128 CL: It creates a lack of trust in the author. And or... (*Carl called away – interview ended*)

129

130 ENDS

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26/04/06

KL home

L0ve0ne

Discussion KL/D

Researcher : The first thing is, you listed a number of aspects of a good read which were important to you, and they really, everybody said the same things, and they were things such as good language, good writing, characters, emotional moments, surprise, tension, a all those, and they.... Well everybody listed those. Could you remember from your reading of *L0ve0ne* whether that gave you any of those elements? Were any of the expectations that you have from reading fiction in print fulfilled by reading this hypertext piece?

KL: No, not at all. It was a poor piece of writing really. It didn't suck me in and at times it was like reading lots of clichés. If the writing had been a little bit better, maybe I might have concentrated more but...I kept reading it and thinking 'oh please' after every one of these paragraphs.

Researcher : So was the writing in the end the key problem for you? If the writing had been good let's say, if you'd liked the writing, would you then have struggled on a bit more with the problems of the hypertext linking and all that stuff?

KL: Yeah, I think I would have done, I'd have looked more at it. I'd have been interested enough to overcome them. It's like when you're trying to find a web page and you're not quite getting there, you go back, keep looking and you're still interested in it; but there was no carrot and stick with this at all, it was, it just turned me off so much.

Researcher : That's another interesting point about the difference between reading fiction on screen and reading a web site on screen. Would you be prepared then to spend quite a bit if time at a computer screen if you're browsing, information-seeking...?

KL: Yeah.

Researcher : Is it the problem of the computer or transferring fiction to a computer that you think is the bigger issue? I'm trying to work really whether the computer itself is a block for some people. I think for some people it is.

KL: Um, I think I'm so used to reading in bed and buses, places like that, that's the first thing – it's the actual physicalness of it. And I love turning pages and the whole feel of a book, so that's an obstacle. I think I probably would have tried harder to overcome the

47 obstacles if I'd actually been interested in what I was reading. I used that thing about a
48 website because some websites are poor but I need to get the information, and I'm
49 interested to get the information, so I'm prepared to put up with some bad bits on it to get
50 the end product. But, whereas this, it just didn't interest me so I switched off fairly early
51 really.

52
53 Researcher : So the motivation for information-seeking that would have made you struggle
54 on with a bad website is that you've got a goal that you need to achieve?

55
56 KL: Yeah.

57
58 Researcher : Like book a holiday, buy a CD or whatever, and you can foresee that goal
59 being achieved...

60
61 KL: Yeah.

62
63 Researcher : What's the goal when you read a piece of fiction then, that isn't being realised
64 by this hypertext piece?

65
66 KL: I suppose I just want to be entertained and sucked in, and I wasn't. It's the same with
67 books – if I can't get with a book after fifty pages I put it down. Life's too short to plough
68 on. At one point I would try and read the whole book through, but now there's so much out
69 there I need to look at, I just can't be bothered. And I think it's the same with this, that if I
70 really wanted to do it I would carry on, but I was using the same sort of selection as I do
71 with reading – after a while you give up and forget it.

72
73 Researcher : Because it is entertainment at the end of it all-

74
75 KL: -Yeah-

76
77 Researcher : It's supposed to be pleasurable – is that the point?

78
79 KL: Yeah. It's like, most authors should be able to write really good opening sentences of a
80 book – and everybody can quote the really great ones – and suck you in on at least the first
81 page. OK, if you're reading classics, Dickens and things, um, as far as plot goes you have
82 to read at least a hundred pages before you get anywhere. But meanwhile you've got all
83 those little things going on in the book, whereas I think because this is so instantaneous you
84 haven't got the patience to muck about with it really. You need to get straight in and be
85 caught on at least the first two or three.

86
87 Researcher : That's interesting. So that means something about the medium is affecting
88 your behaviour or your tolerance of... what you said about Dickens is a good point because
89 you know with Dickens that you've got to give it a bit of time, then it will begin to emerge
90 and the whole thing will begin to sort of build up. But with this you wouldn't give it a
91 hundred screens.

92

93 KL: No, because, without meaning to be damning, there's a lot of difference between her
 94 prose and Dickens!
 95
 96 Researcher : Yeah...
 97
 98 KL: She's not a good writer. Maybe if she had been a good writer I would have given it
 99 longer, I think that's the main thing – it was the actual content that turned me off so much.
 100 Whereas if the content had been worth pursuing I would have put up with the funny links
 101 and so forth to get somewhere.
 102
 103 Researcher : So actually, in terms of, if I were continuing the research and I came back to
 104 you in a year's time and I said, 'On the basis of my research I've now written a hypertext,
 105 I've taken all your advice, I've made sure it's brilliantly written, and I've listened to all of
 106 my other participants and I've now written this brilliant piece of hypertext,' you'd actually
 107 be a very good candidate for it, because you are quite prepared to stick with the challenge
 108 of the plot and the characters unravelling.
 109
 110 KL: Yeah, I'd be able to give it a go, I certainly would.
 111
 112 Researcher : And that is quite fascinating in a way, because all of the people who have
 113 taken part in the research, at least the ones that have gone beyond the first session and have
 114 done the questionnaire and then met with me for the final one, have all been people that
 115 were prepared to give it a go. Even those of you that have been prepared to give it a go, still
 116 found significant barriers with it. So I think that I am learning that even people that are
 117 dead keen there's more that these writers need to do. So you said you were prepared to be
 118 challenged by a story, puzzled by a story, prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find
 119 out how it ends – so you've got good reading stamina really, you would describe yourself
 120 in that way. What about your expectation of endings? In traditional literature, you know
 121 print literature, most people said they didn't mind if they got a neat conclusion with all the
 122 loose ends tied up. Um, I think you were in that category?
 123
 124 KL: I think it depends on the author you're reading, what book you're reading. I mean, I'd
 125 be really miffed if I didn't get all the ends tied up in a crime, or a structure like that. But
 126 when, it just depends on how the author's doing the story. That's the thing with those
 127 questions as well: sometimes I like the challenge, but sometimes I just like to open the book
 128 and go to fluffy land as it were. It really depends. I think a lot of this hypertext is dependent
 129 on the authors and what they can produce, and until the quality of the writing goes up,
 130 you're not going to get people to want to look at these.
 131
 132 Researcher : In the academic literature, you know, which I've obviously read a lot of,
 133 there's an awful lot of discussion about the inherent human need for closure at the end of
 134 fiction, and it's obviously a debate. Are you saying, if I'm understanding you right, that
 135 depending on the genre, the type of book that it is, the story, the feeling of closure is
 136 dependent on all those other factors and it isn't the be-all and end-all?
 137
 138 KL: No, it's not.

139
 140 Researcher : You could come to the end of the story with it open-ended –
 141
 142 KL: There's a lot of authors who don't close off their stories in a nice little neat cut way.
 143 *Gone With The Wind*, that's the typical example, that she never closes the story, she doesn't
 144 have that ending, it's all up in the air whether Rhett Butler comes back or not. But that's a
 145 major book, it's the biggest best seller, it still remains so.
 146
 147 Researcher : So what's the sense of satisfaction that you would get from a story like that,
 148 that is left up in the air, as it were? What's the sort of, at the end of it you put it down and go
 149 'aaah' ..?
 150
 151 KL: Well, it's a finely plotted story, great historical research in it, really believable
 152 characters, about a time that I knew nothing about, and I'd always loved the film. The
 153 actual book was really great, as great as the film, and that's why I read it. So I mean, the
 154 plotting, the historical research to teach you about the civil war, and the characters that you
 155 do invest a lot in. I'm not really bothered about the openish ending.
 156
 157 Researcher : That's interesting, because a lot of people when they read these hypertext
 158 pieces do say, 'There wasn't an ending and that for me makes the whole thing pointless.'
 159 But for you that wouldn't necessarily be a problem if all the other elements were engaging
 160 and sucking you in.
 161
 162 KL: *Gone with the Wind* is quite an interesting example because the author, although she
 163 died early after she did the book, in a car accident, she said she'd never write another book
 164 because she'd had enough of it. So she actually wrote an open-ended book so you could
 165 put– and she got lots of letters from people saying, 'Didn't he come back?', and 'Well, I
 166 don't know - I haven't written it yet.' I haven't written it! So it's all through the history of
 167 literature that there's been open-ended books. We don't want it all tied. But maybe people
 168 are a lot more comfortable with a happy ending when they read a book...
 169
 170 Researcher : I think what I'm learning, I think hypertext can deliver some of the
 171 satisfactions of print fiction but the writers haven't got to grips with some of these issues
 172 you're talking about. I think they've possible got carried away with it's all new and
 173 wonderful. Well, from that point of view, understanding what sort of a reader you are and
 174 what turns you on, that's really interesting. Now, in terms of the way it was delivered – the
 175 next section of my research really, what writers can do with that interface – this *L0ve0ne*, it
 176 was quite a simple interface in one sense, but it didn't please you. So I'm trying to get at
 177 what were the big problems, and one thing I asked was 'is the navigation system easy to
 178 learn?', and out of five of you that read it only one said yes, so in percentage terms I guess
 179 that's statistically significant. What about the navigation can you remember was good, bad,
 180 hideous?
 181
 182 KL: Well it was just strange things, like when you changed the link – you go from blue to
 183 red or red to blue? – it went against the old conventions, the colour changed against the old
 184 conventions. And um, there wasn't an idea of where you were in the story, to leap about.

185 First of all when you signed on and you saw the first page, it was this hideous sugar pink
186 that you just reeled from. And you just don't want to go any further. If someone can't be
187 bothered to design a decent interface, you think, 'Why should I be bothered to read your
188 book?', you know. In the same way that if somebody prints some book in a tiny, weeny
189 print, you think, 'I'm not going there.'

190 And it does remind me quite a lot of the early web pages where people didn't have
191 any standards, and the techies were, 'Well it's there, so I'll put it there and you should
192 damn well read it.' Designing from a usability point of view, putting the user first – it was
193 almost like you should get with what they wanted you to do, and I found that really
194 arrogant, but it's something I get with a lot of techies anyway.

195

196 Researcher : It's quite interesting that you got that – I mean it's only implied, but it is a
197 strong reaction. The writer isn't saying 'get with the programme, you know like it or lump
198 it', but you felt like you were being treated that way.

199

200 KL: Yeah...

201

202 Researcher : And I think a lot of people have reacted in the same way.

203

204 KL: I didn't read 253 but from what I remember it had a navigation system with it, didn't
205 it?

206

207 Researcher : Yeah, like a tube map.

208

209 KL: Yeah, and that wouldn't have come amiss, putting in an index so you know where you
210 are.

211

212 Researcher : The interesting thing about *L0ve0ne* is that there is a contents frame that you
213 can bring up which will sit alongside the story text, but I don't think you found that. You
214 didn't find it on the first session, and it doesn't sound like you found it subsequently, and
215 nor did some of the others.

216

217 KL: Yes, something popped up, but it wasn't very easy to navigate, and because the story
218 was so fragmented you didn't know where you were from the start.

219

220 Researcher : It was possible – she put along the bottom a menu of frames, no-frames,
221 contents framed contents, a list of things that you could choose from, but they were obscure,
222 they weren't worded or offered in such a way that people found them.

223

224 KL: And what the heck does 'frames' mean to a one-time user? I mean, she's using all that
225 sort of jargon, isn't she? Does the person who writes the novels design the—?

226

227 Researcher : Well, in this case it doesn't say another name, in the case of *L0ve0ne* it doesn't
228 give a credit to a designer. In some of them it does.

229

230 KL: I was just interested because quite often, my partner reads science fiction and he pulls
231 down these paperbacks that have these howling awful covers on, which have nothing to do
232 with the story. And I was thinking if that happened with this, that the author presents their
233 story, with the links and so forth, and the techie takes it away and does the design in a really
234 howling way that puts people off.

235
236 Researcher : Yeah, well I think she may have just designed it herself. It almost feels to me
237 like someone learning Dreamweaver for the first time and managing to make it work. I
238 don't know that, but it has got that slightly primitive, not-quite-there feel to it.... Like you
239 say, if a book were designed badly and was on the shelf, you wouldn't buy it. But it is
240 interesting that you didn't actually find that contents page that would have oriented you,
241 because what it did was every time you found a page it highlighted it on the list of contents.
242 So you could gradually see all the pages that you covered. But if you didn't find it, that's
243 not your fault, it should be findable, shouldn't it? You can't be blamed for not finding it,
244 because if it was that hard to find then the— it's like being able to find the first page in a
245 book.

246
247 KL: I was reading it, and my partner was reading it with me, and I think we got that up but
248 it didn't seem to make any sense anyway, so it went away again.

249
250 Researcher : Right! It didn't help.

251
252 KL: It just— no.

253
254 Researcher : Well, if these devices that the writer is offering don't help, then that makes
255 them more hindrance then, doesn't it? If they're there but they don't help, that just makes
256 them an active barrier, I find. Um, in terms of orientation — you've already answered it
257 really — you didn't know where you were, and I'm interested in whether you knew where
258 you were in the book, you know, the place that you were roaming around in, and the story.
259 And I think you answered that you didn't know where you were in either case...?

260
261 KL: No, no I just roamed around, nothing seemed to make any sense, it wasn't a story, and
262 I kept jumping backwards and forwards, so I had no idea what she was on about at all.

263
264 Researcher : No. So that, in terms of what you understand a narrative's about, storytelling's
265 about... I mean, I don't want to put words into your mouth, but is that a disaster really?
266 You didn't know where you were in the book...?

267
268 KL: Well, not if it's *Ulysses* and James Joyce, but she ain't James Joyce, so...

269
270 Researcher : No.

271
272 KL: The stream of consciousness stuff is fine, but you've got to be in a mood to read it, and
273 you've got to know that that's what you're going to get when you go into a book. There are
274 authors who have written these sort of all-over-the-place, but no, I really need to know if
275 there was any plot at all.

276
277 Researcher : Even if it was *Ulysses* you'd know what page you were on, in terms of what
278 you'd already read and what was to come...
279
280 KL: Yes...
281
282 Researcher : With this, you couldn't really know that, unless that contents page worked.
283 But even that, as you say, was a bit iffy. So I think one of the big problems for hypertext
284 writers is that it's all very well to be experimental and new, but actually even the keenest
285 readers do need some sort of signposting. Would that be a fair summary for you?
286
287 KL: Yeah, because you're getting over not just that problem but that people are new to the
288 media as well, so it's got to be even more basic and simple than if the media had been going
289 for quite some time, then it's essential.
290
291 Researcher: Because if you'd had hypertext for fifty years and people were now beginning
292 to experiment with some of the rules, it wouldn't be such a shock, would it? You'd kind of
293 know what the baseline was. But here you've got no baseline to use as a safety.
294
295 KL: Well it kind of annoys me, because we're not back in the old webpage design and
296 Netscape, we've moved on a hell of a lot from there. Surely these things have been learned
297 by now, but obviously not in hypertext.
298
299 Researcher : Some people are arguing that writers are constrained by the software, and I've
300 argued that actually they're not because you can do anything with software now-
301
302 KL: Yeah-
303
304 Researcher : There's no software package that doesn't allow you to provide page numbers,
305 chapter headings, maps, charts, diagrams, lists, timelines, whatever you want really. I'm
306 taking your side on that really – I think writers can do whatever needs to be done. I don't
307 think the software's a block anymore. As you say, it might have been ten years ago, but not
308 now. So, nearly there! I'm just sort of working through the things that came up as
309 highlighted on the questionnaire. So, you've answered the question really about what were
310 the problems for you – essentially it didn't fulfil any of the requirements for fiction. The
311 writing wasn't good enough, you didn't get into characters?
312
313 KL: What characters?!

314
315 Researcher : Have you got any memory of there being a main character in there?
316
317 KL: Oh, just some woman rambling on about her past affairs, and that was about it really. It
318 kept jumping about and I just gave up then. She met some guy... and that was it. So, no.
319
320 Researcher : Plot? Was there a plot?
321

322 KL: Uhh, if there was I didn't find it. No.
323
324 Researcher : Do you think randomness can be counted as plotting? If the author was trying
325 to make it confusing... no, she's done that, she's succeeded!
326
327 KL: No, I don't because that's real arrogance on the part of the author.
328
329 Researcher : Because you didn't get engaged with the writing or the characters, and
330 because the plot was indecipherable, you couldn't have excitement presumably.
331
332 KL: No, just irritation, really.
333
334 Researcher : OK. What about the way that you tried to use links? You said that you used
335 links by attempting to follow the story. Is there any other way you could imagine that links
336 could be used to make... you know, the potential of hypertext linking, as you said in the
337 first session, is quite interesting really, what you could do with it. Having read this piece
338 can you think of any ways that hypertext linking could be made exciting, interesting,
339 sucking-in, having that effect?
340
341 KL: You could um, you could link to characters and give the background of the characters
342 and go off on little storylines – you know, prequels. I think that would be quite nice, where
343 they're coming from. And you could, the person telling the story doesn't know where
344 they're coming from, so the author could, you could go off on different paths there, I mean,
345 that could be quite interesting.
346
347 Researcher : And would that not destroy the flow of the story if you did that, or are you
348 imagining the story still being clearly there?
349
350 KL: Well, I'm used to, I do read the great writers like Dickens and Collins and you can go
351 for miles on little sub-plots and things like that before you get the meat of the story, and it
352 never did those lads any harm, so I don't see why it can't do these.
353
354 Researcher : Do their sub-plots eventually still connect to the main plot, is that the trick
355 with it? Because that's my memory of Dickens.
356
357 KL: Yeah, but sometimes they just do it for the sheer hell of it because they've got a, vent
358 their spleen on America, or chocolate drinking houses or something like that. And I think
359 that could be quite interesting on hypertext – you could go off on different angles and make
360 your story very broad.
361
362 Researcher : Yeah, I think you're right, and the idea that I have is that those side roads you
363 could follow or not follow with hypertext. Because it's not linear you wouldn't have to
364 follow them if you didn't feel like it-
365
366 KL: No...
367

368 Researcher : If you didn't, you wouldn't lose any of the story, and if you did it wouldn't
 369 ruin the story.
 370

371 KL: And it would please two types of readers, because often, like Margaret Mitchell *Gone*
 372 *With The Wind* thing, writers get letters saying, 'Why did so and so do that?' but other ones
 373 are quite happy just to take the character on the page. So for the ones that want to know a
 374 lot more, or who are nosey about the past, you could use that to expand your story. And that
 375 would please two groups of readers.
 376

377 Researcher : That's a really interesting point, that you could actually please different kinds
 378 of readers with the same piece, by offering different sorts of choices. .
 379

380 KL: But there's also the other thing that, I quite like it but some people don't like
 381 descriptive passages – you know, about the weather and the towns and so on, so you could
 382 put them on another section, and someone could leap over those and go straight to the plot.
 383 I don't know how that would please the writer because they tend to want you to read
 384 everything they put down – sort of saying that's not as important as that, but it might get
 385 somebody who doesn't want to do, you know, I'm thinking of, was it *Midnight's Children*
 386 where Salman Rushdie had someone sitting in a boat in the middle of a lake for about
 387 five or six pages, and if you don't want to read that you could leap over and get to
 388 the plot!
 389

390 Researcher : But with hypertext anyway, I mean, you're not going to read everything
 391 probably unless it's made very linear, so the writer of hypertext is already saying you don't
 392 have to read everything because got these choices. And you're not the first person to have
 393 suggested the idea of side roads and back stories, prequels, and it seems, that feels like it
 394 would combine the interest of the narrative with that pull of information-seeking that
 395 somehow hypertext seems to encourage people to do. It does make you want to explore, but
 396 if it's a story you've got to be able to explore and still know where the path is. I don't know
 397 if this is the right metaphor, but it's a bit like walking from here to Corfe, you know, you're
 398 going to get to Corfe eventually and have your cup of tea, but you might go off down a few
 399 tracks and have a look at this, that and the other view before you get there. But you still
 400 know where you're wanting to be. And I'm wondering if that might be the trick, and as well
 401 to, like you said earlier, to get new readers feeling safer with it, the ones that don't want a
 402 kind of very postmodern exploring experience, but want something that feels like it's
 403 designed.
 404

405 KL: I think until you get those readers, it's not going to be popular anyway.
 406

407 Researcher : No. Do you, finally, are you somebody that goes to fiction for the, to
 408 commune with the author? Is the author a very important figure?
 409

410 KL: No, they shouldn't be there. If I can see the author I start getting really stropky.
 411

412 Researcher : But you don't choose books because you've read others by the author? You
 413 did say you do that, although you choose books by all the options (*on the questionnaire*).

414
415 KL: I do, I choose books by author, but I don't want to see the author in it, because then it
416 starts blurring between non-fiction. There is such a thing as an imagination, and I think if
417 the author keeps hidden – obviously if he brings something and someone's putting bits of
418 their experiences, you don't mind that. But these sort of ones, you get these, particularly
419 now, particularly bad novels where, 'this is just my life but I've made it fictitious', I just
420 switch off. I think the author should be there at the back, not telling the story.
421
422 Researcher : So the idea of design is obviously important, but you don't want that artifice to
423 be in front of your eyes before you can get to the story. Because I'm trying to wonder
424 whether part of the problem with hypertext is that you're constantly being made aware of
425 the artificialness of it, you're constantly being re-reminded that you're in made-up thing.
426
427 KL: Because I think one of the problems with this one is the little paragraphs were so small
428 and every time you read one you had to click to get to the next one and click to get to the
429 next one, and there was there was that break between, and it caught you out, whereas with a
430 book you turn the pages at quite long intervals, or short depending on how you read.
431 Whereas for me I read a short paragraph for a few seconds and then clicked and it was
432 always disrupting the narrative.
433
434 Researcher : Why is a book such a successful interface then? Because it's something else
435 I've looked at – you know, a book is a technology, it is a piece of technology, it just
436 happens to be made of paper and ink technology rather than plastic and electrons
437 technology. Is it that we've just got used to the book, or is it a perfectly, an absolutely
438 perfect piece of technology for its job? Turning a page is clicking a link really, but it
439 doesn't feel like it, does it?
440
441 KL: No, first of all you're brought up with printing, you get it at an early age, it becomes
442 part of your life. There's also the feel and smell of books, because I'm a bibliophile and you
443 can't replace a book... and it's portable, you can read it anywhere. There's just the joy of
444 reading that gets built into certain people from an early age and you never replace it. Also
445 with books, you can flick through them and browse around. Quite often I'm reading a book
446 with lots of characters and I think, 'Where the hell did you come from?' so I flick back to
447 find out. Particularly when you've got a tortuous crime novel and they suddenly come up
448 with a clue and you think, 'Where was that?' You can go back, sort of-
449
450 Researcher : But isn't that ironic that a book, which is supposedly linear and fixed, it's
451 supposed to not be as navigable as a hypertext: the computer is supposed to be the ultimate
452 in free navigation, yet it turns out that it's less free to browse than a book. That's quite an
453 irony really, given how hypertext is presented by those that are keen on it, as being this is
454 really the way forward because you can roam in any direction. Actually what you're saying
455 is, you couldn't roam as freely in the hypertext, despite all the links and the choices as you
456 could in an ordinary book.
457
458 KL: No, certainly not, nowhere near. It's such a set process as well, whereas with books
459 you just pick them up, flick through and it's there.

460
461 Researcher : That's something that, it's quite a profound finding in a way, that the book as
462 a piece of technology is actually more flexible than this, which is supposedly the ultimate
463 in flexibility. Because that's why we use the internet, that's why we all bought into having
464 computers, because we can do everything, anywhere in the world, roam, browse,
465 explore ...
466
467 KL: Allegedly yeah, but I think.... I've never fallen for that really...
468
469 Researcher : And in fiction the illusion seems to fall down even more quickly because in
470 fiction we need to feel that we are free within it. This is what you were saying, that you
471 don't want to be made aware of the author, you don't want to be made aware of the artifice,
472 you want to be made to feel you're in it, can move around in it. But hypertext is preventing
473 that happening.
474
475 KL: Yes, too many obstacles at the moment. And it's not just down to being unaware of
476 how to use the computer...
477
478 Researcher : No, you're obviously very competent with the computer.
479
480 KL: I mean, there's just so many barriers.
481
482 Researcher : The writing, the plotting, the linking, the meaninglessness of the links taking
483 you to places that didn't seem to connect with the previous place, the interface itself, the
484 colours, the fonts. All these elements that are kind of almost invisible in a professionally
485 designed book, have become highly visible in a piece like *L0ve0ne*, and are all getting in
486 the way of the actual story.
487
488 KL: Yeah, it just seems a very impersonal way to read as well.
489
490 Researcher : Impersonal?
491
492 KL: Yeah, yeah. I can just smack into a book, but the technology seems very sterile for me
493 personally.
494
495 Researcher : Do you think it might be that until Sony have perfected their electronic book,
496 about that size, it's not going to be a lit screen, do you think that when they produce a really
497 beautiful electronic book.
498
499 KL: I still don't think it will have the feel and personality of a book... but you're talking to
500 the wrong person.
501
502 Researcher : Oh no, because most people are the same-
503
504 KL: For example, I wouldn't go near a CD, I think they're horrible, tacky-tacky. And now
505 CDs are going over to MP 3 it will be even more impersonal... But I think with books,

506 there's just something about them that I don't think computers are ever going to have. I'd
507 like to think though, and my partner goes online a lot more than I do, but even so there's
508 just not that feel.

509

510 Researcher : No, and also there's that history with books. I buy quite a lot of secondhand
511 books, and some have stamps on, old library ticket... there's something about the history
512 of books as well...

513

514 ENDS

Appendix Three

These Waves of Girls

1 6/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *These Waves of Girls*
5 CV think aloud (CV/T)
6
7 CV: I find this a bit perturbing... this laughter.
8
9 Researcher: Would you like to click out of that screen instead of it being time controlled?
10
11 CV: I think in terms of usability it's something you expect, an icon indicating where to go
12 next. So... now, 'listen'. OK. I like the images (*the opening menu*).
13
14 Researcher: Are you, somewhere in the back of your head, approaching this as a piece of
15 literature, or a website, or a game...?
16
17 CV: It's hard... I think, all in one. I'm quite familiar with hypertext narrative, and I'm
18 attempting to be a producer of it too, so I'm interested I how you go about doing something
19 like that. I think this is a good combination of text and image in a fairly easy interface. I
20 find it a little bit rudimentary, but that's my heightened sense of design.
21
22 CV: Having gone through the options, I'm going to just play around and read some. I think
23 the subject matter is very interesting, it kind of touches back into my own school years, and
24 my experience of boys at that stage, but also the kind of experiences my daughter might be
25 going through.
26
27 Researcher: These (*the pop-up text boxes on the opening menu*) are almost like teasers,
28 flyers for what's in the sections. Do you like the idea of having a menu? Do you like the
29 idea of choice?
30
31 CV: I do like the idea of choice, that's one of the great potentials of hypertext. I think,
32 because I'm being researched, I'm looking at it quite strategically, whereas I would have
33 probably clicked on one and jumped.
34
35 CV: I'm now in... I have choices, I can go back to the primary categories. There's a
36 different menu (*on the 'new' window that opens*). I'm just going forward in a linear fashion.
37 I do assume this is a linear path; the buttons are using a spacial metaphor for back and forth.
38
39 Researcher: Are you somebody that needs linearity with a narrative?
40
41 CV: I'm still deciding on that one, I'm still exploring myself. Actually I really like a good
42 book, but I think some narratives do allow for interactivity. So theoretically I'm into the
43 idea of interactive narrative, but I don't know how far that relates to my own enjoyment
44 really, whether I get much more from a book.
45

46 And now I'm wondering what this abundance of images has to do with the story, and I'm
 47 not really focusing on the story.
 48

49 Researcher: No, that's fine, I couldn't expect you to: it's just a question today of getting
 50 used to the way it's presented.
 51

52 CV: I am a little lost but I think that's partly because I'm not reading the story. But, even
 53 within an interactive narrative there are some conventions that could be followed.
 54

55 Researcher: Would you be bothered if it really didn't conform to any conventions, if links
 56 were a big puzzle, if structure and menus weren't there?
 57

58 CV: No, I quite the idea of exploring the medium in terms of creating an experience, rather
 59 than clear usability...
 60

61 CV: There are some very interesting images and some interesting leads, hyper-links. I
 62 think at times I'd like the images and text to be clearer (*text and background visually*
 63 *confusing*)....
 64 Because of its structure, because there's no clear-cut story, I'd probably not read
 65 every node of text because I'd feel it's not necessary to do that, but then I'd wonder if I'd
 66 miss significant points.
 67

68 Researcher: Does the presence of links encourage you to jump away?
 69

70 CV: Yes.
 71

72 Researcher: So if there's a link there you kind of feel drawn to it?
 73

74 CV: You do. But often there seems to be a lot of text in each chunk. I like the fact that the
 75 images and the text are conducive to interpretation. I'm interested in this link to listen to the
 76 story (*plays wav file*). It's a little bit basic (*blank screen while wav plays*).
 77

78 CV: Now I'm onto a dead end (*the wav has ended*). So that link to the soundtrack had led
 79 me to a window that doesn't really have any options so now I have to go back to the top
 80 menu. It is almost like a game, an exploratory.... I'd be quite interested to get back to
 81 where I was at some point but not necessarily now.
 82

83 Researcher : You're not too bothered by not having a map or a set of 'hooks' to hang your
 84 mind onto? You're quite happy being non-linear, three-dimensional almost?
 85

86 CV: I am. But, as I said, I'm not sure how much I'm getting a story. It is so deep, isn't it?
 87 (*the hypertext structure*)
 88

89 CV: The interface is definitely not a barrier... there is no way you can actually map it out,
 90 but I guess that's part of the point, you have these segments that come together in a
 91 marginal narrative. I think the way you can become your own author.... in way you're very

92 much choosing a specific path through this very, very complex narrative. So the degree to
93 which you can do that is probably more than I've seen in any other interactive narrative, but
94 in the end it's still a predetermined story. It's predetermined text. This is closed still.

95

96 ENDS

Missing pages

1 8/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *These Waves of Girls*
5 KC think aloud (KC/T)
6
7 KC: I've never looked at anything like this before, so it's very interesting. The first thing I
8 notice is this square, and then a lot of others came up (*main menu graphics*). It said 'listen'
9 but then you couldn't see these titles here. I assume they're like chapter titles. I assume
10 these are in order. You can read them (*the pop up summaries*) but then it said 'listen'. It is a
11 bit confusing because here this looks like a chapter called 'kissing girls', but there's only a
12 small box of text, and if that is a chapter, it's a very small one. But it might be an overview
13 of the chapter.
14
15 KC: If I go back to 'kissing girls'... (*looks at other menu items*) they're not related!
16 They're not like sequential. I would expect that to follow on to the next chapter but it
17 doesn't (*reading the pop ups and hasn't quite got the hang of what they are yet*). There's a
18 character, Mr McKenzie, that we've not been introduced to before... That's a block of
19 three, and now there's another block of three here (*still main menu items*). I don't really
20 know what to do with this...
21
22 KC: Umm, oh! I just clicked on it (*new window opened*). I clicked on what I thought was a
23 chapter title, and now I've got this really weird image in front of me – it's really blurred and
24 I can't see it... oh, here we go... and there are some titles on the left hand side (*section*
25 *menu*).
26
27 KC: So, I think the best thing for me to do is go back to the beginning and then click on
28 'kissing girls' – that's what I thought might be the first chapter. Again, I've got eight things,
29 titles, I suppose they would be paragraphs in a chapter. It's not a very clear image but it
30 seems to be of a girl with long hair...
31
32 Researcher: Have you got any sense of whether you feel you're in a book or something else,
33 at this stage?
34
35 KC: I opened it expecting it to be a book, expecting to see chapters... but now I've opened
36 what I thought was a chapter and I've got these headings on the left hand side... (*reading*
37 *some text*)... I want to hear the story...
38
39 Researcher: You have to click on the underlined words...
40
41 KC: Ah! So I'll click on the underlined words... (*plays the wav file*) It asks you to close
42 your eyes when you listen but it's very difficult to do so when you're faced with so much to
43 do.
44
45 KC: I think the problem with this is that you're going to have to keep clicking. You can't –
46 it says close your eyes and listen but... if you were lying in bed with a book, or listening to

47 a tape or something, you'd close your eyes and the book would start. This says close your
48 eyes and listen, which implies they want you to relax but as soon as it stops speaking, you
49 have to open your eyes and click on the next bit. If you were really into the story that would
50 really irritate. It would break the spell. And then you've got to remember where you are. I
51 suppose you can go back...

52

53 KC: If I could get back to the picture.... *(uses the browser back arrow)*... ah, what you can
54 see now, you can see the text, so you can follow the text, which is better...

55

56 KC: There's a lot to do and it's difficult to listen to the story and navigate around and look
57 at the pictures. In terms of a novel that you could get really engrossed in, it would be
58 difficult, to me. Usually, when I read a book, in total silence, I get engrossed in the story.
59 But here I'm looking and thinking that girl doesn't look like she's three, and I'm thinking
60 how old she looks like as opposed to reading the story.

61

62 Researcher: You're trying to engage with every part of the screen – you're actually
63 working quite hard?

64

65 KC: Yes. But also... I don't know whether you're meant to use your brain differently. This
66 image I'm looking at now, the orange image in the 'Vanessa' section, it's so unclear, and
67 you don't really know what they are, and I'm thinking why are they there? And I'm trying
68 to relate them to the text.

69

70 KC: I've only just noticed those actually *(the in-section menu)*...

71

72 Researcher: If you were on a website, information seeking, how would you approach these
73 items here?

74

75 KC: The kind of websites I look at, I'd assume these were categories. The trouble is when
76 you click on them you come up with these very ill defined images, you can't really see
77 what you're looking at. You'd assume this would be about Mr Anderson... There are these
78 underlined sections of text, but when you click on it you just get a weird image...

79

80 Researcher: Try opening the whole window up.

81

82 KC: OK, well now not only do you get the whole image but you do get some text... it's
83 almost like there's a story embedded in a story, so I can't relate to it the way you'd read a
84 book. It's a completely different kind of reading.

85

86 KC: There's no instructions, it doesn't say how to get the most out of this book. With books
87 they have a front and a back cover, and some text on the back cover, and you read from start
88 to finish. I can only assume that the writer is assuming that the people who read her are
89 people who now how to use these books. Certainly I don't see it as a book, and it's quite
90 hard work, and you have to be very alert. I couldn't read this to relax because you've got to
91 be totally alert, it seems to me.

92

93 Researcher: It's not a book. Is it a game?
94
95 KC: I'm not sure what it is. It's something that is trying to tell a story. It's using images that
96 are blurred. It's almost as if you can read into depth, or you can go into detail. But it's as if
97 you don't have to read every bit of blue underlined text to get the meaning, though I
98 haven't read enough to know if I would get the meaning.
99
100 KC: I don't really know how to get the most out of it. And then, having gone into one of
101 these sections, it goes in again, we now have an image and you still have more blue
102 underlined text; and you have darker mauve text.
103
104 (*Researcher explains that visited links go mauve*) KC: Usually when I buy a book, I go by
105 the author, or I read the back cover, or a page or two to see if I like the style, But here I've
106 got nothing to tell me what it's all about. I'm assuming it's about a girl who goes to a
107 summer camp. It feels as if you'd have to go down the chapter headings to see how it ends.
108 You can choose how much detail you go into. It's an unusual way of reading.
109
110 KC: Actually, you have to actively read this book. It's quite hard work and you have to,
111 you can't use a book mark. But if you were just clicking to get an overview of the book
112 you'd have to remember where you'd been, and you can't.
113
114 KC: The other thing I've just noticed is that some of the text is in bold and I don't know
115 why that is.
116 When you click on something it takes you back to something you've seen before...
117 without knowing...when you read them it doesn't look like a chapter, in fact I'm
118 wondering if this is written in the traditional format of a book, because I can't tell. These
119 could easily be chapters of a book, and because they are in line. But I wouldn't know
120 whether that is the end of the book (*the last item on the menu list*).
121
122 KC: If I scroll down and read the last paragraph...it's really not clear whether this is the
123 end of the book, and then you're thinking have I missed something significant by not
124 clicking on all the blue text.
125
126 ENDS

1 9/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *These Waves of Girls*
5 RG think aloud (RG/T)
6
7 RG: So if you click on that it gives you characters... story both on text and sound, that's
8 good. Ah, that annoys me usually on websites, when you get loads and loads of links
9 because then you just get lost. I don't usually like to just stay.... But if you want to keep the
10 reader – I mean, look at this, it's heavy isn't it. You can either choose to read the text or
11 follow the links – people might follow the links and then you just lose the narrative.
12
13 RG: I don't mind interactivity or a disrupted narrative, as long as I've got a site map or
14 clear view of where I am. As long as I know exactly where I am and I can go back to that,
15 because I don't like being lost. If you're reading something it could be quite disruptive.
16
17 RG: I like the design - quite a few frames and stuff obviously.
18
19 RG: I'd probably say I'm near the beginning but that's probably because *I'm* at the
20 beginning, I've just started browsing. I haven't gone far from the home page... but I might
21 be wrong, I don't know. It's probably a good thing that the main menu is always in the
22 background, it probably makes up for going back and forth.
23
24 RG: I guess if you do it like an exhaustive search, through the starting menus, then I guess
25 you've covered quite a lot. I presume it's a collection of short stories. If the stories, if all
26 the little bits and snippets were good, then you don't need an overarching narrative. But if it
27 doesn't mean anything to me, then I would like it to lead somewhere.
28
29 Researcher: Would you mind if they were quite small, self-contained micro stories almost?
30
31 RG: No. If they are interesting.
32
33 RG: It's interesting, it's different (*the distorting image*). If the image pulls me or appeals to
34 me... I might look at the source. It doesn't look as if it has a traditional narrative. In
35 terms of design I would expect, on the home page, to have some sort of overview or
36 contents.
37
38 RG: This one isn't very user-friendly in terms of font colour. White on white....
39
40 Researcher: How do you think you'd know if it was the ending?
41
42 RG: You see something like a short text, some sort of credits, that might look like an
43 ending, contact information.
44
45 Researcher: In every other medium there's always something where you know the
46 performance has ended.

47 RG: It is quite, more unstructured than I expected but the range of facilities is quite limited. It's
48 hypertext... I don't know if the point of this is to get gratification from the design. If the text is
49 appealing, I could just read black fonts on a white background, but I've seen other things where
50 you find things in a room, it was quite virtual, and that was really good as well.

51
52 RG: I'm used to searching websites, it's my research, but that doesn't mean I'd choose to
53 use something in my leisure time that was quite complicated. The other thing is, I do like to
54 be able to see how long the book is where it ends. I want to know which stage in the reading
55 process I'm in. At this stage I don't get... I can imagine it will take about two days to read
56 this. I don't think it's got more depth than three or four clicks away from the home
57 page.

58
59 Researcher: There's a virtual space you're feeling you're way through.

60
61 RG: It looks interesting for sure...A lot of work has gone into it.

62
63 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional)...4 respondents MASTER DATA

The hypertext piece you read: *These Waves Of Girls* W/Q

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

Yes n= 6 No n= 0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=2

Online games n=1

PC games n=0

email and browsing/ information seeking n=4

Shopping n=4

Other.... Blogging, research, news, entertainment

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?

Yes n=3 No n=1

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=4

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=1

An author you already like n=4

An author you have never tried before n=2

Recommendation from a friend n=3

Review in the press or media n=3

Anything else? Attractive cover, good price.....

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=0

Familiar everyday language n=3

Interesting characters n=4

Emotional moments n=3

Exciting action n=1 plus 'sometimes'

Surprise n=2

Tension n=4

Satisfying conclusion n=2

Anything else? To learn about myself/the world; good plot; chapters not too long; happy ending; no stupid female characters

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=2

A deep, heavy read n=0

Both n=2

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n=0 No n=2 Don't mind n=2

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes n=3 No n=1

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

Yes n=3 No n=1

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=2

Uninteresting plot n=2

Too familiar storyline n=2

Uneventful n=2

Dull characters n=2

Poor writing n=2

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=2

Anything else? I only read books I know I'll finish

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=3 No n=1 Don't mind n=0

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

Yes n=1 No n=3 Don't mind n=0

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=0

Physically uncomfortable n=4

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=3

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=4

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=0 Large n=3 Either n=1

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=2 No n=0 Irritated n=2

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=2 No n=2 No menus offered n=0

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes n=1 No n=3 No visual elements present n=0

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes n=1 No n=3 No multimedia used n=0

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=1 Disrupt n=2 Neutral n=1

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=0

Watching a film n=0
Playing a game n=2
Solving a puzzle n=2
Something else? It's a different medium

2 *What about the hypertext carried you along?*

Artistic/ appealing language n=1

Interesting characters n=1

Emotional moments n=1

Exciting action n=0

Surprise n=0

Tension n=0

Satisfying conclusion n=0

Nothing n=2

Anything else I've forgotten? The desire to find out if there really was a story; you telling me to keep going!

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=0

Uninteresting characters n=1

Over-complex plot n=2

Confusing plot n=1

No excitement n=4

No sense of an ending n=3

Anything else that you didn't like? No actual story; not much of a plot; couldn't relate to the characters; no real story; having to scroll to read the text; images made no sense.

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=1 No n=0 Disrupted reading n=3

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=1

Word that seemed to signify something n=1

Animated image n=0

Icon n=0

Attempting to follow the story n=2

At random n=1

Any other factor?

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

9 If 'yes' to question 8, was that:

intentional n=0 accidental n=1 both n=3

10 If you did re-read sections was that:

interesting n=1 exciting n=0 annoying n=3 frustrating n=2 'seeking clarification'

11 Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?

Yes n=1 ('yes-ish') No n=3

12 Did you feel satisfied with the ending?

Yes n=0 No n=4

13 Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?

Yes n=0 No n=4

14 Would you read another hypertext novel?

Yes n=2 No n=2

15 If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was

Intriguing new medium n=2

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=1

Anything else?

16 If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was

Boring n=2

Confusing n=1

Unsatisfying story n=3

Did not operate easily n=2

Anything else?

1 2/3/06

2 Bournemouth University

3

4 *These Waves of Girls*
5 discussion group (W/D)

6

7 Present: KC, RG, CV, EC

8

9 Researcher : One thing that came up, every single person said, there was that series of
10 questions in the questionnaire that said 'did you know where you were in the book, or the
11 site, and did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?' You wanted some
12 kind of safe haven but you didn't have it. Is hypertext too difficult?

13

14 KC: I think it might be a generational thing. I've been reading books for forty years...To go
15 from a traditional way of reading a story to go to something different I found was a leap too
16 far.

17

18 Researcher: Was it impossible for you to get any sort of thread therefore?

19

20 KC: It was very difficult because I was spending so much time clicking around, and also
21 there with the particular text, you had the words on the left the picture on the right, then
22 you'd have a picture on the left and the words on the right, and you had to scroll. It was so
23 disjointed and I was spending so much time trying to find out where I was in the book I
24 actually really didn't take the story in.

25

26 Researcher: It's interesting that the reviews of the piece say that it's a dreamy and
27 wonderful thing to explore, so that's the kind of publicity, but that's no good if it doesn't
28 work for you.

29

30 RG: I couldn't connect with the content of the book. I'm calling it a book in the liberal
31 sense obviously. If I had connected with the story, if I was intrigued by the content of the
32 stories then I'd probably have made more of an effort to keep it going around and clicking
33 in circles and so on. It was like, eventually it got painful because it didn't appeal to me at all.
34 But I look at other sites which are like fan fiction which I really enjoy which again is
35 basically like hypertext, it's like people writing stories, taking characters from existing TV
36 series or whatever and writing whole stories based on then and putting it on the internet.
37 And that's working quite well because I already know the characters. When you have no
38 idea about the characters, the plot, the narrative or anything and you're just thrown at
39 that... I think I don't think it's a generation gap because I've been reading books for five or
40 six years really intensely, which is shorter than your forty years, but I had the same
41 problem as you. I think it's a matter of the structure.

42

43 Researcher: There's an awful lot in what you've just said RG, and I'm going to try to pull
44 some of it out. It's not hypertext itself because you're happy with hypertext, and I guess
45 you are KC too, using the internet... so it's not hypertext itself, it's something to do with
46 what it does to your expectations of narrative, and something to do with the way it's

47 presented as well. Because, I'm guessing that you can tell an effective story with hypertext
48 if it's done in the best possible way...

49
50 RG: Yeah, for me I think it was a combination: the hypertext wasn't the main factor, but it
51 made it worse because I couldn't connect to the story and the hypertext just made it more
52 difficult. If the story had been better then maybe the hypertext wouldn't have been so much
53 of a factor. So the hypertext was a dependent variable rather than the main point.

54
55 Researcher: Would reading a story in hypertext be a no-no for you anyway because it was
56 on the computer, and you had to scroll and...?

57
58 KC: Yes, I read a lot of fiction, I read before I go to sleep, or in the summer I sit outside, so
59 for me it's a relaxing sit down. I don't mind scan-reading articles and then printing them off
60 in their traditional form, but not novels, not stories, I really had a problem with the medium.
61 Because I've got used to it I suppose.

62
63 EC: I'd have to support RG and KC – that's exactly how I felt as well.

64
65 Researcher: How about you, CV?

66
67 CV: I think the narrative lends itself, the piece itself lends itself to that kind of confusion.
68 It's not the same as saying all interactive narratives make you feel that way, but *Waves of*
69 *Girls* did...

70
71 RG: If the little snippets of information had been appealing to me then maybe I would have
72 made an effort to try to find my place in the narrative, if there is any place. Maybe the
73 purpose of it is to not have any structure...

74
75 EC: But the story must have structure or it's not a story...it's just a morass of thoughts if it
76 doesn't have a structure.

77
78 Researcher: Do we assume there was structure there somewhere, that the writer knew what
79 she was doing and she knew where each link was going to take you?

80
81 EC: No!

82
83 CV: I'm sure there was, but I didn't get any sense of structure at all.

84
85 KC: It was quite rambling. I thought what is the point of this story if.... There wasn't a
86 beginning, middle and end. It didn't even end properly, in my opinion. If you're going to
87 read something, you don't want to find the story yourself. You know, I read because I want
88 to be told a story, I enjoy turning the pages over in a traditional book, getting towards the
89 end of the story. But that, you could have clicked anywhere and it wouldn't have made any
90 difference, you could have looked in any order and I don't think it would have made a
91 difference.

92

93 Researcher: Were there any clues in the design of the interface that there was a point that
94 would be an end? You could build in an end point that would be clear to the reader...
95
96 EC: But nobody would get to that point. Everybody would be so confused and fed up...
97
98 RG: Maybe that point would be at the beginning of the page - maybe you could start from
99 that point.
100
101 EC: The other thing is you're on the internet, and the communication model of the internet
102 is that if something hasn't downloaded quick or made sense quick you get rid of it. You
103 don't actually work at a website on the internet trying to understand it, you just move on to
104 the next website on the search. You expect instant gratification on the internet.
105
106 Researcher: Everybody comes to the piece with a particular set of conventions they are hoping
107 to find fulfilled: it's book, or game or the internet. Whatever model you feel happiest with
108 when you read that's the one people seem to look for. And hypertext at the moment, at least the
109 one you've been looking at, doesn't seem to satisfy any of your expectations. Is that right? Is it
110 that you're all finding certain expectations frustrated one way or another?
111
112 EC: It's just too much work.
113
114 Researcher: Is it more work than reading a difficult novel?
115
116 EC: Yes, because if it was a difficult novel you could always go back a few pages, pick a
117 point up before you go forward again. It's just, nobody wants to work that hard having
118 pleasure.
119
120 RG: Even if it's a difficult novel you get to see the structure that the author wanted you to
121 see. There you can't do that, you don't know, there is no structure that the author wanted,
122 the author didn't want you to have a structure.
123
124 Researcher: Do you get more structure in a website?
125
126 RG: In a traditional website you would. Because people replicate each other when they're
127 building websites.
128
129 KC: The other thing is you don't know how long the story's going to be. There's no clue. If
130 you pick a book up, it's four inches thick and you say, 'well that's gong to take me a week
131 or two to read'. So you didn't know how much time this book, this story was going to take
132 me to get through. Some bits were shorter than others, and you couldn't really work out
133 how far along you were.
134
135 EC: KC, did you think it was a story?
136
137 KC: No
138
139 EC: Because I thought it was just prose, just odd bits of prose strung together.

140
141 CV: My perspective is slightly different because I'm quite, invariably I'm quite used to
142 these kind of narratives, with the stuff that I deal in. And I have quite a utopian feel towards
143 the breakdown of the passive audience, that people shouldn't be fed stuff, that they should
144 be active participators in their own readings. So theoretically I'm quite into the idea of
145 hypertext narrative and interactive narrative. But I think it has to be really, really
146 compulsive in order to work, and in this case it wasn't. So I look for emotions – you were
147 talking about information in nodes, bits of information, is that a story? Well I think it is, but
148 it has to be emotionally compulsive, you really need to want to read it. I had no compulsion
149 to read about documented teenage experience, perhaps because it wasn't emotionally
150 compulsive for me.
151
152 Researcher: Is there any way for any of you that the visuals could work? I know a few of
153 you found that the visuals were a distraction.
154
155 KC: Well, they weren't really pictures, they were just blurred images.
156
157 EC: I spent so much time trying to tie the words to the blurred image and see a relationship
158 between them, and most of the time I couldn't find one.
159
160 RG: True.
161
162 KC: I looked at the image and I thought what has this got to do with what I'm reading? I
163 couldn't see a link and you couldn't make out most of the images anyway.
164
165 RG: It felt like the images were there to... postmodern narrative or whatever, just try to say
166 something without telling the reader anything substantial about the narrative at all I think.
167 There was a school bus, and a shoe or whatever it was. I think, the shoe tied up to the text
168 a bit but it didn't give you any information. It wasn't aesthetically pleasing, it was really
169 blurred so I wasn't quite sure what the point of that is. The other thing is the menus: if you
170 compare the font colour to the background colour, sometimes I couldn't make out what the
171 choices were in the menu – it was just too similar. So visually, I don't know if that's
172 deliberate, I don't know why it would be...
173
174 CV: I think it's a clear example of historical interactive narrative, so it's already quite dated.
175 So it doesn't respond to certain standards now of accessibility. It wouldn't pass any
176 accessibility test because people can't actually use it properly. I think we're looking at an
177 antiquated aesthetic and surely that's slightly influencing our opinion of it, I think. If the
178 visuals were stronger, if the design of it was stronger, perhaps....animation yeah.
179
180 RG: I felt it was a like a conspiracy there, to disorientate the reader...
181
182 KC: I still can't imagine why somebody would want to go on that website... unless you're
183 doing a PhD!
184 Researcher: Can you imagine a situation where images and graphics would be appealing,
185 can you imagine maybe a 'film-of' book, maybe an adaptation?

186
187 KC: Not if I've got to sit at my computer to read it. That's the problem, I don't enjoy
188 reading fiction on a computer. I'm not going to get up in the morning and go to my PC to
189 read a book for half an hour before I have a shower. I'm not going to read a computer for
190 half an hour before I go to sleep. If I'm trying to find information about a holiday I'll go
191 and look on the internet...
192
193 EC: A book, wine and chocolate go together every well.
194
195 CV: It's not generational – I use computers for both entertainment and for professional
196 stuff. But because I use it all the time I also like the idea of sitting down to a good book
197 where I don't have to look at a screen anymore, and maybe that's why I reacted in the way
198 that I did. I'm not sure...that actually... my fiction I want to reserve for lying in the bath,
199 sitting in a comfy chair, not actually looking at an interface so I don't use a computer for
200 that aspect.
201
202 RG: You could use a laptop...
203
204 KC: Why would you sit in the bath with a laptop?
205
206 CV: You can sit on the beach with a laptop.
207
208 Researcher: I would sit in bed with a laptop...
209
210 KC: Yes, but why? If you're tired, you can just put your book down, put your book mark
211 in... otherwise you're trying to log out, oh it just sounds like hard work...
212
213 Researcher: What about the electronic book Sony are developing? The size of a paperback,
214 and you store loads of books on it...
215
216 KC: I like to see them in my book case, because they bring back nice memories.
217
218 RG: It's exactly like you say, it's like a bit of a collector thing, you like to see them in your
219 book case. So you can't do that with an iPod...
220
221 Researcher: You can have both, I have CDs on my shelf and music in my computer...
222
223 EC: But would you listen to music exclusively on your computer?
224
225 RG: That's a good question.
226
227 Researcher: No, I guess I'd have both... Is it too big a hurdle to think that at some point in
228 the future pieces might be written exclusively for computer that would work, and that you
229 might be interested in?
230
231 EC: Are you talking mass market?

232
233 Researcher: Even *a* market...
234
235 EC: *A* market, a niche market... CV may be your niche market. The other three of us are
236 probably the mass market when it comes to reading books.
237
238 Researcher: I guess, is there some inbuilt deep human resistance to reading stories that you
239 have to interact with, or is it really something to do with the newness of the technology and
240 the breaking down of very deeply learnt habits?
241
242 RG: I think in most examples of popular culture like *The DaVinci Code*, people read the
243 book and then go online, they read all the companions...
244
245 EC: I'd read the book, and enjoy the book, I have the book, and then put it in my
246 bookcase...
247
248 Researcher: Would you go online?
249
250 EC: No.
251
252 RG: I did that, I was downloading the images as I was reading the book. I was finding maps
253 of Paris, tracing, it was like 'I've been there'. It was like a game.
254
255 Researcher: If *the DaVinci Code* had been only released online, presented online and did
256 all those things...
257
258 RG: If it was really, really good, if it wasn't like tough work, definitely. The writing was
259 really captivating, I couldn't put it down. If it was the same thing online with all the extras
260 of animation, you had the maps and photographs, then I would probably enjoy it as much as
261 I did the book.
262
263 KC: With a book, if I'm going to the doctors or the dentist I'll take my book and sit and
264 read a few pages. And I always have a book with me, if I'm in a car and I'm stuck in a
265 traffic jam and I'm a passenger, out will come my book. But I can't imagine taking my
266 computer around with me, just in case I had a few minutes and wanted to read a book.
267
268 CV: But the kind of device Jim's talking about is much more portable, much more
269 accessible...
270
271 KC: But you can't flick though it...
272
273 Researcher: Sony are hoping it will so slim and so small, the size of a small paperback, that
274 it will just slip into your handbag and become as accessible as a book. If the equipment was
275 more beautiful and appealing then maybe there'd be more writers, more investment.
276 Something is blocking its progress...
277

278 EC: Yeah, what's blocking its progress I think is lack of a market, because that sort of little
279 hi-tech gizmo is for younger people, like my children, but they do not read. None of my
280 children read anything, the generation that read is older people.

281
282 Researcher: Would your children like an interactive novel?

283
284 EC: No, they do not read.

285
286 Researcher: If it was on a nice gizmo... I bet they read MSN, websites, blogs... I bet they
287 do read.

288
289 EC: It upsets me that all three, aged 18 to 24, never read any narrative or novel or anything.
290 They just have no interest. I don't see a market for it.

291
292 CV: I really don't think there is a generational division here, I think it's a complete
293 assumption that young people are into technology, older people aren't...in fact there's
294 been extensive research done about this, and I don't think there is a generation gap at all.
295 My daughter's nine and she loves sitting with a good book, and yet she also loves playing
296 computers. The two things aren't mutually exclusive.

297
298 Researcher: One of the things that comes up, a big issue for everybody is orientation. Am I
299 right in thinking you all needed clearer signposting, ways backwards and forwards, to
300 know where you were...?

301
302 CV: No. There's two different aspects to the online world - one is purely functional,
303 information retrieval, easy navigation; the other is about experience, and actually we began
304 to see the net too much as an educational thing and not enough as an experimental,
305 experience-based medium. So I quite like the process of hunting, of gameplay, of puzzle
306 solving, not quite knowing where I am - it just has to be compulsive as a story.

307
308 Researcher: So CV doesn't mind the wandering, but you three would like something to say
309 'I've read this much of this much, I'd like to be able to go back to where I was, I'd like to
310 know when I've reached the end...'?
311

312 RG: I really like to know how much of 100% I've read, that's really important to me.
313

314 KC: If I go on holiday I take about the equivalent of about four books a week, so if I go for
315 two weeks I need eight books. On the other hand if I've got a very large book, I could
316 probably make do with seven large books. You know roughly how long it's going to take to
317 read, but on the internet I thought 'how long is this going to take me to get through?' I
318 found it very unsatisfying because it didn't have an ending.

319
320 CV: I have to say I'm a total contradiction. I could easily sit and enjoy this interactive
321 narrative, but lately I prefer tactile media forms. I've been dealing with computers for too
322 long, I've come out the other side and I want something I can touch, and feel, and smell.
323 Outside of the interface. If it was more tactile I think it would be better, for me.

324
 325 Researcher: How would that be possible in a digital world though?
 326
 327 CV: I think that virtual reality is really going to take hold and we'll have the sense of
 328 tactileness, the illusion that we're feeling something. It's not that remote, we're talking 20
 329 or 30 years.
 330
 331 Researcher: When an author puts links into a story and says 'this is a point of interest and
 332 I'm flagging attention to it,' is that an intrusion into your reading imagination or is that an
 333 extra enjoyment that says 'that might be interesting, I'll have a look there'? If there are ten
 334 links on a page the author is offering you a lot of choice.
 335
 336 RG: When you have a book you have the preferred structure there and you know how the
 337 author wanted you to read it, when you've got ten links on a page you don't know how
 338 important the ten links are for the narrative or for your understanding. Are they just there
 339 for your reference or are they required reading? How much are you supposed to invest in
 340 the links? At one point I just gave and started clicking anywhere.
 341
 342 EC: I think if there are ten links a few of them must be the right answer, let me try and find
 343 the right answer that's going to make the story proceed... and I found that none of them
 344 were the right answer, none of them made the story proceed, so then I lost interest in the
 345 links.
 346
 347 Researcher: What would you have liked the links to do?
 348
 349 EC: Continue the story.
 350
 351 Researcher: What would the links have done ideally for you that wouldn't be done by
 352 1,2,3,4,5,6 page turning process?
 353
 354 RG: They could give you background, like footnotes, background about the characters and
 355 situations and then you can get more into the narrative. Non-vital information.
 356
 357 Researcher: Not narrative development?
 358
 359 RG: You could, but not the backbone of the narrative. Little snippets of information-
 360
 361 EC: Side stories. I just found them very intrusive. I'm trying to read it as a book, because
 362 that's what I'm thinking it is, but it doesn't behave like a book. So my reaction when it
 363 doesn't behave like a book, rather than thinking 'oh this is exciting, I must learn this new
 364 format', my reaction is to simply shut down and say it's too much work. I'm not willing to
 365 invest the time to learn the new format, my life is too busy.
 366 CV: I used links both in terms of points of interest and in a random way. I really, really am
 367 intrigued, and like the experience of hypertext jumping, finding different nodes of
 368 information, you can go off at tangents and come back to a central story, are not necessarily,

369 but the whole thing amount to an experience about an emotion or feeling. That's the kind of
370 hypertext that would really work with me.

371
372 Researcher: Do you imagine there would be a central spine of the story and the links would
373 take you off but always bring you back?

374
375 CV: Not necessarily a linear narrative but it could be about an emotion or a certain kind of
376 experience, something that would be strongly compulsive. But actually one of the points
377 you're picking up on is that it's too much hard work, and I like reading a book to escape
378 and be passive sometimes and not have to think. And on occasions it's too hard work.

379
380 Researcher: Is clicking a link harder work than turning a page?

381
382 KC: Yeah. The whole, environment because you're sitting in front of a computer in a chair,
383 as opposed to lounging in a bed or sitting on a sun lounger, so you almost feel as though
384 you're doing a job.

385
386 CV: You don't have to sit at a desk with a laptop.

387
388 KC: It would feel very strange though sitting in bed reading a laptop or sitting out in my
389 sun lounger with a laptop on my knee.

390
391 Researcher: If we got you the perfect portable electronic book so that you could sit in your
392 bath without giving yourself an electric shock, could you imagine a story where hyperlinks
393 could do anything beyond turning pages and going from chapter to chapter?

394
395 KC: I think they could show you things. So for example, I've read everything that Ian
396 Rankin has written, so you could see the inside of Inspector Rebus' flat, see a photograph
397 of it to link you more in with the story; or you might see a picture of a person, or
398 character. But I think might want to click on them all at the beginning, so that then I
399 could read the story and have the picture in my mind. I wouldn't want to deviate from the
400 story.

401
402 Researcher: So, I am beginning to get a sense from everybody that you can actually
403 imagine possibilities: if we get over the technological problems, if we get great writing, if
404 we get great story structures and multimedia and hyperlinking used skilfully, even the most
405 resistant might find something of interest. I can imagine *The DaVinci Code* presented on
406 the new Sony electronic book, with all the hyperlinking possibilities, all in the within same
407 piece, the same medium.

408
409 RG: I think if you frame it in non-exclusive terms as you said, it's not mutually exclusive. I
410 think we're really protective of books because we love books and they're part of our lives
411 obviously. But if you frame the question what if, in addition to the printed book, you got
412 that gadgety version as well, people would be much more prepared to go for that.

413
414 Researcher: Because people do buy the DVD of the film, and the book of the film...

415
416 RG: And they buy the music of the film...
417
418 Researcher: Is there anything that anybody wanted to add? Anything you're desperate to
419 say about hypertext?
420
421 RG: It's a different medium. I think, we do the book metaphor but it's a different medium.
422 It doesn't do it justice to judge it as, it's just a medium on its own.
423
424 Researcher: EC, you said you were in book mode, struggling to make sense of it as book,
425 but you also said you were in web mode, struggling to make it work as a website...
426
427 EC: I couldn't marry the two of them together. I think also picking up on what CV and KC
428 said, when I read a book it's a pleasure – I want to relax, I want to kick back... that was not
429 pleasurable.
430
431 KC: I could imagine having a look at one of these electronic books. I don't think I'd buy it,
432 but I'd try it. It would have to be by an author I liked. I can't imagine reading a book, in fact
433 Stephen King brought out a book on the web and the fact that I printed it out chapter by
434 chapter. I did print it out on A4 paper but then it wasn't a book, it was like a report, so I
435 thought I don't want to read this. So I think I'm a dinosaur.
436
437 RG: I don't like e-books. I like reading stuff online but a book is a book.
438
439 CV: One of the key issues we haven't resolved, that we still haven't escaped is that all we
440 have is paper simulation. So what's new about it, and it's probably one of the central issues
441 about this discussion that the two mediums are interlinked, they're not the same and yet
442 we're applying old frameworks of understanding to this kind of new medium. We haven't
443 got round that. But that inevitably is the process of transition – you're using old
444 frameworks to orient yourself.
445
446 RG: Since you mention that, there's one variable which is material possessions, and I think
447 that's the leap between digital and non-digital. It's a different rule, it's something, it's not
448 just tangible and non-tangible it's material possession. I mean, we build our lives around
449 material possessions, for better or worse.
450
451 ENDS

Appendix Four

253

1 29/03/06
2 Ensbury Park Library
3
4
5 253
6 JC Think Aloud (JC/T)
7
8
9
10
11 Researcher : What sort of fiction do you like reading?
12
13 JC: Um, a bit of everything really. Crime, horror, general fiction. It's more a case of the
14 few types of fiction I *don't* read.
15
16 Researcher : So this will probably be unlike any of those...
17
18 JC: That's true, yeah.
19
20 Researcher : What I want really, at this stage, is for you to give me an initial reaction to
21 what you see, because obviously it's different from a book. It's not exactly like anything
22 else really, this is what I'm finding. What I'd like you to do really is explore the interface,
23 and as you're doing that tell me what you find, what seems obvious, what's tricky, you
24 know, see what sense you make of it. And then, after that, reading it at your leisure. You
25 won't get the story today, but part of what I'm doing today is seeing how people react to
26 the... (*interruption*) interface today and then I can talk to you about the content when
27 you've read it, exactly.
28
29 JC: It seems very, it's just sort of like a basic web page.
30
31 Researcher : Yeah.
32
33 JC: Coming to this from a search engine, or coming to this from a link, I wouldn't
34 immediately think, 'This is a story.' So, possibly, whether or not some sort of heading,
35 some way of identifying this is actually a story as opposed to a web page...
36
37 Researcher : Yeah, you're right.
38
39 JC: Because it just sort of says to me link, link, link to different pages rather than link to
40 different bits of the story, if you see what I mean. It doesn't look different enough from a
41 standard web page, but... So this sort of follows through the story does it, I take it?
42
43 Researcher : Well, I think that bit is just more like a blurb really.
44
45 JC: Oh right.
46

47 Researcher : Just telling you how and why...
48
49 JH : Again possibly the same sort of thing but it just looks like a standard sort of
50 page.
51
52 Researcher: Yeah.
53
54 JC: It's a sort of layout thing, I'd say.
55
56 Researcher : So what have got now, what do you think, from your perspective?
57
58 JC: Umm, it's Car One... I take it this is the members of the car in this train, this tube train,
59 I take it... This is an interesting way of doing it, because you get to identify each passenger,
60 in turn... so you can follow through, so you can link onto each one of their stories. Is that
61 the idea? You've got each individual story?
62
63 Researcher : Yeah.
64
65 JC: (*clicking on a link*) ...click on a box.... Oh, it goes to different cars. The story links up,
66 like a web... It's quite cool, actually.
67
68 Researcher : Is it starting to make a bit more-?
69
70 JC: Yes, it's starting to make more sense actually now. The fact that it all links to different,
71 and you can scroll through the different passages one by one. And in a way, the idea that
72 you can sort of jigsaw together the story, by going through the carriage you slowly begin to
73 put the story together.
74
75 Researcher : Well I don't think he really tells you that that's the aim, but I guess I've done
76 like you've done, and I've assumed that's how you're supposed to-
77
78 JC: It's not a traditional narrative from start to finish, it's more like read all these and come
79 to your own picture.
80
81 Researcher : Yeah.
82
83 JC: It's good!
84
85 Researcher : And of course, he's built in these connections which you can choose to follow
86 or not.
87
88 JC: ... The Journey Planner. Oh, again, it's, the stories are linked up in the Journey Planner,
89 by different cars.
90
91 Researcher : So, how many different ways of navigating have you come across so far, then?
92

93 JC: Uhh, I'd say three. One is this sort of journey planner idea, which is sort of ideas of the
94 story. I suppose you could follow it by theme. And then there's going through it by
95 passengers, one by one, in a sort of logical order.
96

97 Researcher : Yeah, you could read it one, two, three, four, five, six, seven...

98

99 JC: Yeah, and then if you go to a passenger, I suppose there's also a way in which you
100 could follow it, you could start on passenger one and then through the links on that page,
101 follow it through that passenger's journey. So you could either do it, sort of a logical
102 sequence, follow it through one passenger and then come back and follow it through
103 another passenger, by the links. So that may lead to another passenger and another
104 passenger.
105

106 Researcher : What's your initial reaction to having a story, whether we call it a novel or not
107 – he calls it a novel – a novel that can be read in at least three different ways?
108

109 JC: I think it's quite clever. I remember doing these when I was a child. We used to have
110 these books where you, 'Choose Your Own Adventure' books. And the only thing was, I
111 found with those, you were very tempted to read, if you didn't like a certain part of the
112 story, you'd backtrack and find yourself cheating... I'm not sure it was really cheating
113 because as long as you get the story-
114

115 Researcher : It is offered-
116

117 JC: Yeah, so can it be classed as cheating? But, I think it's a clever idea. I'd have to read it
118 first to really, get a feel... I think you'd have to go through it once from start to finish, to
119 know if you could put the story together in your head. Because I think a lot of the problem
120 would be probably linking it together, I think, because reading through it... I know I
121 would probably do it in a logical fashion, read one, two, three.
122

123 Researcher : Why would you do that, why would you choose that one, and not the sort of
124 roaming around and clicking on links a bit more randomly?
125

126 JC: I'm not... I think it might be personal taste actually. I like to do things logically,
127 because if not I'd be afraid that I'd miss out. I'd be afraid that I'd get lost. But by going
128 back to the car thing and then following it through each one, in turn, I'd know that I'd get
129 everything. I might not get it in the order that it was initially intended, but I'd get
130 everything, and then I could always go for a second time and re-read and get the order...
131

132 Researcher : That's very interesting. So what, overall, what do you think about the
133 interface, using it?
134

135 JC: I think it's clearer now you're into it. I think the initial screen probably needs a bit more.
136 It didn't really read as a piece of fiction. And again, if you come into this half way through,
137 then again I think you might have a bit of a problem seeing it as a piece of fiction. You
138 definitely need to read it from the top of the page down.

139
140 Researcher : So you mean if you first hit this car, you might-
141
142 JC: You wouldn't automatically think it was a book.
143
144 Researcher : No, you wouldn't...
145
146 JC: If you had it on a piece of software on a disk you'd have to follow it through. But if
147 you're doing it on the internet there is the chance that someone could jump in half way
148 through, and then...
149
150 Researcher : That's very interesting... So, do you feel you know your way round it enough
151 to operate it?
152
153 JC: Oh yeah, sure, no problem.
154
155 ENDS

1 2/5/06
2 at Bournemouth University
3
4 253
5 JH Think-aloud (JH/T)
6
7
8
9
10 Researcher: So whatever comes into your head, if you could say that out loud, that's what I
11 need, good or bad.
12
13 JH: Yeah? OK. Very plain, to start, but, that's, it's more of a text based thing. This looks a
14 bit confusing, this bit at the beginning.
15
16 Researcher: What do you think that's all about?
17
18 JH: Um, linking different parts of the story. It's like an introduction thing, isn't it?
19
20 Researcher: It's offering different themes. Where do you think the story begins?
21
22 JH: Well, I would have thought the first one: it says 'describes the ground rules of the
23 novel'. I don't know – there isn't one. There isn't sort of a start. I can't see which bit you're
24 supposed to click on first.
25
26 Researcher: You can't see the obvious opening.
27
28 JH: No... (*reading intro text*). I guess that one, 'journey planner'. Oh no, that is sort of an
29 introduction isn't it? I thought it was going to be rules...
30
31 Researcher: I think you're right though, I think it is a description of how it works. It's not
32 actually the story.
33
34 JH: No it's not the story, no.
35
36 Researcher: For you, given that you're on an arts, you're at the arts institute, is that amount
37 to read, to get you started, helpful?
38
39 JH: Sorry, the amount to read?
40
41 Researcher: Yeah, if we went back, to that page that was describing the ground rules of the
42 novel, is that helpful to have that amount of information?
43
44 JH: Yeah, I think it is, yeah,
45
46 Researcher: You don't mind the thought of reading that through?

47
48 JH: No, I don't. I'm quite into reading, so, it depends on the person.
49
50 Researcher: Yes it does. Given that I'm studying pieces that do require reading- none of the
51 pieces I'm looking at, even if they're very visual, have no reading. I'm looking at pieces
52 where you are an audience, not a player. So that's fine, if you're happy to read.
53
54 JH: What would be good is if you could sort of um, if you're the sort of person who doesn't
55 like reading this, you know just like the intro to this, it would be quite good if you could
56 just begin it. Start it wherever you want and it will always make sense.
57
58 Researcher: I see...
59
60 JH: I don't know if it does. Do you know what I mean?
61
62 Researcher: Yeah, I do.
63
64 JH: So you could read it at whichever point you want, and it will...
65
66 Researcher: It seems like the point of interactivity really, to be able to start wherever you
67 feel like it.
68
69 JH: That's like the map...
70
71 Researcher: So you've got the tube map and you've got the list of cars, in the tube train...
72 OK, so you clicked on car one.
73
74 JH: So you've got the means of each person, each passenger...
75
76 Researcher: What do you think about that, as a way into a story?
77
78 JH: Yeah, I quite like the idea of, it tells you about the person, yeah...that's quite nice, I
79 quite like that idea.
80
81 Researcher: You've started to move round fairly quickly. Are you happy with the
82 navigation, and linking?
83
84 JH: Yeah, it's quite simple. Quite simple, yeah. At the beginning to have to think which
85 one you're going to click on first. Otherwise, eventually you get used to just clicking on
86 anything. You know what you're doing, it sort of makes sense quite well.
87
88 Researcher: For you, is this following conventions of navigation and on-screen material
89 that you're happy with?
90
91 JH: Yeah. It's just simple links, isn't it? I don't like this being right down at the bottom.
92

93
 94 Researcher: Because you might miss that?
 95
 96 JH: Yeah.
 97
 98 Researcher: One of the principles of web design is that you shouldn't have to scroll too
 99 much, that's become a convention. With this you're having to scroll an awful lot, to get to
 100 everything. Could that have been designed differently, so you didn't have to scroll?
 101
 102 JH: Um, I quite like the idea, you know, if this done a bit more graphically, I prefer in a way,
 103 rather than links with text, although the links at the bottom are good, like this, I like that,
 104 but for individual people it would be it quite nice if they were like little Cluedo characters
 105 or something. But there would be too many...
 106
 107 Researcher: But they could be arranged across the screen and smaller. If they were just
 108 icons, they wouldn't take up as much space.
 109
 110 JH: Yeah, it needs to still be obvious. It could be faces on top of a Cluedo, whatever...
 111
 112 Researcher: That would be interesting. So, is the point here-
 113
 114 JH: There'd be a hell of a lot basically.
 115
 116 Researcher: Hell of a lot of characters?
 117
 118 JH: Quite a few characters, isn't there?
 119
 120 Researcher: There are, 253.
 121
 122 JH: So this makes up a story, does it, each of these characters? (*clicking on characters*) I
 123 like that being at the top, as well as. Because of you've clicked on the wrong one you don't
 124 have to scroll to the bottom. I know you could probably go back in the normal way on a
 125 browser, but...
 126
 127 Researcher: You don't want to have to do that.
 128
 129 JH: Say you'd clicked two or three off, you've got to go the bottom. Ah, there's some
 130 empty seats... I'll have a look around, what's that? 'End of the line'. Maybe it works –
 131 shall I click on one of these, and try it from there? It doesn't work from Passenger List
 132 Three.
 133
 134 Researcher: Can I ask something about the way you're reacting to this? You're clicking
 135 around pretty quickly, and your initial exploration is very competent, and you're very
 136 happy to use all of these links– do you, are you able to tell me what sort of mode you're in?
 137 Have you come to this thinking it's going to be sort of like reading a book, or in some way
 138 like exploring a website? What kind of expectations did you have?

139
140 JH: A bit in between. I came to it thinking not exactly a book or website, but um, I did
141 actually think it might be something where you could just switch it on at any link you want
142 and it would all make sense. I'm not sort of in a, I didn't think it would be like a huge story,
143 I just, I didn't think it would be website style either. It's quite exploratory.
144
145 Researcher: Is that how you'd describe it?
146
147 JH: I think so, it's fun in a way. You're sort of in control of it.
148
149 Researcher: So you're not put off by the idea of a story that's going to be told by you
150 choosing which bits you read?
151
152 JH: No, I think that's quite a good idea. I quite like that. As long as it works of course. I
153 would like to have a look at it definitely.
154
155 Researcher: OK. So just flick around a bit more and see if there's anything else. I notice
156 you haven't used the map, you haven't actually clicked on the tube map.
157
158 JH: You can click on the map, can you? I like that idea. I thought because of the beginning
159 page, because it's all based on text, I assumed without thinking that this might not be
160 clickable.
161
162 Researcher: The beginning page did have a bit of a map which wasn't clickable. But then
163 you get this journey planner which is.
164
165 JH: I think my mind sort of assumed, because it's all clear links, I didn't even think to look
166 up here. Um, Ok... I see, it links to each character. Does it do other things as well? Car
167 Four...?
168
169 Researcher: That takes you to the whole of the car and get the car map again. What did you
170 do before that took you straight to the passenger?
171
172 JH: I clicked on, there, 'Estelle'...
173
174 Researcher: And that took you a specific character.
175
176 JH: Character, yeah. How did I do that...? Just switched between one character to the next,
177 'next passenger, previous passenger' yes... I quite like that, but um, the choice of choosing
178 from one end of the list to the other, of the characters, as well as switching between the next
179 passenger, it's quite good. Both of the ideas are...
180
181 Researcher: So you can choose whichever character you want from the car map, or you can
182 go 1,2,3,4,5 if you wanted to read it in some sort of linear...
183

184 JH: I think that's quite good, because I think a lot of people wouldn't be able to follow a
185 story or, um, navigate through this without it being one after the other. Like people that
186 perhaps not such arty people, where they read a lot, they would probably only cope with
187 one after the other.
188
189 Researcher: People that have been used to reading in print...
190
191 JH: Yeah... I don't know, that's what I think anyway. I like both ways. I like the idea of
192 doing both.
193
194 Researcher: Ah...so you, what, within the same piece?
195
196 JH: Yeah... I like the idea of being able to switch to whichever bit you want, or to follow
197 on.
198
199 Researcher: And is this offering you that?
200
201 JH: Yeah. You can go to the next passenger there, or you can go to the journey planner and
202 choose a list of passengers like that. I quite like that because, if there's one in particular you
203 want to skip to, you can just go straight back to them. And also it's more adventurous like
204 this, but the other way round you're getting more of a storyline. Not exactly more of a
205 storyline, more of a structure. I like both. I like both in it.
206
207 Researcher: So are you saying, for you it needs a kind of structure that is available if you
208 want it, but freedom to explore if that's how you feel?
209
210 JH: Yeah.
211
212 Researcher: And have you come across that kind of approach in other multimedia or online
213 situations?
214
215 JH: I have, but I'm thinking of it now but I can't think for the life of me think what it is.
216 There is something that I've got in my mind while I've been doing this that allows you to-
217 it might just be simply those books, those choose your own adventure books. I know you
218 can't read it all the way through but you've got the choice to go back. I think that's what it
219 is I've got in my mind.
220
221 Researcher: Where there is a clear structure but you can also make choices. You've got
222 many more choices here than you would in those books, because with those you only get a
223 choice now and again, but with this you've got choice all the time.
224
225 JH: Yeah.
226
227 Researcher: So it will be very interesting when you read it to see if that amount of choice
228 works in terms of telling a story.... OK well, I think that's fine, JH. You've worked very
229 quickly and you can see how this interface operates, and you seem happy with it.

230
231 JH: Yeah... Oh, have you seen this bit?
232
233 Researcher: No.
234
235 JH: 'Another important announcement'.
236
237 Researcher: Kind of humour in there...
238
239 JH: Yeah. There's quite a lot of hidden stuff that you don't notice until a bit later on
240 perhaps. I don't know if that's a good thing, I don't know if it's a good thing or not.
241
242 Researcher: Well it's mixing up reading that we're used to with playing...
243
244 JH: I like the other, generally the idea of finding out later what you can do, but this part, the
245 announcement, I'll have a look another day obviously, but straight away an announcement
246 seems to be the sort of thing you should see first. But that might just be because I'm
247 skimming thorough it now.
248
249 Researcher: But if you're saying if you're in the flow of the story and you suddenly hit on
250 that...
251
252 JH: Yeah. It sort of confused me... it might just be because I'm not reading it. When I play
253 with it properly I'll look back at that properly and see exactly what that is.
254
255 ENDS

PAGE
NUMBERING
AS ORIGINAL

1 29/03/0-6
2 Ensbury Park Library
3
4
5 **253**
6 **JV Think Aloud (JV/T)**
7
8
9
10
11 JV: I just thought I'd first of all go for any title that you'd got on the screen.
12
13 Researcher : So was that completely random?
14
15 JV: Yeah, that was a random title.
16
17 Researcher : OK.
18
19 JV: Because, I thought 'let's go in, not in any particular order.'
20
21 Researcher : Yeah.
22
23 JV: So, I went for 'cookery' (*on the journey planner*) to start with.
24
25 Researcher : And what have you found here, in your perception of it?
26
27 JV: It's a bit like an underground map. I'm at the tube... and I'm just going for that because
28 I'm interested in cookery...
29
30 Researcher : So you chose a word just because it's of interest to you.
31
32 JV: Yeah, it jumped out at me. And now I've just got a description of Mr Brian
33 Latham, I presume. What he's wearing, what he looks like. Oh, he is a cookery
34 correspondent.
35
36 Researcher : What else are you seeing on the page, from your point of view?
37
38 JV: Well, it's giving you a description of what he does, what he's done lately. Um, it's
39 quite amusing actually, when you start reading.
40
41 Researcher : It is quite good writing.
42
43 JV: Yeah...It's quite explicit where... well, language, writing. It could put a few people off,
44 I suppose.
45

46 Researcher : If you were choosing a book, how would you know it was going to be the sort
47 of book you'd like?
48
49 JV: Umm, I'd read the covers, the blurb on the back, all the writing by various newspapers.
50 Or I might even look it up on the internet.
51
52 Researcher : And that is one issue about this, because you just said the language might put
53 some people off and maybe it's not the sort of style you'd like. You haven't got that backup
54 at the moment, have you?
55
56 JV: No...
57
58 Researcher : What link did you click on that time?
59
60 JV: The 'next passenger' in the car. So at the moment I'm going through passengers...
61 *(recording interrupted by library activity)*
62
63 ENDS

1 2/5/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4
5 253
6 PC Think-aloud (PC/T)
7
8
9
10 PC: I tend to think that the book works as an interface, and so, that works fine, doesn't it?
11 You turn the page and everything's in there, nice and neatly, compact. So I don't know if
12 it's possible to better that. So that's a problem in itself, to start with. Do you want me to
13 comment on what I'm seeing here?
14
15 Researcher : Yeah.
16
17 PC: Well, initially, I'm looking at it, and I think it's got um, references to mapping and
18 stuff like that, I think, I don't feel that it shows that in an interface, when it could, if that's
19 what it's about. Because a map can be an interesting way of navigating through a story, but
20 I just don't think, the way this is laid out... I don't know if when you go into it, the map
21 becomes more of something you can navigate visually, because I think if you put things in
22 a 3D sort of platform as well, it helps to deal with vast sets of data, because the way people
23 think, they think in sort of spatial terms. That's how I'm going with my project at the
24 moment anyway.
25
26 Researcher : So just so I understand, you see the map logo, and therefore looking for that to
27 be some part of the navigation system?
28
29 PC: I am, yes, because that would make sense to me, but I haven't gone into it yet. I'm not
30 sure how it works at the moment. (*exploring screen*) I'm just randomly clicking at the
31 moment to see what happens.
32
33 Researcher : Do you know what you clicked on? Did you just click literally randomly?
34
35 PC: Well, I clicked because it was the top one there, you know.
36
37 Researcher : The top of that opening menu.
38
39 PC: Yeah.
40
41 Researcher : What do you think you've got now?
42
43 PC: I take it it's like the first chapter, really. Seems to be describing what's going to
44 happen in the novel. It's difficult really, without spending a bit of time reading through
45 this.
46

47 Researcher : By all means read what you feel you need to read to get started. Now you've
48 brought up a fuller map.
49
50 PC: I've gone back because I thought I'd just play around and see what comes up, to start
51 with, because that's what I would tend to do on a website. You go back and forward, you
52 just play around to start with, and find out what you like the look of and take it from there.
53 Ok, so, I've got another map now.
54
55 Researcher : Are you aware of how you got that map?
56
57 PC: Well, I noticed the word 'journey planner' so...
58
59 Researcher : Why did you click on that, just because it was second-?
60
61 PC: Second could be a reason.
62
63 Researcher : From the point of view of design, how would you like to have been able to
64 enter into the story or map? Is there something that would have made it easier for you?
65
66 PC: I just think maybe if it was laid out like a map, like this perhaps, and you could access
67 things through that.
68
69 Researcher: You mean the whole of that splash page could have been made a map?
70
71 PC: Yeah, because that's how I read it, but that might miss the point of what's going on
72 here completely, I'm not sure.
73
74 Researcher : No, no, the point is what you find, because you're in charge. My approach is
75 to say 'what is the user getting from this?'
76
77 PC: What I notice here is that you can actually interact with this map here, there are ways
78 to...
79
80 Researcher : The journey planner map?
81
82 PC: Yeah.
83
84 Researcher: And that's got hot spots all round it.
85
86 PC: Yeah.
87
88 Researcher: What are you thinking now?
89
90 PC: A bit confused by it all, to be honest. Do *you* think this is straightforward?
91
92 Researcher: I really ought not to say because otherwise I might influence your view.

93
94 PC: Yeah.
95
96 Researcher: Can I just ask you why is it troublesome? Why are you not reacting to it
97 quickly like you would if you were on a website?
98
99 PC: Well I think it's because I've come to this not really knowing what it's all about,
100 whereas when you call up a web address and go there, you're going there for a reason,
101 aren't you? And so you look for that, whereas with this there's nothing in particular I'm
102 looking for.
103
104 Researcher: What do you think the reason you came to this might be, because that's a
105 really important point you're making. You're being confused because something you're
106 looking for isn't there. So what do you think you might have been expecting? I told you it
107 was a hypertext fiction piece, so what did that put you in mind of? Were you aware of some
108 expectation you might have had when you sat down?
109
110 PC: Um, not really.
111
112 Researcher You just didn't know?
113
114 PC: Not really. I wasn't sure what to expect. I mean I was perhaps expecting for more of
115 graphical interface, um, because I know it's dealing with text but really I mean, if it's
116 giving it the opportunity to use graphics and stuff I think it should do that, because like a
117 straightforward book doesn't really have that chance. I know it can be illustrated but I think
118 with this because you've got that way of being able to navigate it, it gives you that
119 opportunity to do something different.
120
121 Researcher: So in a sense, are you saying that, although this has been quite a well, I mean
122 the reason I picked this one is because it's known, it's one that gets talked about,
123 somewhere there's a list of all the awards it's won... It's also been published in print form,
124 so this is one that's out there and known of. But what you're saying is, it's missed a trick
125 somewhere, which is you've got this opportunity to use a more graphical approach to
126 storytelling...
127
128 PC: Yeah, but there is another side to that which I appreciate as well, which is it is a story,
129 and I think, the story has to be good, and that's one of the most important things. So...
130
131 Researcher: Ok. So could you have a trip around a bit more on the interface and see what
132 other elements of the design you come across. Now you've found yourself into one of the
133 cars, Car One. What do you see?
134
135 PC: Like a layout of where people are sitting in this car. And that's represented as like an
136 order, like you would on a bus.
137
138 Researcher: Not very graphic, just tabulated.

139
140 PC: Yeah, which works really because it's just an overhead view. I'm not sure why we've
141 got this though, so I'm going to have a look at one of the people. So I'm thinking this opens
142 up quite a lot of avenues to explore because there's of people on here.
143
144 Researcher: And when you get into one of the individual passengers what kind of interface
145 are you seeing now, from your perspective?
146
147 PC: Just like a brief resume of what they're all about. But in terms of the way it looks, I
148 mean it just doesn't do anything for me. I appreciate it's won a lot of awards, it's probably
149 a good story and a good idea in it. But if I was designing I think I would play more on the
150 idea of a map.
151
152 Researcher: Yes. It's interesting that the map disappears.
153
154 PC: I mean, there's still a hint of it there.
155
156 Researcher: The Car One is a chunk of the map. But it's gone, that main menu, that main
157 navigational tool. What about these links within the text, is that-?
158
159 PC: I was thinking it was quite a dead end really, but there was another link in there.
160
161 Researcher: So you clicked on a link in one passenger and there was another link in there so
162 now you've got-
163
164 PC: Well, I was wondering how far you could go with each person.
165
166 Researcher: Yeah.
167
168 Researcher: And with that one it was another two clicks on.
169
170 PC: And now you're back to where you were. I see, 'back to passenger 36' – it allows you
171 to go back to where you were before.
172
173 P: Is that the one I was one before?
174
175 Researcher: Good question. I think it was.
176
177 PC: I don't know what other one it would be.
178
179 Researcher: It should be the one you were just on, to be logical. So, in terms of the
180 navigation, in terms of your ability to move around, what do you think? Marks out of ten.
181 In terms of your ability to go in, move around the site and begin to read the story, what
182 would you give it at this stage?
183

184 PC: Well, I'd give it above average you know, maybe a 6. The way it's done it's just in
185 simple links in the text.
186
187 Researcher: Which is good?
188
189 PC: It can be, it can be and I suppose for this it isn't a bad way of doing it, because it is
190 dealing with text.
191
192 Researcher: You're going to be mainly reading.
193
194 PC: Yeah, that is the idea of it after all.
195
196 Researcher: There are other pieces that are much more graphic, more visual with more
197 multi-media effects, and I'm trying to look at a range. I've purposely chosen one that was
198 mostly text for you guys because I thought that would throw you off a bit and make you
199 think how text might work. But just to summarise, have I got it right that your overriding
200 feeling is that there's an opportunity, as soon as you're online, you can use software to
201 make it more visual, because it's inherently now a more visual medium?
202
203 PC: Yeah, I do. I mean, I think, just because of way I'm going with my work and the way
204 I'm looking at it, I look at the screen as something that has spatial boundaries really. And
205 there are ways of bridging that. One of them is by putting it into a 3D framework.
206
207 Researcher: Which with a print book you can't do.
208
209 PC: No, but you see that's what I think, if that was explored with this, it might be a way of
210 making a threaded narrative interesting through a space.
211
212 Researcher: This still feels quite flat, doesn't it?
213
214 PC: Yeah, and that's what I'm saying – I think the book is flat and fine, so to put it on the
215 screen doesn't really do anything different.
216
217 Researcher: I see. So the addition of links and interface isn't enough different?
218
219 PC: No. It's not enough. I think it's no different to having one of those choose your own
220 adventure books where it says at the bottom of the page 'go to page so-and-so.' It's no
221 different. It could be a click there, or you just go to a page. I know it would save time but
222 it's the same principle. It's like getting from A to B really.
223
224 Researcher: That's great Paul, thanks.
225
226 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....MASTER DATA

The hypertext piece you read:.....253 (253/Q)

4 respondents

About You

1 *Are you a regular PC user?*

Yes N= 4 No n= 0

2 *Which of the following do you use your PC for?*

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=3

Online games n=0

PC games n=02

email and browsing/ information seeking n=4

Shopping n=4

Other.... MSN

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 *Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

2 *What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)*

A kind of story you already know you like n=2

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=2

An author you already like n=4

An author you have never tried before n=3

Recommendation from a friend n=4

Review in the press or media n=4

Anything else?.....

3 *What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)*

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=2

Familiar everyday language n=2

Interesting characters n=4

Emotional moments n=3

Exciting action n=2

Surprise n=1

Tension n=1

Satisfying conclusion n=4

Anything else?.....

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=1

A deep, heavy read n=0

Both n=3

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n=2 No n=1 Don't mind n=1

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes n=4 No n=0

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

Yes n=4 No n=0

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=1

Uninteresting plot n=2

Too familiar storyline n=0

Uneventful n=0

Dull characters n=2

Poor writing n=2

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else?.....

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=1 No n=0 **Don't mind n=3**

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

N=1 Yes No n=0 **Don't mind n=3**

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=0

Physically uncomfortable n=2

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=1

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=3

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=1 Large n=1 **Either n=2**

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=1 No n=2 Irritated n=1

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=4 No n=0 No menus offered n=0

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes n=0 No n=0 No multimedia used n=4

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=0 Disrupt n=0 N/A n=4

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=2

Watching a film n=0

Playing a game n=3

Solving a puzzle n=4

Something else?...

2 *What about the hypertext carried you along?*

Artistic/ appealing language n=2

Interesting characters n=4

Emotional moments n=1

Exciting action n=2

Surprise n=1

Tension n=0

Satisfying conclusion n=0

Nothing n=0

Anything else I've forgotten?...

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=0

Uninteresting characters n=0

Over-complex plot n=0

Confusing plot n=1

No excitement n=1

No sense of an ending n=1

Anything else that you didn't like? Interface too plain to be attractive; positioning of links could be improved

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=2 No n=1 Disrupted reading n=1

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=2

Word that seemed to signify something n=2

Animated image n=0 (n/a)

Icon n=0

Attempting to follow the story n=3

At random n=2

Any other factor?.....

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

9 If 'yes' to question 8, was that:

intentional n=0 accidental n=0 both n=3

10 If you did re-read sections was that:

interesting n=2 exciting n=0 annoying n=1 frustrating n=0

11 Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?

Yes n=2 No n=2

12 Did you feel satisfied with the ending?

Yes n=2 No n=1

13 Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?

Yes n=0 No n=4

14 Would you read another hypertext novel?

Yes n=4 No n=0

15 If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was

Intriguing new medium n=4

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=2

Anything else

16 If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was

Boring (n/a)

Confusing (n/a)

Unsatisfying story (n/a)

Did not operate easily (n/a)

Anything else?.....

1 5/5/06
2 Ensbury Park Library

3
4
5 **253**
6 **Discussion (253-1/D)**
7 Present: JC; JV

8
9
10
11 Researcher: The thing that I picked up was that you were both interested to look at
12 something like this, give it a whirl, and that there were certain things about it that you found
13 quite intriguing, but certain problems that stopped you getting into it as a story. If I work
14 through the things that I picked up from the questionnaires, and then obviously we'll go
15 wherever you feel you want to take it. The first thing was, there were certain things that I
16 asked about what you liked from a good story, and I've got those listed down. I don't really
17 need to go into those particularly again, but as a starting point, could you say off the top of
18 your heads whether you think this piece, 253, gave you any of the things you'd expect from
19 a good story? Is there anything in it that kind of made you think, 'yeah this is gonna be
20 interesting,' or 'I might want to read more of this' or.... you both wrote down things you
21 liked, interesting characters, emotional moments, surprise, tension, challenge. Was there
22 anything in there that 253 gave you?

23
24 JC: I tended to find that the format distracted from it. I found it broke it up. The whole sort
25 of suspense thing and... the whole idea about suspense and building up the story, I found it
26 very, um, very fragmented... by the clicking. I found it very fragmented. I wasn't able to
27 develop that suspense feeling, that sort of building-up-of-the-story feeling.

28
29 Researcher: So, for you when you read, is the way that you get into it by sort of letting your
30 mind drift off, and sort of forget what's going on...?

31
32 JC: Yes, and therefore by having to think, 'oh, bounce onto that bit, clicking onto that bit',
33 and then you were tempted to go back to, say, another character and then click on another
34 link which went off and ... it was very difficult to try and follow a story through. It was
35 very sort of... I could go down that way and then you'd go down that and then you'd think,
36 'I don't particularly like this little bit, so I'm gonna go back round.' I found it very ...
37 yeah.

38
39 Researcher: So how about you, JV, on that sort of area?

40
41 JV: Yeah, usually when I read a book, I'm getting lost in it, if someone was talking to me I
42 don't hear them. But I was very much aware that I got distracted quite easily. Um, I mean,
43 when you were going through the carriages with all the characters, it was quite interesting
44 to find about them and where they'd been and what they were going to do, but you always
45 had that in the back of your mind that you knew the train was gonna crash.
46

47 Researcher: How did you know that?
48
49 JV: I don't know. I just knew. It wasn't obvious, but um...
50
51 Researcher: So did that spoil it in a way?
52
53 JV: Not really. I mean, I knew there was going to be an outcome, but I didn't know how,
54 why and when, who was going to suffer and who thought they were dying and they were
55 thinking 'Oh, this is my last moment' and 'This is the last time I'm ever gonna do this.'
56 But um...
57
58 Researcher: The more you read, did you begin to get the sense of how the characters
59 connected and how things were building up towards the crash?
60
61 JV: Yeah...
62
63 Researcher: Was that there?
64
65 JC: I think so, but you had to really stick with it. Either don't go near it, or read the whole
66 thing to get the full hit of the story. I don't think, you couldn't – I could compare it to a
67 book, but it couldn't be one of those books where you could just pick it up and stop, it
68 would be a light read. It felt like a very intense, you had to work at it to follow it through
69 and map it all out.
70
71 Researcher: So more intense than the average novel you would pick up?
72
73 JC: Yeah, more intense than an easier read sort of novel that you would tend to pick up.
74
75 Researcher: Have you ever read anything in print that was difficult like this, that you stuck
76 with?
77
78 JV: Classics... I tried reading *War and Peace*, and I just couldn't stick it. Um, and other
79 things that are slow to get into, a bit like *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, I just couldn't get
80 into that.
81
82 Researcher: How long do you reckon you both gave this? And this isn't a question I'm
83 going to tell you off if you only said five minutes...!
84
85 JV: Oh, a couple of hours for me. I did it in two lots.
86
87 JC: I did it even more lots, I tended to split it up even more... maybe that was the problem,
88 I kept coming back to it in sort of half an hour chunks.
89
90 Researcher: Was that because you didn't really quite get into it?
91

92 JC: Yeah... plus I found that I didn't exactly have time to sit down and do the whole sort of
93 three, two-and-a-half hour slot that-
94
95 Researcher: How long do you reckon you give a print novel? What's your reading session
96 if you really get into a novel?
97
98 JC: It could be three hours. I mean, I've done a book in a day, if it's something you've
99 looked forward to..
100
101 Researcher: A whole novel in a day?
102
103 JC: Yeah, 300 pages...
104
105 JV: I did *The Da Vinci Code* in two days, so... 'cos I really got into it.
106
107 JC: I tend to do *Harry Potters* in a day. I actually take days off from work to sit and read,
108 so...
109
110 Researcher: That's amazing reading stamina! And you, JV, if you can do a big book like
111 that in two days.
112
113 JC: It just goes to show a good book can— especially if it's a series, if you've read four and
114 there's another couple coming up.
115
116 Researcher: So what is it that grabs you, and holds onto you where you can sit through a
117 book for a whole day or three hours, and you can read a whole novel in two days? What is
118 it that's hanging onto you and won't let you go, so you don't want to give it up, you'd
119 rather stop doing everything else?
120
121 JV: Well, you want to know the final outcome, don't you?
122
123 JC: You do.
124
125 JV: Especially if it's a mystery.
126
127 JC: I tend to be very character, tend to be very drawn to character.
128
129 JV: And I'm very, what's it called when you read and it's all pictorial?
130
131 Researcher: Images, I suppose?
132
133 JV: Yeah, yeah, lots of that. I mean, I'm, as I'm reading I'm doing the story in pictures as
134 well. I'm *in* the story. I'm living it.
135
136 JC: That's actually a good one. I think what makes a very good novel is if you can put
137 yourself in the position of one of the characters, sometimes.

138
139 JV: You're almost one of the, whichever one you've decided is your favourite.
140
141 JC: It depends on how the book's written really. Certain styles you can't do that.
142
143 Researcher: So you're getting into the characters, you're being drawn along by the plot that
144 makes you want to keep going because somehow you want to know what's happened, you
145 don't want to put it down. The writing style? Does that have a big effect?
146
147 JV: Not really.
148
149 JC: Not so much, no.
150
151 JV: As long as it's comprehensible.
152
153 JC: There are certain books that tend to...
154
155 JV: If they use very long words and, um...
156
157 JC: I'm not such a problem with the long words, it's if they... there was a book recently
158 that I actually read about three pages and put it down, because I couldn't do it. And it was
159 about someone from up north, and it was written with a northern accent. I couldn't read it
160 because I found it very hard going.
161
162 Researcher: Like *Trainspotting*, is really hard to read, the original version.
163
164 JC: Really?
165
166 Researcher: Yes, because it's done in Edinburgh dialect. It's very hard to read on the page.
167
168 JC: But yeah it was that idea, and... *The Shipping News*. I couldn't stand the book, because
169 it was written, the language in it was constructed in a peculiar way.
170
171 JV: Short sort of sentences... but the funny thing was, she actually wrote the cowboy one,
172 didn't she? *Brokeback Mountain*, yeah.
173
174 Researcher: So, if those are the sort of things that grab you, did this book have any of those
175 powers over you, even if it was only for five minutes? Did it have characters that you were
176 interested in, or the plot that you wanted to know what's going to happen, or anything
177 really.
178
179 JV: I followed one of the characters. I can't remember his names, I think it was Maurice
180 somebody, and I followed him through the journey. Um, but apart from that I found that I
181 wanted to go in between the chapters.
182
183 Researcher: Jump about?

184
185 JV: Yeah. And after about an hour, I'd had enough, so that's why I did it in two lots. I think
186 it was more looking at the screen than reading the story.
187
188 Researcher : Is that how it was for you?
189
190 JC: Yeah, I think it's very much the worst thing, not the worst thing but the most distracting
191 thing about it was the structure, was the fact that you could jump in and out. I couldn't stop
192 myself from going off on different angles. I should follow, you should follow it through
193 from the start of one character to the end, to get the full flavour. But I just found that I
194 couldn't stop myself from jumping around and therefore it was very difficult to build up an
195 image, and a momentum.
196
197 Researcher : So, in a way, the fact that you had choices on the screen felt like it might be an
198 interesting thing to begin with, but what you seem to be saying is that actually became a
199 distraction.
200
201 JV: Yeah, because you kept thinking 'Oh, if I go on this one, what will this page...?', you
202 know.
203
204 Researcher: So it was making you want to do it?
205
206 JV: Yes-
207
208 Researcher: -but at the same time that was breaking up the flow of the story. Have I
209 understood that? Don't want to put words in your mouth.
210
211 JV: Yes. You were almost like skipping chapters and then coming back to them, and then
212 looking at the end-
213
214 JC: Actually, that was the feeling I had, that you'd picked a book up and read the last
215 chapter, and I know some people do it and they should be shot...I can't see how you do it.
216 It ruins it for me, to know. If you read the last chapter and you don't see certain characters,
217 you know that they're going to pop it half way through the book. And that was the feeling I
218 got from this, was that you'd end up reading half way through the book and then go back to
219 read the beginning, and then you'd... I didn't like it.
220
221 JV: In the middle of it I had this big thought, I felt I needed to know about the train driver,
222 so I had to go and look him up! (*laughs*). It was strange.
223
224 Researcher: Do you think it's possible to tell a good story where the reader has choice over
225 their route through it? Most people read books one page at a time, don't break up the order
226 that the author gives it to you; but with this, the author is saying to you 'break the order.'
227
228 JV: They are, they're giving you the choice, and most of the time you are taking that chance
229 to do it.

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Researcher: Which is, you're bound to, because it's curiosity, isn't it?

JV: Yeah.

Researcher: So do you think, I know this is the only piece you've looked at and I'm not suggesting this a law of the universe or something, but do you think it's possible to tell an interesting story where the reader kind of controls their passage through the story, and you still get those qualities of being drawn along, and interesting character, or do you think this choice is going to destroy storytelling?

JC: Personally I'd say no, I'd be very sceptical, because it would be human nature to want to jump around. You wouldn't be able to stop yourself.

JV: Unless you were very strict.

JC: I do remember when I was younger the books where you got, it was like a choice of books, and I think that, I don't think it's a coincidence that they're only children's books. It's not like there's a *Choose Your Own Adventure*, I've never come across an adult *Choose Your Own Adventure*. I don't think it would work, I'm very sceptical. I could be proven wrong...

JV: Is it possible we're too curious?

JC: Possibly, yeah.

JV: When you're older? Or not?

Researcher: Is it possible we're stuck, and I'm exactly the same 'cos I've grown up on books – is it possible we're stuck in a particular way of being told stories? Because I was thinking about in the 'old days', when the travelling minstrel would go from village to village, singing stories, and they would change the story depending on what the villagers wanted. You know, if they wanted to hear a bit more about one particular hero, he'd add a few more verses in. So it's not as if audiences have never taken part, but they were able to still tell the story where it was gripping.

JC: Yeah, but I would say though that if you're going to compare it to the whole idea of travelling minstrels, the minstrel still, in a way, chose for the audience. I mean, the audience has said, 'Oh we want to hear more about Brian the Knight'. Then the minstrel would choose how the story went with Brian the Knight. It's not like the audience could stand and say, "No, sing about this bit, sing about that bit." It's not the same sort of choice.

Researcher: So, do you think, for a writer to create an interesting hypertext novel, the choices would have to be limited?

276 JC: Or locked...
277
278 JV: Yeah...
279
280 JC: Maybe do it so that you, every time the reader would finish off one character's story, it
281 would open up a second one. Remove the choice but still keep the option. Still keep the
282 different threads.
283
284 Researcher: That's interesting. So, in other words, what you're saying is, yes there could be
285 choice, but you've got to restrict the choice so that certain lines of the story get dealt
286 with?
287
288 JC: -first, and then follow. And then if the reader wants to go back and read previous
289 storylines, then they can, once they've read it. Once it's unlocked-
290
291 JV: Sort of 'pass go to'-
292
293 JC: Well yes, that sort of thing.
294
295 Researcher: A bit game-like.
296
297 JC: Yeah! I think so.
298
299 JV: Pass 'go' to get to the next stage.
300
301 Researcher: Because computer games, which tell stories-
302
303 Janet: Go to a different level, isn't it?
304
305 Researcher: Yeah. I mean, they work don't they? They don't tell such complicated stories,
306 they don't really deal with emotion and sort of psychological things really... But they do
307 work. One of the reasons seems to be that they still keep a pretty straight story going. You
308 go off down sideroads, and explore caves and towns, but you've still got a progression,
309 which maybe this doesn't quite have.
310
311 JV: Do you think it's also the ability to hold the reader's interest, before they suddenly
312 think, 'Oh I wonder what's round the corner, or the next screen, or...?'
313
314 JC: I think it would just be human nature to always go shooting off and go and explore
315 different things. Even in the best books, there'll always be an odd patch where you think,
316 'Well...' You know, it will either slow down or the narrative will go quiet. Um, but you've
317 got to stick with it because you've got to follow it through to get to a better bit. But with
318 this story, if it goes a bit quiet, you don't tend to follow the character on, you think, 'Well,
319 I won't read that, I'll go off and start another character.'
320

321 Researcher: That's really interesting. So, in a way, the question of choice is very seductive,
322 tempting. It might be the thing that stops the writer being able to grab you. So, if you're
323 going to be a writer and do this, you've got to plan those choices incredibly carefully. Did
324 you find the way links were offered and the whole way the thing was organised on the
325 screen reasonably easy to use? I asked the question 'did you want to be able to go "home"
326 from wherever you were, and you all said yes. Why did want to always be able to go back,
327 to a particular point?
328
329 JC: I think it was probably the temptation of choice again. You get halfway through
330 something and you think, "Well, I'm not following this,' and you want to zoom straight
331 back to 'home' and start off again.
332
333 JV: And have all those choices back again.
334
335 JC: Because I tried to do it systematically...
336
337 Researcher: What was your system?
338
339 JC: I just go through the characters.
340
341 JV: I didn't, I moved around. I jumped. Because I had these random thoughts, like I said. I
342 wanted to know who the driver was right in the middle of something, or... I thought 'Let's
343 have a look at these adverts,' and...
344
345 Researcher: A lot of the academics are saying that your way of approaching is actually
346 human nature – your brain jumps around, flicks on association...
347
348 JV: Yeah, my brain does anyway, whatever I'm doing.
349
350 Researcher: So, you'd be the deal guinea-pig for, you'd be the sort of person that would
351 like that sort of flicking, let's see what he's done, let's see what he's done...
352
353 JV: Yeah, as long as it had the ability to hold your interest.
354
355 Researcher: That would mean that every time you clicked on a word and went to another
356 place, that would have to have a really good connection, wouldn't it? Be pushing the story
357 forward. So the writer would have to design it that way.
358
359 JC: Far more difficult to write a book in this way.
360
361 Researcher: Yes.
362
363 JC: So much more challenging, I think, because you'd have multiple structures. You'd
364 have to spend so much time planning it and plotting it out.
365

366 Researcher: I think if game designers can create stories with choices that flow, then writers
367 can do it as well.... Were you always aware of the interface being an irritation or not? Did
368 you like that design, that visual layout, or not?
369
370 JV: I didn't have a problem with it, I don't think...
371
372 JC: It wasn't particularly inspiring, but it wasn't a problem either. It's like you said before
373 we sat down to do this, if you got with a web developer you could probably make it so
374 much more engaging. But again, whether or not that would be a distraction from the story,
375 whether the basic layout, whether if you did a colourful, 3D flashing past you, that may
376 distract from the story. So, I mean, it would be a toss up. I didn't particularly find it difficult,
377 I didn't find it particularly distracting, but I didn't find it inspiring. It was just there. It was
378 just like using a website, at times I didn't feel like I was reading a story, I felt like I was just
379 surfing around the web you know.
380
381 Researcher: That's an important point. How did you feel about the interface, the look and
382 feel of it as you were using it?
383
384 JV: Um, I wasn't bothered by it. To me it was almost like, part of it was like reading part of
385 the underground map. The only thing that bothered me was thinking I just hope you didn't
386 want us to remember all 252, plus the driver, characters! Because I thought maybe that was
387 an awful lot of characters in a book.
388
389 JC: It's a hell of a big thing to undertake.
390
391 Researcher: Was it 253 pages effectively, and each page was a character?
392
393 JV: There was 253 words in every character, wasn't there?
394
395 Researcher: Yeah. Did you have any sense of is this is a book, a website, game? I asked you
396 (*in the questionnaire*) was it like reading a book, playing a game, solving a puzzle etc., and
397 there were various answers. One thing I've been trying to pin down is why this has a
398 different effect on people than reading a book. Is it because the moment you get on a
399 computer and you've got choices you go into website mode, it changes your behaviour
400 patterns. Do you think there's anything in that?
401
402 JV: I put it's like a solving a puzzle, or coming to a conclusion anyway.
403
404 JC: Somewhere between a puzzle and a game...
405
406 JV: I was always aware I was on the computer. I couldn't sort of, when you sit with a book
407 you're sort of comfy in a chair and...
408
409 JC: You really can zone out.
410
411 JV: Yeah...

412
413 JC: It goes back to the whole you can really zone out, you know, go off into this world. But
414 I was always aware I was sat on this chair, at a computer.
415
416 Researcher: Is that because books are so portable and light, take it to bed... is that-
417
418 JC: That's one of the issues.
419
420 JV: Comfy. Just sort of lose yourself.
421
422 JC: You can't curl up in bed with a laptop, can you?
423
424 Researcher: It's hard to get past that because-
425
426 JC: It's very hard.
427
428 Researcher: I thought this would be a minor issue because people are more used to
429 computers, used to laptops, but actually nearly everybody says this.
430
431 JC: I think nowadays that with computers in everybody's lives, that sometimes books can
432 almost be an escape from that. They almost take you back to, it's simple isn't it, a book?
433 You can take a book on holiday, you can sit with a book anywhere you want.
434
435 JV: You can open it and shut it anytime you want.
436
437 JC: Precisely.
438
439 JV: It's light and portable. If you lose it you can buy another one, not like a laptop.
440
441 JC: I think people use it as an escape sometimes. I know I tend to. If I've had a hard day I'll
442 go down and read a book, I won't watch television, I'll sit down with a book, far more
443 relaxing.
444
445 Researcher: I was trying to argue with one person I was talking to that the book is just like
446 a computer, but of the paper and print era. You know, it's still an interface, it's still a thing
447 you've got to get used to using, it's that we grow up with them and they're very easy to use.
448 But you still have to get used to turning pages, knowing what's going to come on page 2
449 follows from what's on page 1. So we've just got used to that because we all know it. But
450 when books first came out that must have been a bit of a shock because people had read on
451 scrolls before that.
452
453 JV: But they all came in order as well, didn't they, yeah?
454
455 Researcher: I don't think they'd have quite the ability to skip around like we can with a
456 computer. But do you think it's something just inherently functional and actually it's quite

457 a perfect design, a book, and that what we've got at the moment with hypertext isn't quite
458 perfect yet? This is still like baby stage, embryonic?

459
460 JV: The other thing is your brain is in function with, you've done it for so long reading a
461 book. Because this is brand new, it's taking you a time to get used to it.

462
463 Researcher: Do you think a generation of children who are five now, who have got
464 computers right from school, they might read more and more on screen, they might take to
465 it more easily? Or do you think this is something-

466
467 JC: I still think you'll have the trouble with people jumping off and not being able to
468 structure the complete story.

469
470 Researcher: You might be able to improve the technology. Sony might create a portable,
471 lightweight electronic book that you can store 5five thousand books on. People might love
472 them like they love their iPods, so that does away with that issue. You might be able to
473 design interfaces that are beautiful and work really easily, so you could get away with that
474 issue, and people might get used to using these electronic books. What you're saying is that
475 if you have choices and links, that does something, almost like disrupting the laws of
476 physics...

477
478 JC: Yeah, well no, it's just so tempting, I just think it's human nature to not stick through,
479 you know, to the very end of each character. You just think, 'Well, I'm off to start on
480 something more engaging.' If you didn't follow one through, if you weren't all that
481 interested in one, you just go back. I don't think you can stop people doing that. You need
482 to be really disciplined to go through each character.

483
484 Researcher: If you're going to offer people the choices you're wanting people to follow
485 them, so if the choices are going to be there they've got to be worthwhile, haven't they?
486 Otherwise it's all a bit pointless. Um, let's just quickly have a look at any of the other
487 things that came up....Oh yeah, how did you select links? That was an interesting one
488 because one of the things I've been trying to look into is whether certain kinds of readers
489 choose links for certain reasons. Some people like character, some people like action, some
490 people like psychological drama. I was wondering if writers could control the way people
491 go through a story by only putting links on certain kinds of words. So if the links were only
492 on character names, that might guide someone who's interested in characters to only
493 follow those links. If links were only on words like 'pow', 'wham', 'smash', that might
494 encourage people to follow that kind of theme. So, did you have any feeling of how you
495 were picking links?

496
497 JC: I did characters. Definitely character names. The majority of the time it was character
498 names. My eyes would be drawn to finding out about another character.

499
500 Researcher: How about you, JV?
501

502 JV: I think I usually did it on an interesting word... because I know there was one at the
503 very beginning, it was either to do with food or drink or something and I thought let's go
504 for that.
505
506 Researcher: That could be quite an interesting technique for the writer, couldn't it, to only
507 put links on certain kinds of words? That would be controlling the reading quite carefully.
508 But I don't know that this writer does that, but it was something I was trying to find out...
509
510 JV: I mean, say you had something that was describing something horrific, somebody
511 might just want to go on all the horror words or something, just depending on what
512 appeals to them. I did start off I think, you know, like chapter one, chapter two, carriage
513 one, carriage two, and I thought, 'oh blow this, this is boring, let's jump about,' you
514 know.
515
516 Researcher: And other people, choosing different links, would end up with quite a different
517 story. Your point about structure then would be that the writer would have to build in all
518 these alternate structures that would work. Whichever links you followed, you'd still have
519 to get a meaningful story.
520
521 JC: It would almost get to the point in some instances where you couldn't tell a story
522 properly, because there would be so many different permutations, that I'm not entirely sure
523 you could create a story that would be fulfilling if you followed each one through.
524
525 JV: Other than that you did one with several endings.
526
527 Researcher: I think really I've covered most of the things I wanted to cover. I asked
528 whether people would read another one, and a couple of you said yes you would, because it
529 was an interesting new medium. Can you imagine an adaptation of a book you've read, or
530 any film you've seen that would lend itself to something on the web? It could have images,
531 it could have sound, it could have links that would give reader choice. Could you imagine
532 anything out there that might lend itself, or do you think that it's such a different medium
533 that it can't really transfer?
534
535 JV: You might be able to do something with one of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, if you
536 were...
537
538 JC: I was thinking *The Matrix*.
539
540 JV: Yeah...
541
542 JC: Because you could follow, because the story itself had various different characters
543 running around and you could have, you could focus on different characters and follow
544 their trip through. But it work equally as well with *The Rings*...
545
546 JV: Yeah, because they split up into different groups and-
547

548 JC: You could follow just a soldier through it...
549
550 JV: Yeah.
551
552 Researcher: Is *Lord of The Rings* written, actually when you read it, does it have a chapter
553 on that character, see what they're doing and then you go to a different character?
554
555 JV: No.
556
557 Researcher: How does it work?
558
559 JV: Well, it did a bit on Golem, and a bit on *whatsisname*, the Hobbit, and things like
560 that....
561
562 JC: *The Matrix* has got cartoons, comics, games, and they all tie into the same period
563 in the story, and it's, a lot of them go off on different character, different character
564 threads.
565
566 Researcher: And does that work well?
567
568 JC: From what I've read of it, it does. But it's choice, but you choose whether to pick
569 up the film, pick up the book, or pick up the computer game. And then you're locked onto
570 that to finish it. So it's not choice within the one medium, it's choice within all of them, and
571 then you build, if you decide to read all the different mediums, you build up the story
572 centrally in your head. But it's separated out, you can't get halfway through the comic book
573 and then suddenly want to jump to halfway through the computer game. They may link in.
574
575 Researcher: The stories are essentially one thing follows the next, and you have to go with
576 that.
577
578 JC: Yeah.
579
580 Researcher: Is there anything else that struck you or that you wanted to say about the whole
581 possibilities for it, of that particular piece, or interactive stories generally?
582
583 JC: I think it's got potential.
584
585 JV: It has. I did want to have a look at some other ones, different types, like mysteries, or
586 something comical or...
587
588 JC: I can see potential, but personally I still have a problem with the fact that it's on a
589 computer. I still go back to the fact that I like to sit down with my book. Until the hardware
590 technology was there to make these things portable, until you can have the internet on a
591 small, that's cheaper, that works properly, it would be very difficult for it to take off. Or at
592 least, not necessarily take off, but to reach the popularity that a simple book has... because
593 it wouldn't be able to compete.

594
595 Researcher: What would you like to have seen in this piece to make this more workable?
596
597 JV: More graphic detail. Um, even a video clip of something happening maybe, I don't
598 know. Um, to hold the interest more, I think, for me.
599
600 Researcher: Is that because of the screen? Is that because when you're at a screen you want
601 something more than just text?
602
603 JV: Maybe, yeah. Because I was always aware that I was sat at the computer. I mean,
604 I've watched DVDs on computer and I'm always aware that I'm watching a film on a
605 computer and not sort of sat relaxed, either in the cinema or watching it on the telly in
606 comfort.
607
608 Researcher: So, something to take away, that feeling of it's a computer so that you just get
609 lost with the story...
610
611 JV: That's it, yeah.
612
613 Researcher: That might be JH's point about the technology not being quite up to speed with
614 the ideas.
615
616 JC: I'm not entirely convinced that even if you start putting videos in, because I think that it
617 would just distract you more. It would remove it from the idea that it was a book. It would
618 become this sort of multimedia thing. If you're going for that, that's fine. But if you're, if
619 the idea is to have a book online that has multiple choices, I think if you start taking videos
620 in there, then I'd say it's even more.... disjointed... I don't think you'll ever have people
621 wandering around with their palmtop computer, all reading books on that. I don't think
622 books are done yet.
623
624 Researcher: But it might be that things on screen-
625
626 JC: -take off in another medium-
627
628 Researcher: -have something else...
629
630 JV: But what it is I don't know.
631
632 JC: Well, when they do break through, when they do get something that's gonna be, it'll be
633 huge. But it's going to take a lot of work.
634
635 ENDS

1 17/5/2006

2 At Arts Institute

4 253

5 discussion (253-2/D)

7 Present: JH, PC

11 Researcher: The first thing is, as a piece to read, did you feel it had any of the qualities of a
12 short story or a novel, as you would expect it to have, or was it something utterly different
13 really?

15 JH: I thought there'd be a lot more story to it, and, I don't know... a certain amount of
16 interactions to it, but I thought there would be a bit more story to it, less about characters
17 but more of a sort of storyline.

19 Researcher: So when you read a book, can you describe how you interact with it? There's
20 two levels of interaction: there's obviously an interaction that goes on in your head, with
21 the words that you read, but there's also the interaction that the interface brings, which is
22 the new thing. When you read a book, what is it that tags you, draws you in, gets your head
23 working? Can you describe that?

25 JH: I can read anything really. I don't, very rarely I start reading a book and can't read it. So
26 it's probably usually the characters that get me drawn in. Sometimes it starts off very very
27 slow, but eventually it gets...

29 PC: Personally, I think it's the plot for me that would draw me in, when reading a novel.
30 And I think that's what I found was missing from the interactive piece. It was more a case
31 of learning through the characters, learning the story. Which I'm not saying is a bad
32 approach, but it was certainly different.

34 Researcher: They're both really interesting elements, but the plot is the thing that comes up
35 again and again. Interactive narrative doesn't deal with plot in a way you're used to, so
36 what kind of plots draw you in? Has it got to be exciting, action...?

38 PC: It's not so much an excitement factor, I don't think. It's just an interest in finding out
39 what's going to happen next. It doesn't have to be action-packed, or exciting as
40 such ...

42 JH: Just so long as it's got enough along the way, enough interest in it all the way through
43 to keep you wanting to know what happens at the end.

45 Researcher: So if you had to sum up what makes you get engrossed – I used the expression
46 in the questionnaire 'lost in a book' – if you had to sum up what makes you get lost in a

47 book, what would say it is? If I were an author and I want to write a novel, and I want to
48 know what it is that will really make you to lose time, forget where you are, sit there, keep
49 turning the pages, not be able to put it down, what do you think it is that does that for
50 you?

51
52 PC: It's hard to put it into words, but I mean, it's really a good plot but interrelated with
53 interesting characters. It's what we've just said basically, but the combination of the two.

54
55 Researcher: It's bringing the characters into a situation that's believable?

56
57 JH: For me, yeah. For me it is.

58
59 PC: Not necessarily, no. I don't mind suspending a bit of disbelief.

60
61 Researcher: The reason I started with that is I want to get an idea of what sort of readers you
62 are, what you kind of think works for you, because then I can obviously put that against
63 what you now say about the piece you read. So, did this work, this piece? You mentioned
64 the plot didn't quite...

65
66 PC: Didn't quite work for me. I found it strange that you could find out what happened,
67 right at the start if you want to. You could find out the ending.

68
69 Researcher: Because he gave you that list...

70
71 PC: He made it clear that that was the ending and you could find it out straight away. I
72 mean, even though when you went to that it wasn't a clear ending, so you need to go
73 through the other parts to find out what the ending actually means.

74
75 Researcher: Did you read the ending first?

76
77 PC: It was one for the first things I went to, yeah, because it was there to choose. So I mean,
78 I wasn't going to put it aside and think, 'Oh I shouldn't look at that now.' Once it's there
79 you think, 'I could save time here'... The fact that you can jump about in it means that
80 you've got the chance to do that, and then go a place earlier on in the story.

81
82 Researcher: So, jumping about, we'll have to come back to. The idea of interactivity in a
83 website or a multimedia application.... I mean, I was looking at the *X-Men* website last
84 night and it's fantastic, full of visuals and interactivity. The idea of choosing where you go
85 in that kind of environment seems completely natural, but what you seem to be saying is,
86 the idea of choosing where you go in a narrative felt awkward?

87
88 PC: Yeah, I think so.

89
90 Researcher: How about you, JH?

91

92 JH: At the beginning I did think that, and I was thinking as I was first looking through it, 'I
93 can't get into this, this is a really strange way of working,' with like you said, the ending at
94 your disposal, and I don't like doing that. But I still clicked on it to see what the ending was.
95 But then um, I've been looking through it again today and I've got a bit more into it.
96 Definitely got more into it today, but...

97
98 Researcher: How long do you reckon you've spent reading it? I mean, reading is mostly
99 what you're doing. Not that I'm trying to check up on you, I'm just interested in how long
100 you think you gave to it.

101
102 PC: It kept me entertained about an hour maximum. Together, you know, a total period of
103 time.

104
105 JH: About an hour, the same, yeah.

106
107 Researcher: How does that translate to reading a novel, would you say? Would an hour of a
108 novel mean basically it didn't work and you'd given up sort of fifty pages in or
109 something?

110
111 PC: You know where you are in a novel, and you know where you're up to, so you kind of
112 know when it's completely finished, even though you could re-read it again. With this,
113 there's always the feeling that there's parts you haven't looked at, so there's not a feeling of
114 completion, I don't think.

115
116 JH: I agree with that actually, yeah.

117
118
119 Researcher: This is something to do with having a picture in your mind of the overall space
120 that you've got to travel through, or the environment, or the number of pages. What you're
121 saying is with a book you know it might be 300 pages, but with this you weren't quite sure?

122
123 PC: Yeah.

124
125 Researcher: But it was called 253, and didn't he say at the beginning it had 253 pages? So
126 that didn't feel the same? That didn't give you that same sense of knowing?

127
128 PC: Not the same effect, no, because they weren't in a numerical order. I mean I found that
129 quite an interesting concept to keep up throughout, but it didn't give it that start to finish
130 feel. So it had a different effect.

131
132 Researcher: Was that the same thing for you, JH?

133
134 JH: Yeah. To me it was a start and end, but no middle. But then there was, I'm not saying
135 it's a bad thing, it's just different. So it's hard to get on with, at first. I did start getting into
136 it once I'd had a real go at it.

137

138 Researcher: You know about interactivity, you like it, you're used to it, you know what it
139 can do, you like exploring and roaming around... when you come into a narrative world
140 you found that difficult. And that's really very interesting, because that means, that even
141 though you're flexible people in terms of using media, there was still something about what
142 you wanted from a narrative that clashed with what you were being offered.
143
144 PC: I think it comes down to the fundamental issue of when you're being in a novel or story,
145 it's an immersive feeling, that you just let yourself go, you don't really have to make
146 decisions or anything, it's...
147
148 Researcher: Decision-making you think might be a problematic issue then with narrative?
149 Do you think it's essentially unnatural when it comes to narrative, maybe?
150
151 PC: I think it is, yeah. I do think it is, but... I think it's unnatural but I still think the
152 possibilities are there.
153
154 JH: Those *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, I used to read some of those, and I found, I
155 was quite a lot younger, I couldn't be bothered to read the story. It would say 'change to
156 this page' and I'd just read the last line or two just to get what's happened, and change to
157 this page.
158
159 PC: It gives you the option to be lazy if you want to.
160
161 JH: A little bit, yeah. It's a different type of thing, because it's more of a story rather than
162 this being about the characters, so I couldn't do that with this...
163
164 Researcher: No, those *Choose Your Own Adventures* were quite plot driven, weren't they?
165 They were driven by events.
166
167 JH: Yeah, yeah.
168
169 Researcher: This wasn't driven in that way, was it? This was driven by choices... The links
170 were often on character names, weren't they?
171
172 JH: That's what I mainly did. When you're reading about a character, I, instead of using the
173 links along the bottom to go to Car Number Two or Three, I mainly used, say it said about
174 what they were reading in the newspaper, and you could click on that, I'd mainly read,
175 click on that. Or, if something had happened to another person, and they'd laughed at it, I'd
176 click on that to find out who that person was and why they were laughing at it, and
177 things.
178
179 Researcher: That was what attracted your eye.
180
181 JH: Yeah. I found that more of an interaction, in a story.
182
183 Researcher: Right. What sort of things did you-

184
185 PC: I like the way there were links between characters, and you could piece together what
186 was happening through the characters.
187
188 Researcher: That could be a narrative device in itself, couldn't it? Because that often
189 happens in films, that you might get scenes with different characters, and you don't know
190 how they're related till you find out later on. So that could be quite a clever narrative device
191 if the writer did it well.
192
193 PC: Yeah.
194
195 Researcher: In terms of the feeling of what you were reading, it almost sounds like you
196 didn't feel you were reading a narrative. I don't want to put words into your mouth, but...
197
198 PC: There's some truth in that. I mean, I don't know if I was missing something but, but
199 that was my reaction to it... What do you think?
200
201 JH: Like I said, once I got into it a bit more I did find it more of something that I could get
202 involved in, um not involved – lost in a book. I got more into it, but not, it took quite a
203 while to get going.
204
205 Researcher: So what do you think was the difference between getting into it and not getting
206 into it? Was it just getting used to a different type of activity?
207
208 JH: Yeah. Different type of layout, different type of, the fact that you can actually skip
209 pages and skip between different parts of the story, it's very different, and it's just um, I
210 think that's why it took quite a while to get used to it. It's something that just doesn't exist
211 really, you know. I read quite a lot and it's very different.
212
213 Researcher: What's incredible is, you're saying it doesn't exist, but I mean this sort of
214 stuff's been around 20 years, and yet you don't know about it and you're people that would
215 know about it, because you're looking for stuff...
216
217 PC: I'm just trying to think to myself what's the benefit of doing it that way, rather than just
218 telling a story on the screen as along set of prose, like that?
219
220 Researcher: The advantage might be that we like interactivity in other media...
221
222 PC: It does draw you in more...
223
224 Researcher: It ought to work with narrative. So you're saying the potential is there.
225
226 PC: Yeah.
227
228 Researcher: Was the writing a positive or negative factor in your reading of it? Because
229 obviously, the piece you had was very much based on reading – there are other pieces that

230 have got a lot more visuals in, different kinds of interaction. The piece I gave you guys,
 231 partly purposely because I know you're designers, was to give you a piece that was more
 232 about reading so that you wouldn't be too thinking about design. Was there, did you like
 233 the writing, did it read well?
 234

235 PC: I found it quite concise, because it was squeezing into 253 words each time, so it felt
 236 like there was a restriction on each page, which was an interesting way of writing
 237 something, I thought.
 238

239 Researcher: Was that an encouragement to you to read it, the fact that you knew it was a
 240 very contained chunk?
 241

242 PC: Yeah, I think so, because you know what you're dealing with each time.
 243

244 Researcher: In terms of web design that it is a convention, isn't it, that you don't put too
 245 much text on any screen? That's developed as a convention pretty quickly, not to have to
 246 scroll too much.
 247

248 JH: If it was a random amount of text on each character, say, if it got really long I'd just
 249 leave it, I wouldn't bother reading it, I'd skip to the next character or something, because
 250 it's shorter. Do you know what I mean? It's just too much information, I'd just be thinking,
 251 'Oh...'
 252

253 Researcher: Yeah, there is a problem about reading too much on screen isn't there, which I
 254 think a lot of writers have now come to grips with. Some of the older pieces of hypertext
 255 fiction have loads of text on the screen, do your head in. So then that's a physical barrier,
 256 something to do with the effect of the screen on your eyes, I think. Print on a page is
 257 inherently easier to read. Um, so the writing was interesting— was it interesting enough that
 258 you felt compelled to keep clicking to find new bits, or not really? It sounds almost as if
 259 you didn't quite have that magnetic pull.
 260

261 PC: It's quite an odd style. I felt that it didn't reveal at times, it didn't say everything.
 262

263 Researcher: No... If that had been a novel, it might have worked quite well, leaving you a
 264 sort of cliffhanger. But it doesn't sound like it did that for you.
 265

266 PC: No. It kind of left me guessing, not in a good way really. Left me guessing so, right so
 267 what shall I do? I'll go and find out the ending and I can get my answers that way.
 268

269 Researcher: Something about the interactivity and the writing, the actual content, is failing
 270 to pull you along like narratives normally do. Is that right?
 271

272 JH: Yeah. I keep saying that I did get into it eventually after a while, and I did find then it
 273 was starting to make me want to read more, but not in the sense that a book would where I
 274 constantly want to read it and don't want to put it down.
 275

276 Researcher: If you were now working with that author and you were, say he was going to
277 rewrite it a bit, edit it, and you were going to redesign it, have you got any sense of what
278 would make it easier to get across that barrier of 'I don't know what's going on' or I'm not
279 being drawn in.' Have you got any ideas about what would make that a better read or a
280 better experience for you? It sounds as if there are some positives in there...

281
282 JH/PC: Yeah...

283
284 PC: Like I say, I might be missing the point, but I'd prefer, when I was looking at it, I was
285 thinking I prefer there to be more pages that had more elements of a story in them, rather
286 than it just being through the character. But maybe that was his intention, and that's how it
287 works. But that's what I was thinking, when I was using it, so...

288
289 Researcher: Would that work on any individual page – rather than just being descriptions
290 of the character, there'd be more plot-driven writing? Is that what you mean?

291
292 PC: Yeah, yeah. I just want to say I liked the links that, when you had the menu, I liked the
293 journey planner and I liked the brief intro, and the end of the line because they, I don't
294 know, I just preferred them to reading about character. I thought they, I mean, there was a
295 lot of characters as well – you wouldn't normally get that many characters in a novel,
296 would you, so that's another different thing. But I mean, it was a way of doing that because
297 they could be positioned in the car, so the fact that you could map them meant that you
298 could deal with larger amounts of people.

299
300 Researcher: But what you're saying, and it goes back maybe to what you said at the start,
301 you like plot, you like to see active, action, events developing out, so you were looking for
302 that. And you might not have chosen that off the shelf. I mean, if you read the blurb on the
303 back of that, that might not be a novel you'd pick up, to be fair to you. But that's an
304 interesting point.... How about you, JH? If you were re-doing this, if the writer gave you
305 carte-blanche to re-design it, re-write it, ...?

306
307 JH: It's the same-

308
309 Researcher: You like characters, that was your starting point, wasn't it?

310
311 JH: Yeah. Strangely, it doesn't, I like the characters to draw me into the story, but for some
312 reason it just seems too many characters. There's not enough, I felt like I needed to see
313 more of the plot. I thought, 'Oh where's the story?' I want to click and see more about what
314 the plot's....

315
316 Researcher: Yeah. So actually, although you started out in a way from different places –
317 you like plot, you like character – actually what you both need is for the plot to develop
318 and to get going, fairly quickly I guess.

319
320 JH: Yeah.

321

322 PC: I was going to say that if I was going to try and improve it, I'd like more visual aid.
323
324 Researcher: You mean in terms of navigation?
325
326 PC: I mean, I'm guessing it was his intention to avoid that as much as possible, um, that
327 was one of my initial reactions, when you first showed it to me. And that still holds true
328 now, I think.
329
330 Researcher: Is that because, again this transition from the book to the medium of the screen,
331 you expect to see something else on the screen from what you're used to?
332
333 PC: Yeah, because you've got that screen there giving you the option to do that.
334
335 JH: It seemed too bland. I liked the fact that you could use, was it the Journey Planner, you
336 could click on a map. I really liked that.
337
338 Researcher: The tube map.
339
340 JH: Yeah.
341
342 PC: There could have been more than that.
343
344 JH: Yeah, but that was most definitely a start.
345
346 PC: I just think the more of a spatial context you give it, the more interesting it will be.
347
348 Researcher: Now, do you think that the interface itself would be enough to block you from
349 getting into the story? Even if you quite liked the writing, quite liked the concept of 253
350 characters, all in a tube train, their lives becoming interlinked through the events – that
351 sounds like quite, that's a bit like *Lost* at the moment. They're all on an aeroplane, by
352 chance they're on a plane that crashes, and then their lives get interlinked. That almost
353 sounds like a pretty good plotting structure. So, if we accept that the concept is quite a nice
354 one, is it partly the interface that's making this not quite work out?
355
356 PC: Yes, if you put it like that. There's no problems with what's going on there.
357
358 Researcher: The concept of it?
359
360 JH: No, yeah, the concept's a really good idea.
361
362 PC: And I think something of that was lost through the interface. I didn't think of it in quite
363 those simple terms as you just put it, so...
364
365 Researcher: Given that then, if that does kind of ring a bell for you, what would you like to
366 do with the interface to make it more usable for you, and 'a n other' reader who's not really
367 into hypertext or interactive media? One of the things I am really interested to do is to find

368 out how we could make interactive narratives work for people who like narratives, but who
369 aren't necessarily multi-media buffs. You stuck with it for an hour because partly you were
370 interested and partly because you knew you were gong to come back and chat to me. But I
371 know from experience that a lot of people give up after two minutes, you know, that's it,
372 two minutes, the story doesn't take off, I've had enough. So what interface approach would
373 make this usable and accessible, do you think?

374
375 PC: I think just more of a sense of mapping, that, if you could move about, say in a 3D
376 environment.

377
378 JH: Yeah.

379
380 Researcher: Something more visual that's on the screen all the time? If you were reading
381 about character A, you'd see character B, C, D...

382
383 PC: Something we mentioned last time was that clicking from one page to another was no
384 different really than turning a page, so if you could move about from section to section, I
385 think that could add something.

386
387 Researcher: JH, you said 'a bit bland'.

388
389 JH: Yeah. I definitely agree with PC on that. It definitely needs, well not definitely, but I
390 think the idea of being able to see the characters that you're reading about is a very nice
391 idea. The last project I did was a game, rather than an interactive narrative, but it did have a
392 story in it. So it was in a 3D environment – you move around and the game fits the story.
393 Umm, to me, it's just my opinion, it's a nicer way for me to be able to read a story on
394 screen.

395
396 PC: We're making it more like an interactive game or a film than a novel.

397
398 Researcher: Can it still provide a reading experience, if I'm trying to attract people to read,
399 rather than play a game or watch a film? Because they are different markets. People who go
400 into a book shop and buy a book aren't necessarily the same people who go and buy a
401 Playstation game...

402
403 JH: It's a problem, isn't it?

404
405 Researcher: For this to work in this medium, are you saying you think that in order to get
406 people to read on a screen there inevitably must be other things going on? It doesn't work:
407 just words on a screen and nothing else doesn't work, is that what you're saying?

408
409 PC: Yeah, I don't think you go to your computer or screen to sit there and read.

410
411 JH: It doesn't necessarily need to be based around a game, it just needs to have, make you
412 feel like you're there, sort of thing. Yeah.

413

414 Researcher: So, when I did the lecture at the art college, I think I might have shown some
415 things from Dreaming Methods website that were very visual, they were kind of like
416 animated books, with all sorts of animation. Is that the kind of approach, where there's a
417 lot of visual interest, and then you might read?
418
419 JH: Yeah.
420
421 PC: I think so, yeah.
422
423 Researcher: So this guy, the writer of 253 needed to make the tube cars graphic, needed to
424 show some faces...?
425
426 PC: When I read this when we met up with you, I thought we were going to be seeing
427 something more like that one you showed us, so, with the one you presented us, I thought...
428 I mean, did it win all these awards and things because it was quite a new idea when it came
429 out? I mean, I'm asking you now really.
430
431 Researcher: It's not that old. I think it's 2001 or something, so in terms of, you know,
432 history, it's quite recent. In terms of the development of software, that's five years, and a
433 lot's happened in five years. Broadband's everywhere now, so that might make a
434 difference. Of course, the giving of awards is a very subjective thing – all the pieces I've
435 chosen have some got some kind of praise about them, that's why I picked them. I didn't
436 just pick them at random, I chose pieces that had got some kind of critical acclaim. But of
437 course, they all work or don't work for various reasons, and what you're saying is
438 completely valid, um, what that writer needs to do. The weird thing about that piece is it
439 was quite successful and got made into a book, which I thought was very odd.
440
441 PC: I wanted to know what the big idea was, what the selling point is, why it's so
442 successful. There's no real why about it, is there?
443
444 Researcher: It's really fascinating. It sounds to me that you feel there's something there...
445
446 PC/JH: Yeah.
447
448 Researcher: But just not quite there. What does it need to work? It needs to be, well you'd
449 better tell me!
450
451 JH: It's a very difficult question actually. Design...
452
453 PC: More dynamic. And by the way you navigate as well.
454
455 Researcher: The navigation needs to be what? By dynamic do you mean more free, or
456 three-dimensional...?
457
458 JH: Yeah.
459

460 PC: Yeah, to try and sort of get away from the boundaries of the square screen, it puts it
461 into more of a world almost, I think.
462
463 JH: Immersive. Immerse the user!
464
465 Researcher: Immersion's the word that a lot of the academics use. Do we need to get away
466 from the idea of book, then?
467
468 JH: Not totally. I don't know why I say that, but not totally.
469
470 PC: Then you probably think, I could be reading this in my bed or whatever... like a
471 novel...
472
473 Researcher: But if it's too far from a book, then...
474
475 JH: It's not then readable.
476
477 Researcher: It's a game?
478
479 JH/PC: Yeah.
480
481 Researcher: Or a website... So, it, I'm really bad at this, I'll probably fail the whole project
482 because I talk too much, but... it sounds to me like what we're in is a world where we can
483 refer to the idea of books, but as soon as we're on a screen we've got to do something else.
484 Is that a fair summary of what you're saying?
485
486 PC: Yeah.
487
488 Researcher: We can't just translate pages and put them on the screen with links?
489
490 JH: No.
491
492 PC: It's not using interaction to its best, you know, capabilities.
493
494 Researcher: That's brilliant, thank you.
495
496 ENDS

Appendix Five

The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam

1 1/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam*
5 DO Think Aloud (DO/T)
6
7 DO: There's a button here (*the hand cursor*) but nothing's happening. This is annoying, I
8 don't know what to do. I would expect something happening.... This one's OK, it's
9 movable, like a piece of paper on your desk (*actually the 'bed' graphic which DO*
10 *mistook for paper*).
11
12 DO: (*clicked on 'Miriam'*) This one gives you information, and highlighting is obvious.
13 (*looking at 'slow PC' and 'quality'*). I think it's quite linear: next, next, next. I
14 sometimes, if it's very non-linear you can get lost.
15
16 DO: I think for me it's fine (*the background graphic*), but I haven't read the story yet... I
17 like the colours. The human head moving around... I like this kind of stuff, but maybe
18 some people would think it's annoying.
19
20 DO: I like this way you can read if you think it's important. You can go back (*the pop-*
21 *ups*). It's good for people if they want to read more about the people. But if it's important
22 it should be in the content. If it's not important it shouldn't be there.
23
24 DO: The first page is confusing, but this page is better.... This is quite nice, the text is
25 like a human.
26
27 DO: This is quite interesting.... Picture here, not very lovely.... I've no idea what this is
28 (*TV?*). I have three buttons, and what do they do? This just changes quality... Got audio
29 as well.
30
31 DO: You got different types (*typefaces*)... I think every page is really short, and that is
32 good for me. I prefer shorter ones, it's clear. I think if I just found this one on the internet
33 I might read it. This is quite interesting.
34
35 DO: I think lots of books will be this way. You read, you watch, you hear something.
36
37 ENDS

1 1/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam*
5 GD Think aloud (GD/T)
6
7 GD: It's like a website.
8
9 Researcher: Why are you not thinking of it as a book?
10
11 GD: Because it looks very unlike a conventional book, it has the feel of a Flash website.
12
13 GD: I notice that the website has certain links, on words and sentences on the screen, using
14 the dark green background. I'm drawn to these links. That's the convention on a website.
15
16 Researcher: Are conventions important for a reader coming to something like this?
17
18 GD: Yes, or else you'd be lost. You wouldn't know what to do. As I read I'm looking for
19 things to click on... if I had it longer I'd read it a lot more, and try and follow the story.
20 Perhaps I'll be far less distracted by the links.
21
22 Researcher: Would you read everything on the page before you started to click around?
23
24 GD: Yes, because that's the only way I guess I'd be able to follow the story. I need to
25 read everything.
26
27 Researcher: Is that different from how you'd read a website then?
28
29 GD: It's about the same way I'd read a website. The good thing about this is that the
30 amount of text you have to read is not much, and if it was a website with this amount of
31 text I'd read it just the same way. If it was a website with a lot of text then I'd just pick up
32 what I think is relevant.
33
34 Researcher: Is it frustrating that you're looking for things to click on and there aren't many?
35
36 GD: It's a bit frustrating that some things that look like links don't do anything. For the
37 uninitiated it might be frustrating. If you're trying to get a wider audience it would be
38 good to include things wouldn't be a distraction and that would increase the reader's
39 experience. The way I read, I will play around, and I will go back again and re-read.
40
41 GD: The background is a good contrast to the colour of the text. Also, the text is
42 readable; on every screen. It's like ordinary linear reading. For an average reader, they
43 could read though it. I didn't like it that some things didn't give you a response, but for
44 people who are used to things like this it might add to the mystery, adding something
45 quite weird.
46
47 ENDS

Missing page

1 1/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam*
5 LS Think aloud (LS/T)
6
7 LS: Before I even click the mouse I'm guided by the menu, so I'm not lost. Before
8 entering any of these I just want to explore, what other buttons are around. Before
9 entering I just want to see if there's anything else. 'Slow PC' and 'Quality'.. oh yeah,
10 adjusting the quality, for people with slow computers. Ok, there's text in the middle of
11 the page... I could click anywhere... but it's not clickable. Then there are four boxes
12 marked in green... I clicked on Miriam for example, this is a word that's highlighted and
13 then I clicked on it and a pop-up box came up.
14
15 Researcher: Are you approaching this as book or website, or...
16
17 LS: The first thing is... I'm not interested in reading the text, I'm more interested in
18 exploring and I haven't got into the story. I'm just exploring. I usually do that! It's just
19 finding my options, knowing what I can do, then when I'm reading I'm not missing
20 anything. Oh, I clicked on the menu and it took me back again.
21
22 LS: Ok, I think at this stage I can start reading the text.
23
24 Researcher: Is the navigation system easy for you to grasp, familiar to you?
25
26 LS: Yes, everything is clear. It tells you click and drag, the hand that tells you if something is
27 clickable, the menu, the navigation on the top. For me it is quite clear. Is following some
28 conventions I'm used to, like there is a next button on the right hand side, that obviously
29 takes you to the next page, and the arrow takes you back to where you were. I've seen this
30 kind of thing not only in narrative, but in business, all kinds of websites. Everything looks
31 familiar. But I'm not sure if...part of the text seems to be disappearing.
32
33 Researcher: You didn't find a way to move the text...
34
35 LS: Oh no, now I'm lost. The next button isn't taking me back to where I was! I got lost
36 at a certain point there. Oh there, click and drag, (*drags text*) because you gave me a hint.
37
38 Researcher: Yes, because you didn't spot that you could drag the text, but that means it
39 wasn't made very clear to you by the interface.
40
41 LS: Click and drag. It was mentioned here but....I didn't know it was a bed... Ok....
42
43 LS: I also realised just skimming through the text, until now most of the text I've been
44 reading, they use really simple words, like slang...street language. I feel I'm not reading
45 a piece of literature here, it's as if I'm listening to someone talking.
46

47 LS: I just clicked on the text and a pop-up window appeared, and it's like scrolling text, I
48 don't know where it's going to end. I have no control over it. I'd rather have more control
49 of the scrolling. It would be nice to have control over the text, for some people, who read
50 slower than others.
51
52 LS: On this page here, now I understand the instructions, now I'm dragging the text (*it*
53 *reads 'drag the text'*).
54
55 LS: The instruction here in the middle of the text I don't really understand... (*because*
56 *she hadn't read all of the text*)
57
58 LS: Well curiosity, I clicked on 'credits' and I wanted to go back to the page where I was,
59 and the only way back was to go back to the menu.... Now I lost the page where I was.
60
61 Researcher: What about if you click on 'credits' and click on 'credits' again....?
62
63 LS: Oh, that's where I was! But it's not clear. Somewhere here, there should be 'go back
64 to where you were'.
65
66 LS: It would be nice to have a music option, to turn the music off, or turn the effects off.
67 But for me it was OK, but maybe it could be an option for other people.
68
69 ENDS

1 6/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 **The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam**
5 **MT Think aloud (MT/T)**
6
7 MT: I think I'll just start with the first. It's labelled one, two, three and four.
8
9 Researcher: You're not the sort of person who would start with four?
10
11 MT: No, that's not my type. I see the green outline, and I feel tempted to click them. You
12 can drag... *(text)*. A little bit confusing. I didn't like that *(the 'bed' graphic)* – it wasn't
13 obvious.
14
15 MT: It's a choice of clicking the arrow or the word.... I think I'd have to read the story.
16
17 Researcher: Would you read all of the text before you started to click around? Is that how
18 you would approach it?
19
20 MT: Depends... if I read down the page and the link triggers me, I would probably just
21 click it. *(clicks on highlighted word)* I like this *(pop-up)*... you don't get out of the story,
22 you can get back. With other stories when I click I can lose the story *(other hypertexts)*.
23
24 MT: I like the design, I like the way it looks. This is a little bit more exciting than just a
25 green link *(the animated linked words)*.
26
27 Researcher: Do you think that visual decoration is helpful in telling the story, or just
28 entertainment?
29 MT: I think it's just decoration, so far. But it's much more exciting, even though it makes no
30 sense to me now. It makes me more interested than if it was just a blank screen with text.
31
32 MT: This is a bit too much *(the spiralling text)*, because I can't read it, I don't like that.
33 *(Clicked on the animated hammer text)* Ah, it's a hammer, now I see it. It wasn't obvious
34 at all. I like it.
35
36 Researcher: Is there enough there to keep you clicking?
37
38 MT: Yes.
39
40 MT: Using the sound I think is very atmospheric. It adds mystery. There should be a
41 button to switch the sound on or off, make to a bit more exciting I think.
42
43 *(back to main menu)* I think I would pop into another part of the story now, now I know
44 it's there. *(goes to chapter 3)* Changing the music... not that scary now, the music.
45 Perhaps they should make some changes to the background now it's changed the story
46 *(background graphic same as Chapter 1)*. I like this *(when clicks on a pop-up)* – you can

47 keep your place. There's no option to turn the music off – there should be. It's just a loop,
48 going on...
49
50 MT: I'm getting a little bit too much text...now I'm just browsing.
51
52 MT: It was quite good because you could navigate back and forth, you were not taken
53 away from the story when you started clicking on the links. With some other (*hypertext*)
54 stories you're reading and then you click on a link and you're taken away to somewhere
55 else, and then you get so lost you want to stop.
56
57 Researcher: People like to explore but need to feel the progress of the story?
58
59 MT: Yes.
60
61 ENDS

1 1/6/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam*
5 PD Think aloud (PD/T)
6
7 PD: I suppose it's the first chapter of something....
8
9 Researcher: Why did you click on the green words?
10
11 PD: They were highlighted. I suppose you could check out the characters or something. I
12 guess it's where you find out more about the characters. My concept is it's not like a
13 conventional book. Normally you'd have the characterisation included in the story, but
14 here you click and.....God, is that advertising?! (*reading the pop-up 'about Miriam'*)
15
16 PD: If you hadn't told me I wouldn't have known it was a bed.
17 (*found it hard to operate the drag bed device*)
18
19 Researcher: That's a little bit clumsy.
20
21 PD: The first thing is what is this supposed to be actually? It seems like a story... but...
22 I'm not quite sure what I'm supposed to do with all this stuff. Seems like these
23 highlighted words are obviously links, and this menu, and navigation stuff, it's all new to
24 me. I use the web a lot but I haven't seen this kind of thing. I've seen stuff like blogs but
25 it's more like a conventional thing. This is more like a new thing.
26
27 PD: It's a new way of giving you information about characters I suppose. What is this
28 supposed to do, that's what confuses me. Conventional thing about stories is that you
29 don't really include anything that is not really needed for the story, so I would be thinking
30 about why is this here? And I'd be looking for an answer. If it doesn't come up
31 somewhere else, I'd be wondering why it's there.
32
33 PD: It's been a bit easier, where you have a link it just opens a window and you can just click
34 it away again, but when it comes to one thing leads to another, you don't know where the hell
35 you are. It's like you're in a bit of maze and you haven't got a line to go through.
36
37 PD: This is quite nice, it's better than having a text page. I thought the spinning head
38 would do something rather than just be background, that's a bit confusing. The lights I
39 like but the letters and the head are a bit distracting I think.
40
41 PD: It's kind of like a role playing thing. You can look at it from different characters' point
42 of view. It's not like a book at all, because there you can leave off and start off over. You just
43 put your book aside, but here you have to close the website down and start all over again.
44
45 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....Master data sheet.....

**The hypertext piece you read: *The Virtual Disappearance Of Miriam* (M/Q)
6 participants**

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

Yes N= 6 No n= 0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=5

Online games n=3

PC games n=3

email and browsing/ information seeking n=6

Shopping n=4

Other....

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?

Yes n=4 No 2

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=6

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=3

An author you already like n=4

An author you have never tried before n=1

Recommendation from a friend n=6

Review in the press or media n=1

Anything else?.....

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=3

Familiar everyday language n=4

Interesting characters n=4

Emotional moments n=4

Exciting action n=3

Surprise n=6

Tension n=3

Satisfying conclusion n=4

Anything else?.....

4 *Do you prefer*

An easy, light read n=4

A deep, heavy read n=0

Both n=3

5 *Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)*

Yes n=0 No n=2 **Don't mind n=4**

6 *Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

7 *Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

8 *What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?*

Over complex plot n=5

Uninteresting plot n=6

Too familiar storyline n=2

Uneventful n=3

Dull characters n=2

Poor writing n=3

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else?.....

9 *Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?*

Yes n=2 No n=0 **Don't mind n=4**

10 *Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?*

Yes n=3 No n=1 **Don't mind n=2**

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 *How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?*

No problem n=5

Physically uncomfortable n=1

Relaxing n=1

Hurts my eyes n=1

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=3

2 *Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?*

Small n=4 Large n=0 Either n=0

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=5 No n=0

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=6 No n=0 Irritated n=0

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=6 No n=0 No menus offered n=0

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes n=0 No n=6

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=4 Disrupt n=0 Neutral n=2

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=2

Watching a film n=0

Playing a game n=4

Solving a puzzle n=3

Something else? Not sure what this is

2 *What about the hypertext carried you along?*

Artistic/ appealing language n=1

Interesting characters n=3

Emotional moments n=2

Exciting action n=1

Surprise n=4

Tension n=3

Satisfying conclusion n=2

Nothing n=0

Anything else I've forgotten? Multimedia good; enjoyed reading someone's feelings...

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=0

Uninteresting characters n=3

Over-complex plot n=0

Confusing plot n=3

No excitement n=1

No sense of an ending n=1

Anything else that you didn't like?

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=5 No n=0 Disrupted reading n=1

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=0

Word that seemed to signify something n=6

Animated image n=4

Icon n=2

Attempting to follow the story n=3

At random n=0

Any other factor? Read as many as I could to get the whole story.

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?*

Yes n= 5 (including 'not much' comment) No n=1

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

9 *If 'yes' to question 8, was that:*

intentional n=2 accidental n=1 both n=0

10 *If you did re-read sections was that:*

interesting n=1 exciting n=0 annoying n=0 **frustrating n=1**

11 *Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?*

Yes n=6 No n=0

12 *Did you feel satisfied with the ending?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

13 *Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

Yes n=5 No n=1

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium n=4

Great story n=2

Satisfying experience n=3

Anything else?

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring n=0

Confusing n=0

Unsatisfying story n=0

Did not operate easily n=0

Anything else?

PAGE
NUMBERING
AS ORIGINAL

1 20/2/06
2 Bournemouth University
3
4 *The Virtual Disappearance of Miriam*
5 Group discussion (M/D)
6
7 Present: DO, GD, HO, LS, MT, PD
8
9
10
11 Researcher: From the questionnaires, the navigation of *Miriam* you all thought was easy
12 to run. Do you have any comments about it now?
13
14 LS: I thought there were a couple of buttons that weren't necessary, that were confusing.
15 They were at the bottom left hand side, one was to change the quality, and the other one I
16 discovered was if you didn't want the background - some people are distracted if they
17 see the green background. That was a good one, but the other one I didn't see the sense
18 of.
19
20 HO: There was the TV... the buttons didn't seem...
21
22 PD: Yeah, what was that all about? They didn't do anything...
23
24 GD: The buttons on the TV worked the same way as the ones that did the quality of the
25 text. One of the buttons was just blank.
26
27 HO: In 'the House of Sam', one of the screens of text ran very fast.
28
29 MT: And the hammer was moving too fast.
30
31 *Researcher: Would you like control over the text always?*
32
33 All: Yes.
34
35 HO: Maybe you can make it a bit slower for readers who read slow. For me, I can't catch
36 up.
37
38 LS: Even though the text repeats itself, you have to wait.
39
40 Researcher: And waiting is a bit boring?
41
42 PD: Yeah, you've got to be quick.
43
44 GD: I didn't know that would loop again... I read it about three times... I didn't like
45 that.
46

47 Researcher: One of the things I want to understand is, do you think control is what's
48 needed or is less control is better? Because when you read a book you don't have to do
49 much. Is more choice better, or less choice?
50

51 PD: Reading on the internet can be quite boring and straining, so the interactivity is
52 actually what made it interesting. In some ways it did create a mood just to be able to go
53 through it. I mean, you didn't have a proper characterisation in it – you had to click a link
54 to get a description. I thought was a really interesting way of telling a story. It's the kind
55 of thing that gets you involved – and you've got the sound and the design, and that kind
56 of creates a mood as well. That way you get drawn into it.
57

58 MT: You can have lots of links and lots of navigation as you are not taken away from the
59 story, as long as I can get back to where I was and I can continue reading. As long as it's
60 just additional information about the character or the plot.
61

62 Researcher: Do you think that works in *Miriam*?
63

64 MT: Very well, yeah. I think it was very good.
65

66 GD: I liked that fact, it made me laugh, when it gave you a link to press and then it said
67 'file not found'. I thought that was funny, so at times those links caused. also adds to the
68 fun, to the humour.
69

70 HO: I tried to explore, but it depends on your market. This is more in an entertainment
71 style.
72

73 Researcher: Do you think the writer was trying to get a balance of fun and entertainment
74 and still tell a story that can involve you?
75

76 All: Yes.
77

78 Researcher: As readers do you think that's the way to go?
79

80 PD: You've got to go on reading, so you do need a story.
81

82 DO: Some attractions. It doesn't have to be a link, it can be something like the text flies
83 out. It's quite interesting. Something happens.
84

85 LS: I had just one thing about the audio – it was a bit annoying, there was no button to
86 turn it off, so I turned it off at the computer.
87

88 PD: I liked it actually. After a while it was in the background, it didn't bother me.
89

90 MT: I think the music should have changed when the setting changed, to change the
91 mood. After a while it was annoying.
92

93 HO: It should have an off and on button. I turned it off on the computer, but it slowed
94 down the computer because the sound was still running.
95
96 Researcher: We seem to be saying that we've got to offer everything, but it must be a
97 choice... the use is presented with something different from what they've seen before.
98 Have any of you got an idea of what we should call this? It's very different from a book
99 anyone has seen before.
100
101 LS: I didn't feel it was a game, even though the author was playing with the game
102 concept. Not a game.
103
104 PD: It had a bit of a mixture of a book, an audio book, when you had voices, like when
105 he's leaving her a message.
106
107 MT: I felt it was a mixture of a short movie and novel.
108
109 PD: I was just thinking, the internet's got to be playful. I've been trying to read a science
110 paper on the internet and it's doing my head in. It's got to be playful – the only bad thing
111 about it was it didn't have book marks.
112
113 Researcher: Let's talk about orientation. You all seemed from the questionnaires, quite
114 happy that you knew where you were in the story. But, you all said that you wanted to be
115 able to go 'home' – why was that important? Why did you need that?
116
117 HO: When I feel lost...
118
119 LS: You need security!
120
121 MT: You can choose to start in the third chapter, but perhaps you want to go home to
122 look at the second, or see something you didn't understand. He offered the choice of
123 reading the last chapter at the beginning, and you wouldn't understand the last chapter if
124 you hadn't read the first chapter...
125
126 Researcher: The very fact that you are offered choice makes the need for 'home' essential?
127
128 MT: I think so because you sort of never know where you are.
129
130 PD: It's sort of unconventional. With a book you can always see where you are, and
131 people are used to that.
132
133 Researcher: So should the designer of *Miriam* put page numbers into it, screen numbers,
134 scene numbers...?
135
136 All: No.
137

138 GD: That would make it slightly complex. We'd now have to be looking at some other
139 thing as well as the story. There's the menu at the top of the screen – I could always go
140 there.
141
142 HO: Maybe you put a bar code, and it will show you when you read, your read this part,
143 like a loading bar... could tell you which page...
144
145 DO: But this a very linear story...what about a non-linear one?
146
147 PD: But maybe that's the point, that it's confusing. At the end the whole concept of
148 reality has changed and maybe that's part of the idea...
149
150 DO: Also, this is not a long story, it's quite short. So I didn't find it a problem. But in a
151 longer story I would like a home button...
152
153 LS: Or a bookmark...
154
155 DO: For a nonlinear one you definitely need something to remember which one I've read,
156 or you could get lost.
157
158 Researcher: If it's very nonlinear HO's idea of a loading bar might be good, because it
159 wouldn't tell you where you were in the line but it would tell you how much you've
160 read...
161
162 PD: Yeah.
163
164 LS: That would be good.
165
166 Researcher: Is it that you need a certain amount of security alongside the newness?
167
168 MT: I think you don't know when you start reading it how much you've got, how long it
169 will take. Some sort of idea how much time...
170
171 Researcher: In the questionnaires you all said that the multimedia elements were good,
172 not a distraction for the reading.
173
174 HO: Only the sound...
175
176 LS: Keep the sound but so you can change it.
177
178 MT: You can do so much with sound, as in a movie you can change the music and the
179 whole movie changes. Just imagine a movie playing the same song, same music all
180 through the movie – it would be boring.
181

182 PD: In that way it's sort of like a film because it creates a mood for you. In a book you
183 always have a choice – you can read it in a certain way, but you can interpret in a way,
184 the mood you feel. When you have music it sets it for you.
185
186 Researcher: The music must be appropriate. MT's point was that the music should have
187 changed when the scene changed. LS, you also said you'd like to get rid of the
188 background sometimes.
189
190 LS: It was a bit distracting at certain points, so turn it off.
191
192 Researcher: Would anyone like to just have it as text, no graphics or multimedia?
193
194 PD: I didn't mind it, but I can imagine some people do mind it and at least you give them
195 the chance. You can stop the wobbly bits that constantly move.
196
197 DO: The background was always the same.
198
199 Researcher: He could have done more with what he had?
200
201 DO: Yes, some change.
202
203 Researcher: What about character? With a book or a film you get emotionally involved in
204 the characters. Could you get that level of involvement with *Miriam*?
205
206 All: Yes.
207
208 Researcher: Do you all agree on that?
209
210 All: Yes.
211
212 MT: I think it's a situation you imagine yourself getting into, waking up and finding your
213 partner wasn't there. It could happen to you.
214
215 Researcher: Is it necessary to have that recognisable story type or genre. Another one of
216 those security issues?
217
218 GD: Of all the ones we read, I find this one the most engaging. I kept on also looking for
219 Miriam, and that is what kept me going through.
220
221 PD: If there's no story what's the point of it? It wouldn't keep your interest.
222
223 Researcher: Do you think you're all taking about the same story? I know that sounds weird,
224 but if you can click here, read this or that, choose your path, you might have read something
225 different: not just your interpretation is different but the piece you read was different.
226
227 LS: Yes, because I think the plot was clear from the beginning. There was this guy and
228 his girl has disappeared.

229
230 Researcher: He seems to have managed to give you choice, multimedia, certain
231 nonlinearity if you want it...
232
233 All: Yes.
234
235 Researcher: It seems like a successful piece?
236
237 All: Yes.
238
239 Researcher: One of the problems that came up when we did the think-aloud sessions was that
240 some of the links weren't clear. And, sometimes the hand was there but nothing happened.
241
242 LS: Yes, it was not distracting, but you expected something to happen...
243
244 HO: For me, after you read chapter one you know how the whole design works...
245
246 Researcher: What things might you change, to make it clearer and easier?
247
248 GD: Give the user a guide to the navigation.
249
250 LS: Actually I don't agree, because the navigation they use is clear.
251
252 GD: But we are all people who are used to navigation...
253
254 PD: I just found personally with that piece that the navigation wasn't difficult.
255
256 HO: I think this story you cannot look at only for people who know the internet but also
257 people like my mother or grandmother, I think they are not sure how to navigate, so for
258 them it would be good to put instructions.
259
260 DO: If you read this story it's not suitable for your granny or children anyway.
261
262 MT: They use arrows and arrows are really simple.
263
264 GD: No, no! We didn't know about the two quality buttons for instance...
265
266 MT: But to get the whole story you don't even need to click one of the links in the text.
267
268 DO: It's not necessary to tell them everything that happens on the page.
269
270 PD: If they use the internet these are common buttons.
271
272 GD: I'm not only looking at *Miriam* – this is the most interesting one. Some of the other
273 pieces are weird...the navigation isn't easy...
274

275 MT: But with Flash games, they have the instructions but no one reads them. They are
276 making the games so simple that you don't need the instructions.
277
278 LS: I thought how it ended was quite interesting – it offered three different endings.
279
280 DO: Did you read all three?
281
282 LS: Yes.
283
284 DO: For me it would be more interesting if you only got one choice. If you see one
285 ending you don't see the other two.
286
287 Researcher: Is this a piece you would tell a friend about – 'try this, it was good'?
288
289 All: Yes.
290
291 PD: It was a real mind-fuck, excuse my language!
292
293 MT: It's the first one I actually enjoyed.
294
295 LS: Me too. I hated *Miriam* at the end...!
296
297 Researcher: That's fantastic. Thanks very much. I really appreciate it.
298
299 ENDS

Appendix Six

Amelie

1 12/5/06
2 Purbeck Upper School
3
4
5 *Amelie*
6 **GH think aloud (GH/T)**
7
8
9
10
11
12 Researcher: So really, just tell me what you're doing and what you're seeing and how you
13 react to that at this stage.
14
15 GH: OK. The writing, do you want me to read that?
16
17 Researcher: Yes, if you want to, just so you get a sense of it.
18
19 GH: OK, so the writing's quite clear... and then you can just...
20
21 Researcher: Is it obvious to you what that row of icons was?
22
23 GH: Yeah, it was. I think, from using other computer programs, it's obvious what to do
24 with them. From this page it's quite confusing to you where to go.
25
26 Researcher: Do you see that as a link, that red word?
27
28 GH: Umm, yeah, it wasn't that clear at first, but...
29
30 Researcher: So now you've seen it, how do imagine you're going to read this novel, or
31 book... or interactive?
32
33 GH: I suppose you'd read it quite quickly. It doesn't look like something you'd sit down for
34 a long length of time and read.
35
36 Researcher: Do you like the look of it? Does it appeal to you immediately or...?
37
38 GH: Yeah... I think the writing, it's a bit small in the way it's laid out. It looks hard to read
39 around it, but overall I think it's good with the picture.
40
41 Researcher: Does this remind you of the film? Does it give you a sense of who is around?
42
43 GH: Yeah, it does. That link's not clear...
44
45 Researcher: Did you that, did you know that was going to be a link? Was that mentioned in
46 that intro?

47 GH: Um, I can't remember... (*exploring the screen*)
48
49 Researcher: So that's that, rolling menu across the top...
50
51 GH: Yeah. Ah Ok.
52
53 Researcher: So you can always come into that.
54
55 GH: So that's clear.
56
57 Researcher: What do you think of having something like that?
58
59 GH: Um, I think it's good, but you'd have to know what some of the symbols meant, like
60 how to work it, because you could just go on any of them...
61
62 Researcher: Well yes, that's a point. It could be completely random.
63
64 GH : Yeah.
65
66 Researcher: You don't know what the order is because actually you notice it repeats after a
67 while, there's only a certain number (*of menu options*).
68
69 GH: So there could be, like, a key at the beginning.
70
71 Researcher: Yes, that's interesting. Because you know the film, have you any idea where
72 you are in the narrative of the film at the moment?
73
74 GH: I did, but now I've got a bit confused because I think, I've got a bit lost. Because this is
75 quite a bit later on the film, but I've just got to it now, so...
76
77 Researcher: It would be interesting to see when you read it for longer whether you mind
78 that sense of just exploring.
79
80 GH: Yeah. It could be just an initial reaction that I'm a bit confused.
81
82 Researcher: Yeah, and that's why it's nice for me to do this one-to-one now and then
83 compare what you say in a week's time.
84
85 GH: Yeah.
86
87 Researcher: You might feel differently.
88
89 GH: Yeah.
90
91 Researcher: Have a little wander, see what crops up. See how it's going to work.
92

93 GH: Could you just go through it all in order if you just kept flicking on the links, or does it
94 get into a cycle?
95
96 Researcher: With this one, there isn't any '1,2,3,4,5'. It's just, you've got that menu across
97 the top which obviously cycles round, and then the only other way you can go through the
98 story is just to explore, find various ways through it. So she's written it in such a way that,
99 in theory, it makes sense however you roam through it. But that will be for you to tell me,
100 really.
101
102 GH: OK...
103
104 Researcher: Different things happen. The more time you spend with it, you'll find different
105 effects. Most of it's read. What we're trying to do is create stories that you mostly have to
106 read still, we didn't want them to be films, we didn't want them to be games, so they're not
107 really full of puzzles... but different still from what you'd normally expect to find.
108
109 GH: OK, that one's good when it talks about her mother and then it goes on to explain all
110 about her.
111
112 Researcher: Do you know what these symbols are for? Are they obvious to you?
113
114 GH: Yeah, they're obvious.
115
116 Researcher: Are they like standard web navigation symbols, so you, they're useful?
117
118 GH: Yeah. I think that's part of what's good about it, it's not something completely
119 different, from websites or what you're used to.
120
121 Researcher: No. So it's not completely baffling.
122
123 GH: No. I think it's good when the pictures change slightly like this one does, underneath.
124
125 Researcher: Yeah, and there are more things the more you go into it, you will find ore
126 things going on. And obviously when you've got time you'll read it, and I think reading it
127 helps – you get more involved in it.
128
129 *(GH exploring screen)*
130
131 Researcher: So do you think you get a sense of how this is going to work?
132
133 GH: Yeah, it looks pretty simple.
134
135 Researcher: It's obviously not freaking you out.
136
137 GH: No!
138 ENDS

1 12/5/06
2 Purbeck Upper School
3
4
5 *Amelie*
6 HF think aloud (HF/T)
7
8
9
10
11 Researcher: So if you can tell me what's going on, if you can describe what you're seeing
12 now you've started to have a little explore...
13
14 HF: Is it kind of like flicking to different parts of the story?
15
16 Researcher: Yes, definitely there's that sense that it isn't just in one order – depending on
17 what you click on, you're going to go to different places.
18
19 HF: And also something about a different character...
20
21 Researcher: Yes, and obviously as you read it you'll get into the story more.
22
23 HF: (*theme music starts up*) It's really like a film kind of book. That's really cool.
24
25 Researcher: It's got a nice atmosphere as well. I thought you might like this one. So now
26 you've found that menu (*moving film strip*). Did you know that was there from the
27 introductory blurb, or did you just spot that?
28
29 HF: I think I just spotted that.
30
31 Researcher: Yeah, and you would explore the screen to see what was active?
32
33 HF: Yeah. (*exploring screen*) There's a definite feel about it, like the era, like how the
34 screen goes across like that.
35
36 Researcher: That's true. That's a good point – the design of it, the look of it is going to
37 affect how you feel about it.
38
39 HF: It's kind of like letting you look deeper into each of the characters, in different ways.
40
41 Researcher: How do feel about the way the navigation works, what you can do to go left,
42 right and centre, backwards, forwards, all of that?
43
44 HF: I think that's really good, because if you go on it long enough you'll probably
45 understand how it all links together.
46

47 Researcher: Mm... So you've got that menu across the top. What do you think that's
48 allowing, where do you think that takes you?
49
50 HF: Does it just take you to different parts of the story?
51
52 Researcher: Yeah, I think that's the idea, that you can just jump in and out of different parts
53 of the story. Are these clear? Is it obvious to you what they would do?
54
55 HF: I'm not actually sure what they do.
56
57 Researcher: No, well that's a good point then, that's not clear enough. That shuts it down,
58 the 'x', a bit like you would on a window, and that's supposed to take you back to the home
59 page. But that's not immediately clear to you?
60
61 HF: Well, I kind of gathered it was something to do with that, but not necessarily... It's all
62 like different scenarios.
63
64 Researcher: It will be interesting when you've read it, when I come back next week, to see
65 if you've built the stories up.
66
67 HF: Yeah, definitely.
68
69 Researcher: Do you see what I mean, when I was speaking at the beginning, how you've
70 got much more control over how the story unfolds?
71
72 HF: Yeah.
73
74 Researcher: Do you like that idea, as a principle?
75
76 HF: Yeah, I do. It's better than being like, you know, the conventional chronological order
77 of it. I like it. You have control over it. It's really good. I like the different, like, stills. I like
78 these little things...
79
80 Researcher: Do you like the idea of having lots to do on the screen, or do you think, if
81 you're going to try and read, it's better to have not so much? Is there a chance that this
82 distracts you from reading and what you end up doing is playing?
83
84 HF: Um, I don't think that actually gets in the way, to be honest. I think it's more
85 interesting, having more on the screen, definitely. If you take time to read each of these,
86 they'll all link?
87
88 Researcher: Yes, I think that's a really good point – you do need to read what's there to be
89 read, or it won't make sense, it'll be like just flicking through the pictures.
90
91 HF: I think it's good having a busy screen. That's good... Yeah, that was good, having a
92 little arrow on just a picture. How do you go back?

93
94 Researcher: There should be a back button, but it seems to get hidden at the bottom of the
95 screen. I think it's down there, but on this PC it doesn't fit.
96
97 HF: OK. On that phone, there was no writing, so you had to go into the phone – that was
98 good. Yeah, like this is really cool. It kind of makes you focus on the art side of it. I think
99 that's really good.
100
101 Researcher: Do you like the idea that a story can be told in that way, with many different
102 elements to it?
103
104 HF: Definitely, because I think some people don't appreciate the kind of filming side of a
105 film, and that actually really annoys me.
106
107 Researcher: You're interested in that part of it, are you, the artistic aspects of it?
108
109 HF: I think that actually may be really useful if someone was studying the film and they
110 didn't have the time to just sit down and read it. This would kind of be a quick way of
111 learning some information about it.
112
113 Researcher: Do you feel like you know your way around it now, you feel you've got to
114 grips with it?
115
116 HF: Yeah.
117
118 ENDS

1 12/5/06
2 Purbeck Upper School
3
4
5 *Amelie*
6 KW think aloud (KW/T)
7
8
9
10 Researcher: Right, so, it's over to you then.
11
12 KW: OK... Start from here?
13
14 Researcher: It's up to you, I think. Are you fairly familiar with using the web?
15
16 KW: I am yeah, I go on it mostly just to have look, for homework and stuff, or context.
17
18 Researcher: Sure. So you're used to clicking on links and jumping from place to place?
19
20 KW: Yeah! I don't know what I'm doing now though...!
21
22 Researcher: That's OK. So that's the little box with the cross – what do you think that might be?
23
24 KW: Does that mean cancel, or..
25
26 Researcher: Yeah, I think it tried to mirror what you do when you close a window-
27
28 KW: Does that mean 'home page'?
29
30 Researcher: Yeah.
31
32 KW: That's fine.
33
34 Researcher: Do you think that could have been clearer?
35
36 KW: Um, it reminds me of an envelope, it reminds me of mail and stuff, but it... but
37 'home', that's easy to remember, home obviously for the home page.
38
39 Researcher: You obviously assume that a story has a beginning – where do you assume that
40 this one begins?
41
42 KW: I don't, umm, I would assume that it began from this picture here, because it goes... I
43 don't know.
44
45 Researcher: You've got choice.
46
47 KW: Yeah...

48
49 Researcher: How do feel about that?
50
51 KW: It's good, it's good that it- a bit confused... I don't know. Because usually I assume
52 that you just clicked the mouse instead of going back to the home page, unless I'm doing it
53 wrong.
54
55 Researcher: No, there's nothing obvious to click on there. But try that bar.
56
57 KW: (*clicked to open moving menu*) Ohh, right, that's good. I like that. It's really nice, but
58 I didn't spot it at all, no.
59
60 Researcher: It isn't your fault, obviously. That's part of what I'm learning – what works.
61 So what do you think you can do with that strip?
62
63 KW: Just basically click on the scenes that you want to look at, maybe? I like that, I think
64 that's really good. I think that should be made more clearer though, because I wouldn't
65 have noticed that unless anyone else told me. But I think that's really good – I like that.
66 There we go, I'll have a look there. See, if I'd seen that, if that was more clear, you know a
67 different image.
68
69 Researcher: You could have done with that being pointed out to you on the first page.
70
71 KW: Yeah. Definitely. Was it not on the first page?
72
73 Researcher: It was mentioned, funnily enough. She says it, but because-
74
75 KW: I didn't read that, no...
76
77 Researcher: But again, that's got to be clear to you, because you're the user.
78
79 KW: Yeah.
80
81 Researcher: What about roaming around on an individual screen like that? Can you see
82 what you might do?
83
84 KW: What, here?
85
86 Researcher: No, when you get to a page, with text – is there anything you can do there?
87
88 KW: Um, oh you can click on that... Can you click on these?
89
90 Researcher: Yeah. I think what you'll find is the more you explore, the more clickable...
91
92 KW: Oh right!
93

94 Researcher: So what's happening? You've spotted more things?
95
96 KW: Yeah, I have. It's really good, actually.
97
98 Researcher: So, to read this story...
99
100 KW: I think you need to read, I mean some of the instructions are a bit, like that – I don't
101 know, it's quite good. (*exploring and reading*)
102
103 Researcher: In a book when you got to the end of that page, you turn the page. With that page...
104
105 KW: You have to, do you have to click on the red or something?
106
107 Researcher: Yeah. Click on words, you can click on pictures– there are different things that
108 are clickable. So sometimes it's worth exploring an image, because there might be
109 something on there, sometimes.
110
111 KW: Sometimes, yeah.
112
113 Researcher: Is that natural for you, to explore a page, or do you expect the links to be more
114 obvious?
115
116 KW: Um, usually I just explore a page, I usually click, and like the next picture or image or
117 something, like this, would come up. But you have to click on a word or something. I'm
118 back to the home now, but... That's nice... You can click on this. Oh right, you can click
119 on certain characters in this book and then it comes up. That's good, I like that.
120
121 Researcher: And I've got the sound down, but there are various sound effects. You can hear
122 the bubble wrap popping on this one...
123
124 KW: Oh wow.... That's really cool. I like that. If I'd seen that scrapbook like that, I think I
125 would have known that was for the characters once I clicked on there. That's really good.
126
127 Researcher: Something like that, that scrapbook effect, is that more visually obvious that
128 you can explore that, than some of the other pages?
129
130 KW: Yeah, definitely. Than some of the other pages, that would be more.... I quite like that,
131 that's really good. Is that...?
132
133 Researcher: You know you can click on words as well, so you can jump off.
134
135 KW: Yeah, oh that's brilliant, yeah. (*reading text*)
136
137 Researcher: And if you find yourself in a loop you've always got-
138
139 KW: The bar again.
140

141 Researcher: Yeah. So there's always a way to go somewhere else.
142
143 KW: Yeah... Is this the dialogue that she's saying?
144
145 Researcher: Yeah.
146
147 KW: That's quite good as well. Instead of narration, it's quite nice to have...
148
149 Researcher: That's the thing with this medium— you can do it any way you want really,
150 you're not stuck in all the conventions of a book. If you want to be you do it differently.
151
152 KW: And when, like when the sound's up, can you hear them talking?
153
154 Researcher: I'm not sure about that actually, on that one. It's a good question though.
155
156 KW: That would be quite cool though...
157
158 Researcher: There are sound effects, yeah, there definitely are.
159
160 KW: Could you get, like, the dialogue from the film onto here?
161
162 Researcher: I'm sure you could, well copyright would be an issue, not for an educational
163 piece, but I think she could have done it. Just try the phone.
164
165 KW: Oh right.
166
167 Researcher: The phone rings when the sound's up.
168
169 KW: (*clicking on hot spots*) Oh right! Nice link there. That was good. Maybe I just need
170 something more obvious.
171
172 Researcher: Or maybe the designer needs to make it more obvious. Because, you're young
173 and you're used to the computer and it's still not obvious to you.
174
175 KW: Some of this was obvious, I mean quite good, I like all the links. I'm really impressed
176 with that scrapbook, I think that's a good idea instead of just having all the characters in a
177 line, just a picture saying who they, it's quite nice. And I like the links of the words, you
178 can click on a word. Oh, and that's nice as well. You can move these.... That's really good.
179 (*reading letter on page*)
180
181 Researcher: There's all sorts of different ways of navigating. Do you feel like, if you're on
182 your own now, you'd explore and find all different kinds of stuff?
183
184 KW: I would definitely, yeah.
185
186 ENDS

1 12/5/06
2 Purbeck Upper School
3
4
5 *Amelie*
6 NM Think Aloud (NM/T)
7
8
9
10
11 Researcher : Have a roam around but tell me what you're doing. It's a bit unnatural, which
12 is why I'll give you the CD and ask you to read it in your own time so you don't have me
13 looking over your shoulder. But just to tell me what you're doing and how you react to
14 what's on the screen, and that's just to get an initial reaction from you.
15
16 NM: Is it Ok if I just read this little bit?
17
18 Researcher: Yeah, whatever you want to do.
19
20 NM: It's almost like a website story. You've got the little clicking icons that goes onto it.
21
22 Researcher: Is that obvious what they are?
23
24 NM: I, that's the home one that brings you back to the start. So you click on each of these
25 icons to go to the beginning of each...?
26
27 Researcher: Yeah. Click and see what happens. I'm not expecting you to read it all now,
28 but you will get a sense of the story when you do that.
29
30 NM: And do these pictures, they represent what's in the text above them?
31
32 Researcher: yeah. So it's kind of like an illustrated story, that as you go into it you'll see
33 other things. There are some sound effects, some animation some video and so on. It's
34 mainly photograph based, but-
35
36 NM: Ok. And how do you move on to the-?
37
38 Researcher: That's a good question. Is there anything obvious on the screen there for you?
39
40 NM: Those little icons up there.
41
42 Researcher: What do you think they may be?
43
44 NM: Going back to the homebase and clicking away?
45

46 Researcher: Shutting down yes, so that's no good. So, if you were on a web page and you
47 were looking for links what would you expect to see?
48
49 NM: Um, a little arrow or something like that to indicate where to be moving onto.
50
51 Researcher: So on that screen you've actually come to it's not very obvious, is it?
52
53 NM: No.
54
55 Researcher: So if you click on that bar up there, that'll give you...
56
57 NM: Ok, brilliant. (*clicks on menu bar opener*)
58
59 Researcher: It is good, but wasn't clear was it?
60
61 NM: No, it wasn't. I didn't see the bar at all, because it blended in with the dark
62 background.
63
64 Researcher: And although it's a nice idea, it needed to be clearer because you might not
65 have spotted it without me here.
66
67 NM: No, I wouldn't.
68
69 Researcher: OK. So now what do you think, what have you got in front of you now?
70
71 NM: I'm guessing these are all the different scenes or sections to go to. Um, is the order in
72 which it comes in, is that random or...?
73
74 Researcher: Well, if I weren't here, and I couldn't tell you, what would you do?
75
76 NM: I'd probably randomly click.
77
78 Researcher: Yeah, so try that.
79
80 NM: So these highlighted words, you go click and it goes back?
81
82 Researcher: Yeah. That page is an odd one because there's no obvious link on it, which is a
83 bit strange, I hadn't noticed that one before.
84
85 NM: I'm not quite sure about the structure of it, and this is, the path of the story I'm not
86 quite sure how that's laid out.
87
88 Researcher: No, well I think that's something you'll want to talk about more next week,
89 whether you understand the story structure. Because I think what's happening is you're
90 straight away not quite sure where to go, what to do. But don't worry about for a moment –
91 just wander around and see what you get. You can explore the screen itself.

92
93 NM: Ok. Is this describing each person that's in the picture?
94
95 Researcher: Yeah, or telling parts of the story as well. You get background information but
96 also events happen. How much, when you use the internet, do you like to explore? Are you
97 somebody who will wander around randomly or will usually do it for specific purpose?
98
99 NM: I normally do it for a specific purpose, like if I need to do research or something, I
100 know what I'm looking for. Or I might generally want to research something. I usually
101 know what I'm doing before I go onto it.
102
103 Researcher: Well that's fair enough, and it might be the same with this, you might want to
104 get somewhere fairly quickly. So it will be interesting to see how you feel when you've
105 read it, about roaming around a structure that isn't so familiar to you.
106
107 NM: Yeah. The pictures are quite good. Are they taken from the film?
108
109 Researcher: Yeah. I think she's used the DVD and made stills from it, and as you go further
110 you'll find some animated sections and sound tracks. There's all sorts of things that pop up.
111 But the interesting thing is how much you'll be willing to explore, that's what I'm
112 interested to know, and whether you pick up the story.
113
114 NM: OK, so you've got the back icon there if you wanted to go... that's clear.
115
116 Researcher: Yes... That doesn't always show on some of the screens, does it? I think it gets
117 hidden behind that control bar. It might be different on your own computer. What's your
118 feeling about the design of it, in terms of something on the screen? Are you approaching
119 this like it's a website, or a book?
120
121 NM: Yeah, I am approaching it like— it's a combination between the two, I think. Because
122 it's on the computer I automatically approach it like it's a website, and I'm exploring it,
123 clicking around, figuring out where everything is at first before I start actually getting into
124 it. But, because I've never actually done anything like this before, so... But no, it seems
125 quite good now... once I've got the hang of it and I've done a couple I probably would end
126 up just reading them like stories.
127
128 Researcher : Yeah. I think one thing is to feel free to explore the whole screen and see what
129 crops up. Try roaming around on the phone, because you see there's a link there, but
130 you've got to find it and that's the snag. If you don't find it-
131
132 NM: You're not aware that it's there.
133
134 Researcher: No, and that might be something we'll talk about – as a reader, whether you
135 like the idea of being active and exploring, or whether actually you want to be more passive
136 and just let it wash over you.
137

138 NM: OK, yeah, and I think once you've got the hang of the website and that you need to
139 look around and click around, then it becomes far more experiencing the website and
140 exploring it basically. But if I hadn't been told at the beginning that I could click on those
141 icons I probably wouldn't.
142
143 Researcher: Maybe when they're thinking about the design of these pieces, they need to be
144 clearer, because your generation, you've grown up with computers and the internet, and
145 even you're not spotting things.
146
147 NM: No, I'm not, I do use the computer a lot, but it's mainly for work and tasks that I have
148 set already, myself. But for a lot of people they do generally explore things like that.
149
150 Researcher: Yes, but is it because the conventions of linking on websites are not exactly
151 being followed here, is that what's thrown you a bit?
152
153 NM: If they said to me, feel free to use the hand to click around and explore the page, then
154 I probably would go 'Oh right OK, fantastic, I'll do that.'
155
156 Researcher: Because you're in a different environment from an ordinary website, you
157 might need a bit more guidance.
158
159 NM: Yes, at first I probably would. Maybe on the introduction page or something, just...
160
161 Researcher: Yes, OK. So do you feel happy that if I left it with you, you'd explore it and see
162 what's there?
163
164 NM: Yes.
165
166 Researcher: OK, well, have an explore and see what you come up with.
167
168 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....Master Data.....

The hypertext piece you read:.....AMELIE (AM/Q)

4 respondents

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

Yes N= 4 No n= 0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=4

Online games n=0

PC games n=0

email and browsing/ information seeking n=4

Shopping n=2

Other....

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?

Yes n=4 No n=0

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=1

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=0

An author you already like n=3

An author you have never tried before n=1

Recommendation from a friend n=3

Review in the press or media n=2

Anything else?.....

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=1

Familiar everyday language n=0

Interesting characters n=3

Emotional moments n=2

Exciting action n=3

Surprise n=1

Tension n=2

Satisfying conclusion n=2

Anything else?

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=1

A deep, heavy read n=0

Both n=3

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n=1 No n=0 Don't mind n=3

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes n=4 No n=0

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

Yes n=3 (plus, 'as long as it unfolds') No n=0

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=3

Uninteresting plot n=3

Too familiar storyline n=0

Uneventful n=3

Dull characters n=0

Poor writing n=2

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else?

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=2 No n=1 Don't mind n=1

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

Yes n=1 No n=2 Don't mind n=1

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=2 ('if labelled clearly')

Physically uncomfortable n=0

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=2

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=1

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=3 Large n=0 Either n=0

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=3 No n=1

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=0 No n=3 Irritated n=1

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=2 Disrupt n=0 Neutral n=2

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=1
Watching a film n=2
Playing a game n=2
Solving a puzzle n=2
Something else? All-in-one mixture.

2 *What about the hypertext carried you along?*

Artistic/ appealing language n=1
Interesting characters n=1
Emotional moments n=0
Exciting action n=0
Surprise n=0
Tension n=0
Satisfying conclusion n=1
Nothing n=0
Anything else I've forgotten? The idea of exploring made me continue.

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=0
Uninteresting characters n=0
Over-complex plot n=0
Confusing plot n=3
No excitement n=0
No sense of an ending n=3
Anything else that you didn't like?

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=2 No n=0 Disrupted reading n=2 (because links were not always clear)

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=0
Word that seemed to signify something n=2
Animated image n=1
Icon n=0
Attempting to follow the story n=0
At random n=3 (plus 'didn't understand where any structure was')
Any other factor?.....

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=4 No n=0

9 *If 'yes' to question 8, was that:*

intentional n= 1

accidental n=2

both n=1

10 *If you did re-read sections was that:*

interesting n=2

exciting n=0

annoying n=1

frustrating n=2

11 *Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

12 *Did you feel satisfied with the ending?*

Yes n=1 No n=3

13 *Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?*

Yes n=0 No n=4

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

Yes n=2 No n=2

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium n=1

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=0

Anything else? Something new; different way of reading; I would give it another chance

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring n=0

Confusing n=0

Unsatisfying story n=0

Did not operate easily n=0

Anything else? Needs improvement or guidance to give a reader a chance.

1 1/06/2006
2 Purbeck School
3
4
5 *Amelie* discussion (AM/D)
6
7
8 Present: GH, HF, KW, NM
9
10
11 Researcher: We've got here, KW and GH. So, your initial reaction – can you remember
12 back to when we first saw the piece, can you remember what your initial feeling was? Just
13 to get it into a context...
14
15 KW: Um, I was quite confused at the start because I couldn't find the initial links and stuff,
16 until you kind of explained them to me. There was one little link at the top, a symbol, it
17 looked like an envelope? I thought it looked like an envelope...but actually it was a click
18 off-
19
20 Researcher: The shut-down, yeah. When you spent some time with it, did it get-?
21
22 KW: Yeah, because I knew that, and also I learnt more new, when I looked at it a second
23 time saw new links, like words signified something, so are red, and I think that's a good
24 colour to use as well, because, just important stuff like that.
25
26 GH: When I came the first time, like KW, some of the things I couldn't work out, some of
27 the things I needed to have explained to me. And... looking back at it, it could have had a
28 key or something, at the beginning, before you opened it, because I think you need
29 someone with you or something to read to explain it. But I think once you knew what the
30 different things were, it made it a lot clearer.
31
32 Researcher: So then, having now read it a bit, how do feel about the way it works? Because
33 one of the things I'm interested in is, this is not a book, you know how a book works, you
34 know how a film works, you know how a DVD works – it's all kind of natural, you don't
35 even think about it really. But this was something completely different, so you had to
36 almost learn how to work it. Having spent some time with it, did you enjoy that process of
37 having to do things as you read it, or was that still difficult?
38
39 KW: I still found it quite... I like something that flows, I didn't think it flowed very well...
40
41 GH: Yeah...
42
43 KW: So it was quite like, Ok it's a word link onto something else, and I didn't understand
44 whether that was going onto the next part of the story or-
45
46 GH: An extra thing-

47
48 KW: An extra thing, and I did get quite confused.
49
50 Researcher: OK, how about you, GH? Did it get easier?
51
52 GH: Yeah, I think the more you use it, the clearer it becomes. I think you need to look
53 through it once just to find your bearings.
54
55 Researcher: Do you think that lack of familiarity of how the thing works would be a barrier
56 to people, or is something you would eventually get used to?
57
58 KW: I think for me it was one of the first times I used something like that, a hypertext
59 anyway, so I found quite difficult, not difficult, just found it a bit confusing. But I think if it
60 cropped up quite a lot, you know, say in Borders or anything, I reckon I could get the gist of
61 stuff.
62
63 Researcher: So you could sort of see the potential for it?
64
65 KW: Yeah.
66
67 Researcher: As a way of telling a story?
68
69 KW: I mean, personally I prefer reading books because I felt still, like looking on a
70 computer, after a while it kind of, not hurts my eyes, just a bit...more straining on the eyes
71 definitely.
72
73 Researcher: You both put (*in questionnaires*) 'hurts my eyes' and said it was
74 uncomfortable to actually sit there.
75
76 KW: That could be just now, where we are-
77
78 GH: In the future computers might be more – like a laptop or something.
79
80 Researcher: Yeah...
81
82 GH: You could sit where you like, but I was doing it at a PC and that made it more
83 difficult.
84
85 Researcher: Do you think this problem of having to read these on a computer or a laptop is
86 really a huge barrier?
87
88 KW: I think for our generation, and probably younger ones it won't be so much of a barrier,
89 but for older generations it might be. We've grown up with computers, nearly...
90
91 Researcher: But even you just said you'd rather sit and have a book, sit in a chair, in bed
92 or...how would you...?

93
94 KW: Well sit on a chair or wherever... I just find you get into the book more, whereas I...
95 I don't know... It said in here (*the questionnaire*) the 'lost in a book' kind of...and I didn't
96 feel lost in this...but I still found it quite different...
97
98 Researcher: You both said you weren't lost in the book.
99
100 GH: I think with books, it's more sort of relaxing, because you don't have to think about
101 where you're going. It's just given to you. So I thought it's a different type of... because,
102 with a book, it's just what the author gives you, you don't have to think about it as much.
103
104 Researcher: That's a really good point. So, with a book you're just taking on board what
105 the author gives?
106
107 GH: Yeah.
108
109 Researcher: But with this, what was different?
110
111 GH: You have to use your own initiative.
112
113 KW: Yeah. Work, not working, but...
114
115 Researcher: Was it work?
116
117 KW: Not, some people would be challenged, not to me, it wasn't challenging...
118
119 GH: Not challenging, like... I don't know how to explain it really...
120
121 Researcher: No, but I'm beginning to understand what you're saying, that you were quite
122 up for it, you were quite interested in the idea when I first came in. But what you're saying
123 now is, actually doing it, it wasn't quite as enjoyable as maybe you thought it was going to
124 be at the beginning. One thing seems to be sitting at the computer rather than with a book,
125 the other thing is maybe the learning of the interface....
126
127 KW: I'll tell you one thing that kind of did confuse me. You know the kind of screen, the
128 film across the top of the page? I wasn't sure whether that was like, the first picture was like
129 scene, not 'scene one', I didn't know where the story started and where it ended, or whether
130 it was in an order. There was no writing or anything, or a key, like you said, just to kind of
131 say 'right, this is so and so,'. Do you know what I mean? I reckon that could have been a bit
132 more clearer, but again, it's just different to reading, that's probably because I haven't done
133 that before.
134
135 Researcher: So was that a problem for you as well? You had that menu there but you didn't
136 know if it meant '1,2,3,4,5' or 'scene 1, scene2'...
137

138 GH: Yeah, at first it was, and it's just a case of exploring, clicking on different things...
139 which is good, I think. But because I knew the story of *Amelie* already, kind of knew what
140 to expect and I knew-
141
142 Researcher: Did that make it easier, do you think, or harder because you knew, in your
143 mind what was the original?
144
145 GH: I think in way it was harder because you knew what should come. So, it could work if
146 it was stories people weren't familiar with.
147
148 *(NM and HF came in to join the discussion)*
149
150 Researcher: We were just talking about, you know that menu that runs along the top of the
151 screen, and KW and GH were saying that that was kind of a nice idea, but it meant that you
152 might not know where you were in the story itself. Have you got any comments on
153 that?
154
155 HF: Yeah, we thought that maybe... 'cos we didn't understand who the characters were,
156 and we thought, I know it's kind of making it more book-like, but have, split the top menu
157 into sections so have characters, and give us a beginning, and an end, and make sure we can
158 choose the middle bit, because we wanted a beginning.
159
160 NM: Yeah, it's hard to know, like the structure of the website, or like the story. If you're
161 doing it from a first-time read, it would be so confusing as to where everything is laid
162 out.
163
164 Researcher: If you hadn't done that first session with me, you would've-
165
166 NM: If you weren't familiar with the book, it would be confusing, but the storyline itself
167 yeah.
168
169 HF: If you were reading the book, it would be really exciting to look round stuff you'd
170 already seen, like highlights from what you've seen, quotes, pictures...
171
172 Researcher: Yeah, it's an interesting point, because it is an adaptation.
173
174 NM: It would be a really good revision technique. For like, animating it, bringing it to life,
175 getting some pictures in there, being interactive with it.
176
177 HF: It makes you enjoy the story more, I would say.
178
179 KW: Especially for people who don't like reading just a text or something. It would just be,
180 yeah, like you said, a good revision thing, especially if people don't like reading text on its
181 own, especially on a computer.
182

183 Researcher: I guess you all like reading, you're studying literature, I guess you enjoy sitting
184 down with a book, drifting off and getting into the story. Is that right?
185
186 NM: I like the new idea of this, sort of bringing it something different.
187
188 Researcher: I think you all pretty much said that, that you... Actually GH said she wouldn't
189 like to read another one!
190
191 GH: I'm not being rude! I prefer to read a book.
192
193 Researcher: No, that's what I need to know. If you wouldn't read another one, why?
194
195 NM: I would use it as a revision.
196
197 KW: Yeah, it includes a lot more people. There's people who like books but there's a lot of
198 people who don't have much to do with a computer, so... some people love computers-
199
200 NM: And enjoy the exploration-
201
202 KW: Yeah, so there's a wider range of things for them to look at, which is really good.
203
204 Researcher: Do you think you can tell a story where the structure is not already fixed by the
205 author, because one thing you said before the other two came is was, when you read a book
206 you sit there and you absorb what you're given by the author, and when you study literature
207 you're learning something that the author created. You're all talking about the same thing.
208 But you're all talking about a different version of something, aren't you?
209
210 NM: It's how you looked at it.
211
212 Researcher: Yeah, you'd have all read it in a different order from each other, almost
213 certainly. So do you think that you can still tell a story, or is it a different kind of story, or
214 can stories only be where there's one fixed version?
215
216 NM: One of my main questions was, was it formed as learning the book, but the actual
217 story I mean, was it forming your own?
218
219 Researcher: Well, I think what the person who wrote that piece tried to do was to make an
220 adaptation, in the way that people make adaptations, you know, people make films that are
221 adaptations of novels, don't they? Or you might get a stage version of a film, or film
222 version of stage play. This was an attempt to tell the story of Amelie in a different way, to
223 show it differently and obviously involve the user differently. It wasn't really designed as
224 revision tool.
225
226 NM: The user, were they supposed to be like creating their own beginning, middle and end?
227
228 Researcher: Yeah.
229

230 NM: Because, like, if you were going to create your own story, it would be more fun to pull
231 it into, almost like a scrapbook of your own. So then you'd say, Ok I'll have this as my
232 beginning, this as my middle and that could be my end. And then you could look at it again,
233 because if you were supposed to be forming your own kind of story out of it, within the
234 context of the play, well then you'd need to place it somewhere. You'd forget what your
235 beginning was by the time-

236
237 HF: Yeah, like I went on something and then by accident I went on it again, so um, it would
238 good if you could actually drag things down that had actually remembered the order of our
239 own story.

240
241 Researcher: I understand what you're saying – you mean for you personally, for your
242 personal version, you could record that.

243
244 HF: Yeah, so you don't accidentally go back on the same thing again.

245
246 NM: And the bit that runs across the top, it goes past so fast that, you're trying to, like, click
247 on it while it's moving, and I found it quite hard to remember which one I had clicked on.

248
249 Researcher: OK, this idea of story structure – is the idea of a beginning middle and end
250 something that you have to have?

251
252 NM: It gives what you're reading substance, you know where you're heading with it.

253
254 HF: A beginning, definitely. I wish there was a beginning, and then you could go off from
255 the beginning.

256
257 Researcher: And could you ever imagine a time when stories just start wherever the reader
258 starts them?

259
260 NM: I found that far too confusing. It would be like, OK...you could even start with the
261 end, say the person died, it would 'OK...'

262
263 KW: Just a plot overview or something...because again, if you just accidentally or on
264 purpose go on to something, and as you say, someone's died, well how has this developed?
265 Is it something that's just been produced with ... You need a context I think, or
266 something.

267
268 Researcher: GH?

269
270 GH: Um, maybe just an opening page, just explaining roughly what it's about, not just
271 throwing you in there.

272
273 Researcher: If you'd had a beginning, middle and end there on the screen, do you think
274 would have used it or would have still explored?

275

276 NM: You could have both perhaps, you could read the real story and then create your own,
277 then you'd understand the context...

278
279 GH: I think you need a beginning, but I don't necessarily think it needs an end, but a
280 beginning's more crucial.

281
282 Researcher: Have you ever read a story or seen a film that didn't have a very conclusive
283 ending at all, that left everything up in the air?

284
285 HF: I can't remember which one it was but yeah, I have. I do think open ends are really
286 good, because it leaves you to make your own decision. I don't think you need an end, but
287 I think the beginning, so you know who the characters are to each other...

288
289 Researcher: And with this you didn't have any obvious starting point.

290
291 HF: It's like when you clicked on something and there was a character you weren't aware
292 of, and you just wondered who they were to the other characters.

293
294 NM: We were clicking more randomly than we were with any precision. It was more like
295 'ooh that looks cool'. Or 'that looks a bit random' but there was no, we weren't really
296 paying full attention to it. It was more the fact that were clicking and interacting with it.

297
298 Researcher: Let's talk about the idea of links then, because obviously what these stories do
299 is, they present you with something where you aren't just given one path through it, you're
300 given these things that you can click on. You had that menu across the top, you had words
301 on the page, or images that you could click on. What would be the way for you to make that
302 really effective? You're saying you quite like the idea of interacting, but it wasn't exactly
303 taking you through the story in a way that was working brilliantly for you. What would be
304 a way to make that interactivity fun but also really drive the story for you?

305
306 NM: The fact that there may be some guidance to fall back on. If you do get confused you
307 could be like 'oh let's go back to that and I'll work again from there. So like, I'd end up
308 getting lost in the website and I'd be like 'oh right, well, OK, um..., ' and just leave it.

309
310 Researcher: This one didn't allow you to go back exactly to where you'd been before.

311
312 NM: No, it was more sort of clicking around. And if there was, say, you could go back to
313 the main menu that was labelled clearly, it would be like 'OK, I was there so let's start from
314 there.' To know that you could fall back to the main page and know exactly where you
315 were.

316
317 HF: Like clear progression, just through it.

318
319 HF: Like, when you know you get to the beginning of DVDs, you can go to 'scene
320 selection'. So it would be like that, you'd have that to go back to, and you could go, 'I'll go
321 to that part and start from there.'

322

323 Researcher: Would you ever watch a DVD in sort of random, like you set your iPod to
324 shuffle, can you set a DVD to shuffle?

325

326 KW: I thought the front page with all the sections looked like a DVD thing, just without the
327 little key, like 'play', scene selection etc.

328

329 HF: What was really, really good was how there were pictures of people and you could
330 click on them and then it zoomed in onto that. So it was like interacting like pictures as well.
331 I thought that was really good.

332

333 NM: It would be quite good if you could click on the characters and it would be like 'this is
334 who they are' and it would be 'oh right, so that's how they connect to it again.'

335

336 Researcher: You obviously like the idea of being able to click on things that you would
337 choose, but do you accept that if you're going to be able to click anywhere, the four of you
338 would click on different things... so if you've got that amount of choice is it possible then
339 for the story to progress in a clear order or does that mean the story must just be pretty
340 broken up you're all going to get a different experience. Do you think there would be a way,
341 no matter where you clicked, that would still be pushing the story onwards? I'm trying to
342 understand whether you think you can have interactivity and a strong storyline.... *(no*
343 *answer)*. Hannah, do you think there was a story?

344

345 HF: What I'd say is I think it could do if the characters were clearer. That was my thing, I
346 thought. At the beginning or whatever, just a quick summary. At the beginning, and
347 possibly if the top menu thing was split up into, like, characters. I don't think it has to be
348 massively clear, just sectioned a bit more rather than like completely free for all.... I don't
349 know.

350

351 Researcher: What do you think KW? Was there a story? Because you spent more time with
352 it.

353

354 KW: Yeah, uhh, I particularly don't think there was, for me. Um, I felt as if I was, I mean,
355 I liked all the links, and I think the words in red signifying everything was really good. It's
356 just I still, I think with all the links, and all the, do you know what I mean, the animation
357 and everything it didn't feel like a story, it was more... 'oh, I'll go on this', it was more like
358 a website.

359

360 HF: More like a game.

361

362 Researcher: GH, how about you? Did it tell a story, do you think?

363

364 GH: Um, Not really. I kind of agree with everyone else. I mean, I think it could if it was a
365 bit more structured. But not too much. It would just turn into...

366

367 HF: I think it could really work- If it was just, like, more structured.

368
369 Researcher: So the picture I'm getting is that you quite like the idea of stories being told in
370 a different way...?
371
372 All: Yeah.
373
374 Researcher: You're not bothered by the idea of words and images and sounds mixed up?
375
376 All: No.
377
378 Researcher: Do you all feel like that? Please say if you don't, because this isn't a question
379 of agreeing with each other, it's a question of me seeing what the range of opinions is, and
380 you might not agree with each other. You like the idea of having links, up to a point?
381
382 HF: Up to a point...
383
384 KW: Yeah.
385
386 Researcher: Up to a point. And you liked the idea of varying structures, but not too free.
387
388 GH: I think you obviously like a small amount of guidance just to push you off in the right
389 direction, and then from there you can go on. You get the confidence to be like, 'Ok this is
390 what I'll do and that's what I'll do.' To be able to form what you need to do.
391
392 Researcher: So, the way that *Amelie* was constructed was too free, was too unstructured,
393 and you think— You spent a bit of time with it because I asked you to, but do you think
394 someone coming to it just for pleasure would have stuck with it, or...?
395
396 HF: If they knew the story really well.
397
398 KW: The graphics were really good. I really enjoyed them.
399
400 HF: Mmm, I did, and the sound effects.
401
402 NM: And the way you could move around the screen.
403
404 Researcher: If the design's good, do you think that's more likely to keep you with it?
405
406 All: Yeah.
407
408 GH: I think it is, definitely.
409
410 KW: Especially for someone who doesn't just like reading, like, pieces, I think it's really
411 good.
412

413 NM: It was a medium between watching a movie and reading a book. It kind of brought
414 them together quite nicely, that's what I did like, the graphics, especially when they faded
415 in and out from each other. There was a section with the bike and the bag, I think, and they
416 were kind of reflecting nicely together. That made me interested in that slide.
417
418 HF: Sometimes there's something you really want to know, or you want to go inside a
419 character, or inside an area of the screen, but you can't because it's, you're just watching it,
420 so it's like you can go further than you could in a movie.
421
422 Researcher: So, do you think that could be a way forward for this kind of thing, that you'd
423 have a fairly structured story, but it offered you other options?
424
425 HF/NM: Yes.
426
427 Researcher: That don't necessarily break the main story up, but if you were interested in a
428 character's history, or past, you could find it...
429
430 HF: I think that works really well.
431
432 Researcher: How would you have felt if it had all been text? Would that have been easier to
433 follow?
434
435 NM: I wouldn't have read it, I'd have sort of skim read...
436
437 Researcher: How much are you prepared to read on a screen?
438
439 HF/KW: Not much.
440
441 NM: It was the animation and graphics that caught... it was nicely split up, amongst the
442 animation and around it, and that made you think 'I'll read that little section, and that little
443 section.' The way it was split up was nice. If it was one big bulk of a paragraph, you're like,
444 ohhh. (*others agreeing*)
445
446 Researcher: I wonder why that is. Why is there that thing about text on screen? We're not
447 so bothered about text in a book, are we? We expect it to be full of words, really.
448
449 HF: Maybe it's because straining the eye.
450
451 KW: I don't know, yeah.
452
453 Researcher: I think we're all the same. I don't like reading long stretches of text...
454
455 HF: It needs to be quite concise. Quite clear, so you understand it, concise as well.
456

457 Researcher: Yeah. So, I think we've got lots of good pints from you... just to sum up, tell
458 me what you expect from a good book, you know, the best novel you've ever read, what do
459 you expect from a really good novel? NM.
460
461 NM: That's a really tough question. Um, I like interesting characters that have good depth
462 to them. A... ever changing plot, not just a continuous line of... also, a bit of suspense, so
463 you don't know what's going to happen at the end. I don't like books that tell you the
464 ending so you're just waiting to get to it.
465
466 Researcher: Is that what pulls you along, not knowing?
467
468 NM: Yeah.
469
470 Researcher: Do you all agree on that?
471
472 All: Yeah.
473
474 Researcher: Ok, so, HF, what about you?
475
476 HF: That was pretty much the same. Something away from the norm, I think. I hate normal
477 stories that you just hear in everyday life, and, they're boring.
478
479 Researcher: So you're looking for something that's unusual, that tells you something you
480 didn't know...?
481
482 HF: Yeah, keeps you, like, on the edge of your seat.
483
484 NM: Especially when you learn things you never knew before.
485
486 HF: Yeah.
487
488 Researcher: KW? What gets you really hooked?
489
490 KW: Um, just a really, I don't know, suspense, and tension, especially 'cos, I don't know,
491 you want to know stuff so you go "I'm gonna read this all the way through to the end." I
492 think it's just satisfying when you come to the conclusion and it's just like, the ending and
493 it's just... nice! (*laughs*). Happy or sad, it's just quite nice just to....
494
495 Researcher: GH, let's come to you.
496
497 GH: Personally I like novels which make you really think about things, that make you think
498 about your own life.
499
500 Researcher: Not an easy sort of, pulpy sort of read...?
501
502 GH: No...

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Researcher: Did this piece give you any of that stuff?

GH: Um, not as much... it's more like watching a film, it's just, it's a story, and you don't really think that much. But it could be made to be like that, you could make it more to make you think.

Researcher: Yeah. How about you KW, did it give you any of things that you said that you wanted?

KW: Uh, I still found it really confusing to find an ending... I think it was never ending. I didn't know where it ended, I didn't know where it started either. I tried, I went back to previous things and I was looking on the film thing (*the film-strip menu*), and I was thinking, 'This picture ends there, so does that mean the start of the other one?'

Researcher: Was that ultimately frustrating?

KW: Yeah, it was, because I prefer, there was just no writing or key again, and I prefer... I don't know, I want to know the basics and I can go on, and understand the story better probably.

Researcher: HF, what about you? Did this give you anything of what you like?

HF: Um, not personally with the story *Amelie*, but if it was a more like, kind of intense story I think that could, because you don't know what you're about to click on. So if it was more like a scary story or something, you don't know what you're about to bring up, so that could be quite...

Researcher: So could you imagine then that this form of storytelling, where things are less structured, where you've got to explore a bit, could become gripping?

HF: Yeah. Because some things are hidden, you can't see everything. You might click on something and it's a complete shock to you. *Amelie's*, I think it's a bit soft for this type of thing, I think you need..

Researcher: Something big and dramatic?

HF: Yeah.

Researcher: NM, did this give you any of the things you started off saying you liked?

NM: I did see the film, but that was a long time ago, and I'm quite confused as to the plot now. I do remember it being quite a good film, but I came out of watching the film confused anyway, so the website hadn't really given me much in that sense. When I watched the film, I didn't know much about the character *Amelie* anyway, so I don't...To

548 be able to understand the story I have to be able to understand the characters, sort of relate
549 with them, so in that sense I didn't get much out of it.
550
551 Researcher: Did any of you get into the characters? Was that part of the problem that you
552 didn't...?
553
554 KW: Yeah...I think it was. I didn't know who any of the characters were...
555
556 NM: Characters are the main point. You need to relate to the characters to be able to
557 understand the story and I couldn't.
558
559 HF: I want what the situation is as well. Like who's in the situation which the characters-
560
561 NM: How's that going to affect people.
562
563 KW: Yeah.
564
565 Researcher: So, that would have been possible to do. That's not impossible in this form is it?
566
567 All: No.
568
569 Researcher: It's just that this particular thing didn't quite do it. That's brilliant. Is there
570 anything else you want to say that wasn't covered in the questionnaire or we haven't
571 touched on? Is there anything else that struck you while you were looking at it?
572
573 NM: I think the website idea would be fantastic for revision purposes. We were saying, we
574 did *The Great Gatsby* - if *The Great Gatsby* was put in that context I'd find it so interesting,
575 because we're going through it, I'd understand where everything was happening. So from
576 that side of the it, the website would be fantastic. If you were trying to revise and you knew
577 the characters already, that would be really useful.
578
579 HF: Yeah, because it places a picture with a quote, so it like puts it in your head. If it was
580 done for revision purposes and you knew the story it would be really interesting.
581
582 NM: I don't think for a first timer using that kind of interactive story, and not knowing the
583 storyline that you're reading, it would be just so confusing and open that you wouldn't
584 understand it at all.
585
586 Researcher: Thank you very much for taking part.
587
588 ENDS

Appendix Seven

Of Day, Of Night

1 21/2/06
2 At book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 AP Think aloud (AP/T)
6
7 Researcher: Please explore, do whatever you want to do...
8
9 AP: My initial thought is I guess there's going to be stuff you can click. If I move the
10 mouse around a couple of things have come up.
11
12 Researcher: Is that a natural activity for you, to explore?
13
14 AP: Absolutely – if I see something like this I assume I've got to move the mouse and
15 something will happen. I do programming and part of what I do is designing graphical user
16 interfaces, instrumentation, knobs, dials switches, that kind of metaphor.
17
18 AP: My initial reaction to this is someone might sit there who's not computer literate and
19 think 'what do I do?'. There's no light words or anything where 'I'll go to that and click'.
20
21 AP: From those first words that came up, 'I'm not sure where my story begins', I see
22 'before' 'realise', halfway', so these are different points in the story. So let's go halfway...
23
24 Researcher: Does that highlighted word register 'hotspot' to you? Is that sufficiently clear?
25
26 AP: Yeah...
27
28 AP: (*watching film*) I find this a bit tedious. It could be because my mind set is I came here
29 expecting to read stuff, because obviously I sit down and I watch films and TV all the time,
30 but I'm thinking I want this to end soon so I can read some words..
31
32 Researcher: You can stop it if you click on it, but it doesn't tell you that. You'd probably
33 find that by clicking around...
34
35 AP: That's probably what I'd do, yes.
36
37 AP: Ok, so again I'd probably click past this. (*more film*)
38
39 Researcher: It's interesting that you'd skip things that are there. Would you go back to things?
40
41 AP: Yes. At the moment, I don't know what this is about, I'm kind of pecking at things
42 trying to figure out what interests me.
43
44 Researcher: You're not exploring the screen, and that's not a criticism of course, but could
45 you tell me why you didn't?
46

47 AP: Ah! Because I'm focused on this little window, and I thought I should pay more
48 attention to what it's saying, but I'm not finding it, to be honest, particularly interesting.
49 You're right, I'm not really going off and looking. The video is my focus. And also the
50 graphic here – I'm used to hot spots on a graphics that point to the fact that you might want
51 to click, and these are slightly hidden. This is a piece of rope, and now I've spotted 'café'
52 up there which I haven't spotted. Maybe it's a bit too subtle – I'm not spotting tings.
53
54 Researcher: And you're very experienced with interactivity. There are some conventions
55 here that you're not getting.
56
57 AP: It's actually quite a small font. Stylistically it's quite nice, but I kind of missed them...
58
59 ENDS

1 21/2/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 BW Think aloud (BW/T)
6
7 BW: You just want me to explore?
8
9 Researcher: Yes. Is it instinctive for you explore a graphic on a screen?
10
11 BW: I think children do it more easily, they're not inhibited at all, they have no fear,
12 whereas an adult might worry if they're doing it wrong.
13
14 BW: It doesn't feel like a book to me at the moment. It's not really like anything I've seen
15 before. Oh, I've quit the whole thing now! I thought it was just quitting that picture.
16
17 Researcher: It wasn't really clear though, was it?
18
19 BW: *(watches opening again)* That's an interesting introduction.
20
21 Researcher: Do you like having a voice? *(voice-over on opening video)*
22
23 BW: Yes... *(clicked on 'halfway')*
24
25 Researcher: Was that obvious to you to click on that?
26
27 BW: Yes, it was indicating....
28
29 BW: Some people would call it art, when you say how do define it.
30
31 Researcher: You'll find as you read more options will appear.
32
33 BW: Ah! Right... I'm just exploring it.
34
35 Researcher: Do you like that feature, or more words appearing as you go on, or does it
36 make you confused?
37
38 BW: No, you feel as if you're developing something. You're intrigued about what's going
39 to happen in a while.
40
41 Researcher: Do you think you would carry on exploring if I weren't here and you'd kindly
42 agreed to participate?
43
44 BW: I'm not sure, is the answer to that. I'm not one of these people who's always clicking
45 around and got to sit at the computer... I'm looking for other things to click on... I think
46 that is the only thing...

47
48 *(pointed out the 'day' hot spot, which is invisible)* That's way off... that's quite tricky isn't
49 it? Ok, I've been here before. It looks like a map to me.
50
51 BW: It seems to be repeating itself *(film clip)*.
52
53 BW: Am I getting out of it what you think I should?
54
55 Researcher: Yes, I'm hoping to learn what people do find works for them or doesn't work.
56
57 BW: *(finds instructions)* I will read this later.
58
59 ENDS

1 21/2/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 JG Think aloud (JG/T)
6
7 *Researcher: Having got that (opening 'map'), have you any idea what to do next?*
8
9 JG: I've got a confession to make... I've worked quite a lot with these stories... I'm a
10 teacher. I've only seen children's ones. I thought there was going to be something else,
11 because the ones I've used with children you can click on characters, speech bubbles will
12 come up... The children love them. It's all visual and they can interact with it.
13
14 JG: I'm not quite sure where it's going from here. There's no obvious icon to click... (*finds*
15 *film clip*)
16
17 *Researcher: What do you think is clickable there? (sees hotspot) OK, so that's conventional?*
18
19 JG: Yes.
20
21 JG: I'm finding this a little bit abstract.
22
23 *Researcher: Not straightforward enough?*
24
25 JG: I think it is, but if you haven't use a computer before...
26
27 JG: It's very different...the beginning is very different. It's rather like a DVD, that just runs
28 and runs...the similarity to that.
29
30 *Researcher: Would you read 'about this work' or would you want to go straight into the story?*
31
32 JG: It depends what it was, or what I got from the title. If I thought it was probably a
33 straightforward fiction text I'd go straight into it, but if I wasn't sure where it was going I
34 might want some sort of clue before I got into it.
35
36 *Researcher: You're looking for places to click and they're not very obvious?*
37
38 JG: I think this is far more difficult than ones I would use at work but then we probably
39 want children to interact anyway so we want it to be more obvious. We call them e-stories.
40 I don't know of any adult, that's why this is different.
41
42 *Researcher: The map is a kind of home page.*
43
44 JG: That's where we almost started isn't it?
45
46 *Researcher: Yes.*
47

48 JG: I think that's quite hard. I think you get there because you explore the map and you get
49 there, but...
50
51 Researcher: You don't mind exploring?
52
53 JG: No, I play.
54
55 JG: I'm interested in the video part of it, how far that's going to go, how far it's going to
56 take, whether its just an introduction. I think the mixed media is good. From a child's
57 perspective that's what they're familiar with, that's their world. Little ones are far more
58 used to interactive material than a straight book.
59
60 Researcher: You've got the idea of the interface haven't you?
61
62 JG: Yes.
63
64 ENDS

1 21/2/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 JL Think aloud (JL/T)
6
7 Researcher: Can you describe what you're seeing?
8
9 JL: Well it's a map.... With places on it... It might be a sort of schematic for the story. I can
10 probably click and go somewhere.
11
12 Researcher: Would you typically want to read the blurb and the instructions before starting
13 or is it your instinct to just get going?
14
15 JL: Ummm, I think I'd try and get going... (*exploring the map*)
16
17 Researcher: Are you in book mode...?
18
19 JL: I think I'm in a different mode. I know I've got to, yeah I'm looking for a way into the
20 story. But I'm curious that, now I've realised that, I'm wondering what happens!
21
22 Researcher: (*watching film and listening*) Do you assume that this is part of the narrative?
23
24 JL: Well I assume it's telling me something about the character. At the moment, nothing
25 more than that.
26
27 Researcher: Now the film's ended, do you have a sense of where to go next?
28
29 JL: Well, I'm going to see what that is... I'm curious about that... (*words popping up*). It
30 seems to be doing a kind of resumé of the story. Right, it's repeating... (*clicked ? We*
31 *couldn't fathom it!*)
32
33 JL: (*Opening film again...*) (*Back to map*) There's more of those at the top now... One is
34 kind of well, I've got to work for it, and there's work in the sense of labour and in the sense
35 of fulfilling..
36
37 JL: Yes, and wanting to be able to decode it really, unravel it...
38
39 ENDS

1 21/2/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 MP Think aloud (MP/T)
6
7 MP: (*Watching screen after opening film and titles*) Well, I'm waiting for something else
8 to happen. It doesn't convey anything to me at the moment.
9
10 Researcher: Well, I might as well say, you have to make it happen, you have to interact with it.
11
12 MP: You just click somewhere do you?
13
14 Researcher: Yes, you have to move around the piece and find the different chunk of the
15 story, bits of film, text...
16
17 MP: Oh I see. You can move around...?
18
19 Researcher: Is the idea of hotspots on a graphic what you're used to?
20
21 MP: Umm, yes, a bit like a DVD...
22
23 Researcher: Have you stopped thinking of it as a book now?
24
25 MP: Oh, I didn't have a clear idea, that's why it was interesting to me to look... You have
26 to keep clicking?
27
28 Researcher: Yes, a bit like turning the page.
29
30 MP: I find this quite difficult, these letters moving about.
31
32 MP: You can increase the sound?
33
34 Researcher: Through your computer, yes.
35
36 Researcher: (*looking around the map*) And you'll find that more will appear as you read,
37 more chapters if you like.
38
39 Researcher: Is your instinct to watch it and listen to everything?
40
41 MP: (*watching and listening to film*) Yes, I mean at the moment it just goes from one thing
42 to another. Yeah, I would tend to take more time. The fact that you have to read from the
43 computer doesn't make it interesting anyway, because it's work... if people are working on
44 the computer all day... because I'm working full time on a computer, I won't switch it on
45 in the evening. I can't say I'm really captivated by it, I'd much rather read a book.
46

47 Researcher: Do you like the idea of book bringing in other media, sound, graphics?
48
49 MP: Umm, not really, and even the sound doesn't appeal to me much because a book is just
50 totally engrossing.
51
52 Researcher: So, it's not a book for you – is this more like a film then?
53
54 MP: It's not a film because a film you can get engrossed as well...
55
56 ENDS

1 21/2/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 RC think aloud (RC/T)
6
7 (*Watching screen after opening film and titles*)
8 Researcher: It's really just a question of having a wander and seeing what you find.
9
10 RC: So you wander in and amongst things like... and click...
11
12 RC: I haven't really looked at anything like this, I'm really just used to text. I'm used to
13 clicking on words...
14
15 Researcher: This one is much more visual than some.
16
17 RC: Presumably you go through and find links like that one...? Do you actually wait until
18 this film is fully finished?
19
20 Researcher: Yes or you can click out of it by clicking on it and go back to the 'home page' map.
21
22 RC: But there's no specific way to go through it. There's no beginning, well I suppose
23 'before' is the beginning... I presume when you get to 'halfway'...
24
25 Researcher: You could start there or there. You've got a lot of choice, but it's a variable
26 structure.
27 RC: I get very impatient.
28
29 (*showed her the 'day' link to map page*)
30
31 RC: Oh that's the link to the whole thing (*blurb, instructions*).
32
33 Researcher: Are you in book mode anymore, or maybe you weren't to begin with?
34
35 RC: I thought I could imagine what it was going to be. From... I know what hypertext is
36 and I gathered it was going to be almost like one of those old fashioned 'Fighting Fantasy'
37 book in a different media. You choose your own path. I think there are these sort of things
38 around, for children... it's very similar to what is around except it's more literary rather
39 than children's stories and games. Maybe to appeal ore to the middle aged person rather
40 than teenagers and children. Or something that's encouraging children to read.
41
42 ENDS

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....Master Data.....

The hypertext piece you read: *Of Day, Of Night* (O/Q)

6 respondents

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

Yes N= 6 No n= 0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut) n=0

Online games n=0

PC games n=1

email and browsing/ information seeking n=5

Shopping n=3

Other.... Work, educational use.

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being lost in a book?

Yes n=6 No n=0

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like n=5

A kind of story you haven't tried before n=5

An author you already like n=5

An author you have never tried before n=5

Recommendation from a friend n=6

Review in the press or media n=5

Anything else? Biographies, free copies through work

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language n=5

Familiar everyday language n=2

Interesting characters n=5

Emotional moments n=5

Exciting action n=3

Surprise n=4

Tension n=4

Satisfying conclusion n=3

Anything else? Humour, plot twists, enlightenment, strong storyline

4 Do you prefer

An easy, light read n=0

A deep, heavy read n=2

Both n=3 (depends on mood)

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)

Yes n=0 No n=3 Don't mind n=3

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

Yes n=5 No n=1

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

Yes n=6 No n=0

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot n=1

Uninteresting plot n=5

Too familiar storyline n=1

Uneventful n=3

Dull characters n=3

Poor writing n=4

I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page n=0

Anything else? Too much violence; my mood.

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

Yes n=0 No n=1 Don't mind n=5

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

Yes n=1 No n=1 Don't mind n=4

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?

No problem n=1

Physically uncomfortable n=1

Relaxing n=0

Hurts my eyes n=0

Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed n=5

2 Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?

Small n=2 Large n=1 Either n=3

3 Was the navigation system easy to learn?

Yes n=4 No n=2

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

6 *Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

7 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

8 *Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?*

Yes n=1 No n=5

9 *Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?*

Yes n=2 No n=0 Irritated n=4

10 *Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?*

Yes n=0 No n=6

11 *Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?*

Yes n=1 No n=3 No menus offered n=2

12 *Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

13 *Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?*

Yes n=1 No n=4 N/A n=1

14 *Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

15 *Did the multimedia elements (if present) aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?*

Aid n=1 Disrupt n=1 Neutral n=4

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 *Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)*

Reading a book n=1

Watching a film n=1

Playing a game n=3

Solving a puzzle n=4
Something else? No hypertext.

2 *What about the hypertext carried you along?*

Artistic/ appealing language n=0

Interesting characters n=0

Emotional moments n=1

Exciting action n=0

Surprise n=1

Tension n=0

Satisfying conclusion n=0

Nothing n=3

Anything else I've forgotten? Novelty; the look and feel of it encouraged exploration.

3 *Were any of the following a problem for you?*

Dull writing n=1

Uninteresting characters n=2

Over-complex plot n=0 (plot reasonably interesting)

Confusing plot n=2

No excitement n=3

No sense of an ending n=4

Anything else that you didn't like? Wanted to know more and did not know how to get there; pointless; interface non-functional –a barrier; no plot;

4 *Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?*

Yes n=3 No n=3

5 *Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?*

Yes n=1 **No n=2 Disrupted reading n=2**

6 *How did you select links?*

Just clicked on any interesting word n=3

Word that seemed to signify something n=3

Animated image n=0

Icon n=1

Attempting to follow the story n=4

At random n=1

Any other factor? Clicked on everything – often nothing happened.....

7 *Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?*

Yes n=2 **No n=4**

8 *Did you re-read any sections?*

Yes n=5 No n=0

9 *If 'yes' to question 8, was that: intentional n=0 accidental n=1 **both n=4***

10 *If you did re-read sections was that:*

interesting n=1

exciting n=0

annoying n=3

frustrating n=4

11 *Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?*

Yes n=1 No n=5

12 *Did you feel satisfied with the ending?*

Yes n=1 (plus comment 'yes-ish') No n=3 (includes comment 'didn't get there')

13 *Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?*

Yes n=1 ('yes-ish') No n=5

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

Yes n=4 No n=2

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium n=3

Great story n=0

Satisfying experience n=0

Anything else? Yes, if it were better constructed; to see if different hypertext would be better.

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring n=1

Confusing n=1

Unsatisfying story n=1

Did not operate easily n=2

Anything else?

1 21/3/06
2 book group meeting house
3
4 *Of Day, Of Night*
5 **Discussion (O1/D)**
6 Present: JL, BW, JG, RC
7
8 Researcher: Your questionnaires were great and I got some very clear ideas. The things that
9 came up that you all had in common, and that includes AP and MP who aren't here, were
10 very interesting. You all said that you are pretty open minded in terms of what you are
11 prepared to read, you're all open to challenge, that you didn't mind difficult plots and you
12 were quite prepared to have a go at something unconventional. I guess really you wouldn't
13 have taken part if you weren't in that category, I suppose... The other thing that was very
14 important was that you all wanted to feel engrossed in the story: it might be that people who
15 are reading fiction seek that particular pleasure. How important was it that you weren't
16 reading a physical book, that you were sitting at a laptop or computer?
17
18 JL: You used the word reading and I felt that seemed an odd word to use in a way, because
19 I kind of felt that it was more to do with having an object to explore, and certainly by the
20 end that was what it felt like.
21
22 Researcher: Can you think of better term for what it was I presented you with? I've used the
23 term reading and I've used the term hypertext or interactive novel, partly because no one
24 has come up with anything better. In the questionnaire I asked you was it like reading a
25 book, solving a puzzle, playing a game or what? Is there anything that would describe it?
26
27 JL: I said yes to all of those.
28
29 JG: I would have called it a en-story. That would be the nearest I could get to it.
30
31 Researcher: If I just go back to that last question how did it feel not to have a book in your
32 hand? Were you still in book mode?
33
34 JG: Well, I would read parts of newspapers on screen anyhow so reading a book is a sort of
35 extension of that. I spend a lot of time looking at a screen anyhow, so I'm quite easy with
36 that.
37
38 RC: Reading a screen, I'm quite used to doing that, but I don't think you have the same
39 enjoyment/relaxation as sitting down and curled up with a book.
40
41 Researcher: Is that because of the work association?
42
43 RC: Not necessarily, I think it's more the fact that you can't very easily take it to bed, you
44 can't sit down comfortably in your chair like you do with a book. It just seemed to be not
45 quite a relaxation. Perhaps if the content had been a bit more enthralling it might have been
46 better, but I didn't really enjoy the content very much. It didn't engage me.

47 JL: You can't exactly snuggle down in bed with your laptop can you?
48
49 BW: I haven't got a laptop so I was sitting in quite an upright chair, so it was more like an
50 experiment.
51
52 Researcher: So was there that kind of interest?
53
54 BW: Yes, it was. It was a novel idea, an experiment and I was quite keen to have a go. For
55 me it was nothing like a book experience.
56
57 Researcher: Yes, it's very hard for me to know how to present it. I wondered whether I
58 should present it as 'unlike anything you've ever seen before', but it is hard to know how to
59 describe what it is really. I looked at it again last night and I had that same sensation of not
60 being quite sure somehow how to feel about it.
61
62 JL: About content?
63
64 Researcher: All of it, because part of what I think my research is about is trying to see
65 where the material, physical form and the content mesh, because I think there's a strong
66 relationship between the two.
67
68 BW: I had a great feeling of.... Wanting to read it in order, and of course it's not like that
69 really. I was quite anxious to get 'before'. I was always looking for an order.
70
71 JL: I heard you use that word you said, 'anxious' and I felt anxious...
72
73 BW: I always had the feeling I was missing something too...
74
75 JL: Yes.
76
77 JG: The point that worried me was there wasn't a clear menu at the beginning, and although
78 I didn't necessarily want to read it in order I wanted to be able to make my own choices
79 from the start. I wanted to be able to access the menu which wasn't immediately there from
80 the start...
81
82 Researcher: The menu appeared didn't it, as you read through it and new things popped up.
83
84 JG: Yes but I wanted that so I could make my own choices from the start – it's like being in
85 charge isn't it? You can be in charge of a book – if you want to click to the end of a book
86 you can, and you make that choice. I had to get quite into that and access the menu and see
87 where that was going to take me before I could that sort of choice.
88
89 Researcher: So would you rather have a straightforward menu page...?
90
91 JG: I'd have liked the menu at the beginning, and then even if I wanted to hop all round I
92 was in charge of hopping, I'd have been in control.

93
94 RC: I found it very frustrating that it was all hidden: I wanted to actually go in and see it. I
95 don't know if it was supposed to but it seemed that you went in and read it or watched it or
96 whatever you did, and then it seemed to be repeated again. I'm not quite sure, and then I
97 had to fiddle to find out how to get back because that wasn't clear. You had to get back
98 each time. Some parts, I don't know if they were supposed to be got into or not, but I
99 couldn't actually get into...
100
101 JG: There was one I couldn't get out of... I tried it again and I still couldn't get out of
102 it.
103
104 Researcher: Was that your experience BW as well, that you got stuck?
105
106 BW: I don't remember getting stuck...I did end up sort of going back and getting
107 frustrated.
108
109 Researcher: I wonder if the author was intentionally making it more mysterious...I can
110 imagine the author thinking it would be very clever to hide things, and things won't appear
111 until they've read a bit. And I can imagine the author's intention being 'this will be quite
112 intriguing for the reader, they'll like this feeling', but actually what you're saying is, given an
113 element of control, you want complete control, you don't want to have a sense of it's there but
114 it's not really there. It sounds as if it frustrated you more than offered you intrigue, is that right?
115
116 All: Yes.
117
118 JG: I think it's the fact that, if you had the choice of 'before' and 'river', and you had the
119 three of them on the screen and you could see them all at the same time, I think it would far
120 less frustrating. That fact that you are desperately trying to find these things...
121
122 JL: It's a kind of effort and reward balance, whether the reward amounts to the effort. I
123 think all of us, we felt that it was bit lop-sided.
124
125 JG: You wanted that intrigue there, but you were led along where she wanted you to go,
126 you wanted to create your own intrigue which you do when you become engrossed in a
127 book.
128
129 Researcher: And yet a book completely leads you where the author wants you to go,
130 because you can't choose – well you could choose to not read certain chapters, I suppose
131 you could – but actually we don't question it with a book, do we, because we're not
132 actually offered any unusual control.
133
134 JG: But a book's only one...medium's not quite the word. But you had sound, and you had
135 pictures, text as well that was creating the mood. I thought the sound, for me, particularly
136 created the mood.
137

138 Researcher: I'm just interested in this idea of control. What I'm hearing is this author has
 139 created something which is mysterious to the point of 'if I wasn't doing this for Jim I'd
 140 probably put it down'. Would you have carried on?
 141
 142 JL: I was determined, I knew that we were going to go from 'day' into 'night', and I was
 143 determined-
 144
 145 JG: So was I, because I was determined to find it all, and after about a quarter of an hour I
 146 felt I'd sort of cracked the way she was approaching it and I could explore it all. But it was
 147 almost as if you had to find the way in, sort of find all of those hyperlinks, and when I got
 148 through that I felt I could explore it.
 149
 150 Researcher: Was there a pleasure in that?
 151
 152 JG: Yes because I like puzzles!
 153
 154 JL: Very marginal, effort to reward, it was very marginal.
 155
 156 Researcher: For you two (*BW and RC*), not pleasurable, having to fathom it out?
 157
 158 RC: I actually got a piece of paper and a pen and wrote down things. I made notes so I
 159 could remember where I'd been. I couldn't remember where I'd been...
 160
 161 JG: Because of the danger of repeating.
 162
 163 RC: Yes, and once I did I thought 'right, I'll write down'-
 164
 165 BW: Did it have an ending really?
 166
 167 RC: No.
 168
 169 JG: I was disappointed by 'night' because I thought it would be more intriguing – there was
 170 far less there...
 171
 172 BW: It was quite an effort to get there, wasn't it?
 173
 174 Researcher: If that author wants to build an audience maybe she has to make it more
 175 rewarding and less work. Do you think it's too much work for you, or is it that the work
 176 involved wasn't giving you enough back, as JL's suggesting?
 177
 178 JG: I think when you got into the objects and you read about the objects and reflected on
 179 those I found that the most satisfying. I went back a second time and that was the best bit
 180 for me at the end.
 181
 182 JL: I think it's quite interesting that it's about... a story about a story, and exploration... I
 183 found that quite satisfying.

184
185 JG: I thought the little video clips were she was walking down the street, and wondering
186 what was going to come from those, I found that quite exciting. That's what it has over a
187 book, because you create your own visions in your mind and you've got the stimulus of the
188 actual visions on the screen.
189
190 JL: I thought in terms of form it was quite interesting because it tells stories within a
191 story...she's exploring and we're exploring. I do think it has a beauty to it...quite subtle. I
192 got the impression that she has worked really hard.
193
194 BW: Where would we access more of this?
195
196 Researcher: I'll certainly send you some links for others that are online.... Could I ask you
197 about your orientation? You've talked a bit about feeling frustrated and trying to find your
198 way around this thing that isn't a book, whatever we're going to call it... but what about
199 your orientation within the *story*, because one of the things I've asked people is 'did you
200 know where you were in the book?', i.e. did you know what page you were on and how far
201 you'd got through the book? But the other question connected to that is 'did you know
202 where you were in the story?' In a print book you'd know exactly where you were in the
203 book by how many pages you'd read, but with this, from the information in the
204 questionnaires, disorientation in the story was coming out for most people.
205
206 BW: I don't think, apart from the fact you were trying to get into 'of night', so you knew
207 there was a second part that you were aiming at...no.
208
209 JG: You had to do it the first time over, and you had to sort of explore the ingredients, and
210 it was only the second time that you could mix it all together, and then when you mixed it
211 all together that's when you got your orientation.
212
213 Researcher: So it wasn't really like reading in a line then, is what you're saying... it was
214 like something that you were constructing.
215
216 JG: You have a knowledge of what's there and then you can mix it and orientate how you
217 want to do it.
218
219 BW: Yes, like all the things, like the keys you hang up, you think well next time I'll do it a
220 different way and see if something else happens.
221
222 Researcher: Yes, I've done that myself, tried to hang them differently to see if I get
223 different dreams at the end...
224
225 JL: Does it?
226
227 Researcher: I couldn't work it out!
228
229 JL: I tried it three times over and it does still come out the same...

230
231 Researcher: How about you, RC, did you feel you knew where you were in the sort of
232 unfolding story?
233
234 RC: Yes, sort of, I mean... but I just, I don't think I was very engaged with it. I don't know
235 if it was my mood or whether it was the time of morning I was watching it... I didn't feel
236 very engaged and very satisfied with it all. And I just sort of, you didn't quite know
237 when you were going to get to the end, and that was what I found a bit frustrating. I like to
238 know.
239
240 Researcher: So would JG's idea of a menu of some kind at the start that showed you what
241 there was, then you'd know how much you'd seen and how much there was to see, would
242 that give you a sense of place, orientation?
243
244 RC: Yes, and that map, if it was onscreen instead of hidden in the screen, that would have
245 been more satisfactory.
246
247 Researcher: Had it on one part of the screen all the time?
248
249 RC: Yes.
250
251 Researcher: So you could constantly refer to it?
252
253 RC: Yes.
254
255 Researcher: So do you think these kinds of pieces need to take on board some of these
256 kinds of elements that you wouldn't normally need in a book? Is that the way it is heading?
257
258 JL: I think the whole thing was about teasing out, teasing the story out of the material,
259 wasn't it? So...
260
261 JG: If you were reading a non-fiction book you'd go first to the contents page wouldn't you,
262 and then you'd explore that, get the feel of that and know where you wanted to go. So it's
263 only exactly the same as that... which bits interest you...
264
265 JL: I suppose it depends how much you want to be teased by it, doesn't it?
266
267 Researcher: Most of you said you didn't get a sense of an ending – so, was there an ending?
268
269 JL: I decided... I don't think there was an ending, but I don't think I'd call it a story. To me
270 it was like one single character development...
271
272 JG: And you almost took that on board, and then you take that on board for yourself and
273 sort of go on from there. So I think she sort of gave you a passage of thought that you take
274 on forward and sort of relate it to yourself, develop it from there.
275

276 JL: But I guess it would make a short story in a way, it was quite slight. I find it a little bit
277 hard to call it a story... one single character... It felt more like a short story.
278

279 BW: But, if you think about the book we've just read (*Saturday* by Ian McKewan) ... I
280 know there are a lot of characters...it gives you one a day. We're comparing it with
281 conventional books all the time, but we shouldn't, should we?
282

283 JL: The quality of the writing was sufficient to carry you along, but I'm not sure it was a
284 major element.
285

286 JG: I thought the best bit of writing was the idea of why she did it, there was a sort of
287 introduction to it... that for me was the most intriguing bit. Once I got there and read that,
288 then I was stimulated to go on.
289

290 Researcher: Some people have said that when they choose a book to read they locate it on a
291 shelf in a bookshop amongst other books, genres or authors, they know what sort of thing
292 they're going to get... would that be a factor you, that it's out of anything you've known
293 before, so it sort of throws you...?
294

295 JG: For me that would make it more interesting...
296

297 BW: Yes-
298

299 Researcher: I was just wondering, because BW said we shouldn't compare it to conventional
300 books, but you can't help it really. So I'm wondering how much your reaction to this is affected
301 by what you already know you enjoy and what you've got used to reading.
302

303 BW: It's a bit like art installations I've seen. I remember going to the Whitechapel Gallery
304 and, there was no text but it was tape recording and you had to put on headphones and this
305 lady was telling you where you had to go for a walk. And it reminded me a bit of that – once
306 you went for a walk and you arrived somewhere she'd tell you a little snippet about the
307 object you were standing in front of. That would have been called an art installation I
308 think.
309

310 Researcher: Has this pushed you too far?
311

312 JL: I don't think so, but I keep coming back to this effort and reward because I'm a bit
313 sceptical about the reward. I thought it was very beautiful actually and quite interesting, but
314 I didn't think it was a whole story.
315

316 Researcher: So actually, if I'm understanding this, I don't want to put words in your
317 mouths – it's almost as if she could have done more with it. Once you'd got used to how it
318 was going to work, and the menus and the interface, you could have done with more drama
319 then.
320

321 All: Yes.
322

323 JL: It could have been richer.
324
325 JG: The clips and the places she went to, I think she could have done a lot more..
326
327 BW: Yes...
328
329 JL: I can see that you have to focus right in, in order to make it work...
330
331 JG: That's why the objects and the introduction were the best bit of her writing because
332 that's where her reflection began to come in.
333
334 JL: But if there were other characters for instance... maybe there are other multi-character
335 stories out there...
336
337 Researcher: Yes, there are.... One of the things the academic literature says about
338 interactive fiction is that it allows you to think in an associative way, which is more human
339 apparently. We don't think in a linear way really, so novels are really very artificial, the
340 idea that one thing happens after another and they've all got a cause and effect relationship,
341 it's not real. At least this is one argument. Therefore interactive fiction should be wonderful,
342 because it allows you to click here there and everywhere, follow your interest, and create
343 your own story. Did you feel that you were able to create your own story with this, that you
344 were able to follow your own personal interests.
345
346 JL: No. But that is the big thing, and it comes back to the control issue, because it was more
347 a question of trying to tease out what *she* was trying to put across. And that was sometimes
348 a lot of pleasure because of that.
349
350 Researcher: Are you all agreeing with that, that you didn't feel like you had choices really?
351
352 Others: Yes.
353
354 JL: Whereas if you could actually, if it was clever enough to allow you to invent your own
355 story or follow it in an associative way, that's a different thing.
356
357 BW: It would be very difficult for someone to make that but it would be very satisfying,
358 wouldn't it?
359
360 JG: An analogy would be you had an all day ticket on the London underground, you had a
361 menu and you had a map, and you could go off on any of the lines and you could explore
362 wherever you wanted to...
363
364 Researcher: The book that RC's lent me, which has been a hypertext, is based on the
365 Tube... Do you think that the idea of having choice is inherently going against narrative?
366

367 BW: It's just reminding me for some reason of, stories never used to be written down
368 anyway, did they? It is still is in some cultures, it's just the spoken word, so then you would
369 create your own story.
370
371 JG: I don't agree with the premise to start with, that the author would lead you along in a
372 novel and almost create your train of thought...I don't think you do because stories can be
373 told in hundreds of different ways, because if you take oral storytelling you could take say
374 the story of *Little Red Riding Hood*, if we all told that story we'd all tell it totally differently,
375 but basically it would have the same theme.
376
377 JL: Is that the same as what Jim is talking about?
378
379 JG: Partly. But you could go off at a tangent if you wanted to... you've got more choice
380 here, but you could still do that with a story if you're telling it orally.
381
382 Researcher: You could argue that interactive fiction has always existed, that's what you're
383 saying?
384
385 JG: There's greater scope here because you can go off in literally any direction, can't
386 you?
387
388 JL: So potentially that could be a weak link, couldn't it? Certainly in this case, when you
389 get repetitions, when you repeat links when you don't really want to, that's a frustration...
390 a redundancy of effort.
391
392 Researcher: An author could intentionally build that in. I'm not saying this one did, but if
393 you see a film like *Run Lola Run* you get repetition of the main story but with differences
394 each time. An author could build that repetition in...
395
396 JL: That's true... slightly more knowledge each time
397
398 RC: I think the frustration with this was, for me anyway, that you weren't actually
399 progressing though it, and you were always going back all the time, you had to go back. If
400 you'd actually clicked on the links and they'd led you back to that page, that would have
401 been fine, but you always had to go down to the bottom right hand corner to get back, and I
402 think that was more of a frustration.
403
404 Researcher: So almost metaphorically you were going there, that far, and then had to go
405 back again...?
406
407 RC: Yes. If you'd actually gone on and gone through, and each time it had taken you
408 through and back again, I think that would have been a lot more satisfying.
409
410 Researcher: The problems that these pieces raise are very subtle, because we want to feel
411 that we're going like that (forward, linearly), we want to feel we're under the author's

412 guidance, but we also want control. We're slightly caught by our expectations of what
413 we've read before, but we're also hoping for something new and exciting.
414

415 JG: With this one it was an imbalance... it was *Of Day, Of Night*, but it was *Of Day*
416 three-quarters and *Of Night* one quarter. I don't like that title because it suggests balance...
417 or because day didn't develop into night...
418

419 JL: So you had a sense of dissatisfaction?
420

421 JG: I wanted more night. I thought it was going to build up to something, I thought night
422 was going to be the most exciting bit, I thought there was going to be intrigue, a sort of
423 flow-through and there wasn't a flow through...
424

425 Researcher: I asked you all if you'd be able to summarise the story to a friend, and you said
426 'no, not really', but actually, hearing you talk I think you are talking about a story... you
427 have got hold of a story somehow.
428

429 JL: It's a story, but actually it's a single character development. It's like a story.
430

431 Researcher: Can we allow it as a story, a short story? Not a novel.
432

433 JL: Yes, a short story...
434

435 BW: Very simple...
436

437 Researcher: The story was simple but the form of the story was complicated.... Could we
438 call it a plot?
439

440 JL: That's a very good question...
441

442 JG: That's an intriguing question. In academic terms, the way we teach plot, no...
443

444 Researcher: What do you tell your students a plot is?
445

446 JL: It's linked in a line...
447

448 Researcher: And designed by the author, whereas this gives you many choices of the way
449 you travel through the story. It would be interesting to see if we did things in different orders. I
450 wonder if you did all read it in the same order? You wouldn't have done, would you?
451

452 JL: I think there was a plot actually, it's just... not as we know it! I think that's the whole
453 thing. I think there is an intended development of the character - she becomes able to
454 dream again. That just about makes a story...
455

456 BW: Just, yes...
457

458 JG: But it's not a linear plot that you can just go straight through...

459
460 JL: I agree there's not a linear plot, but there is a plot idea, isn't there? There is a cause and
461 effect.
462
463 JG: There is. And she does make you think, she does make you reflect. There is a lot there
464 that you can reflect your own ideas through it, in the way that an author, you know you
465 create your imagery and your own reflection when you're reading a novel, you create your
466 own environment and your own scenes, and she very much allows you to do that. And I
467 was getting a lot of reflection by the end of it, with what she did and what would happen,
468 and I was quite stimulated after my sort of day, my sort of life, so she leaves you with
469 wanting to go further.
470
471 JL: It was quite successful in that way, yes.
472
473 Researcher: I feel it's almost like a piece of music you have to hear two or three times
474 before you pick up all the nuances.... Just to finish, did you feel, in comparison to a book,
475 did you have any sense of it being an aesthetic, enjoyable experience? Did it have any of
476 the same characteristics of why you read novels or fiction?
477
478 JL: Yes, aesthetically, but it wasn't to do with the words so much...I didn't think the words
479 were that great.
480
481 JG: The puzzle element, because that was a challenge... the videos because you got a
482 visual picture rather than creating your own, so aesthetically that was very pleasing. I
483 agree with JL, I don't think the actual words were very exciting, not desperately well
484 structured.
485
486 BW: Well I felt it was stimulating, a novel experience. I enjoyed the music and the visual
487 scenes, I didn't really get a lot from the text. The introduction explained a few things, but I
488 didn't think much of the actual quality of the text. Quite frustrating.
489
490 RC: Yes, I found it very frustrating. I enjoyed the visual experience. But... I couldn't
491 compare it with a book at all in terms of engagement or involvement. I found it very
492 frustrating the way it was structured. I think it could have been done a lot better – perhaps a
493 different one I would find a lot better or more satisfying, and I wouldn't class it as piece of
494 literature because there weren't that many words. It's multimedia... a multimedia
495 experience.
496
497 JL: It wasn't as rich as a book...
498
499 JG: I'd like to look at another one – I think it's hard to make a judgement until I've seen
500 more.
501
502 Researcher: Thank you all ever so much – I really appreciate your time.
503
504 ENDS

1 24/3/06
2 by telephone
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 discussion (O2/D)
6 Present: MP
7
8
9 Researcher: Thanks ever so much for filling in the questionnaire. Overall, could just you
10 tell me whether you enjoyed the piece?
11
12 MP: I didn't.
13
14 Researcher: No, I got the impression obviously from your answers. What in particular
15 stands out in your mind as being the problem with the piece?
16
17 MP: I found it irritating. In some ways it's a bit, it pushed you to go further and try longer –
18 the more you found the more appeared... but I just got frustrated. I spent about 45 minutes,
19 and I got fed up.
20
21 Researcher: Do you think it would take you about that long if you were reading a novel that
22 you ultimately didn't like? Would you give it about that same amount of time, do you think?
23
24 MP: I might give it a bit longer...
25
26 Researcher: You wouldn't get the sense of frustration maybe, so much?
27
28 MP: No.
29
30 Researcher: You said in your questionnaire that the navigation system wasn't very easy to
31 use, and you said it wasn't obvious where links were, you couldn't move in any direction as
32 you wanted. Do you think if those technical issues could have been hammered out it would
33 have been less frustrating?
34
35 MP: Yes, probably.
36
37 Researcher: What do you think that author might have done? Did you have any, as you
38 were going through, did you have any thoughts about what would have been better for you?
39
40 MP: Well, it's just that I found it frustrating that it was so difficult to make the story move
41 forward.
42
43 Researcher: So, in fact, in terms of using the computer interface, maybe you got used to that,
44 but what really killed you off was the lack of the story developing, have I understood you?
45
46 MP: Yes.
47

48 Researcher: So, what was going on as you were reading it, what were you hoping was
49 going to happen each time you clicked on a link or followed a page?
50

51 MP: Oh, I just wanted to learn more about her, you know, where she came from and where
52 she was going to, and I didn't find it very easy by picking up the objects which didn't seem
53 to be very relevant.
54

55 Researcher: Did you initially find yourself interested in the character?
56

57 MP: Yes, I wanted to know where had she been and where would she go.
58

59 Researcher: And in fact, I've looked through it a few times myself now, and I had the same
60 feeling as you that actually there was some interest in it, and it was working up to a point
61 and then you felt that the story didn't take off somehow. Could you imagine for the future a
62 piece like this that combines images with words and a certain amount of gameplaying?
63 Could you imagine it working if the author for example had developed the story more?
64 Would you have liked it, do you think, or would you be resistant to reading a piece-?
65

66 MP: Well, I personally, as I told you about, work at a computer, and I don't want to have to
67 spend more time on it than I have to. I certainly wouldn't want to read a book on a
68 computer. But I'm sure there are improvements you could make to help you go forward,
69 rather than do that frustrating thing... I don't like to give up, but I just felt I was getting
70 nowhere...
71

72 Researcher: What did you think about the idea of the map as sort of way of deciding where
73 to go in the story?
74

75 MP: Oh, not a bad idea.
76

77 Researcher: And what about the idea of parts of the map becoming visible the more you
78 read? Because that was one of the sort of techniques, wasn't it?
79

80 MP: Oh, well that encouraged you to keep going...
81

82 Researcher: Yeah, to keep reading. In the questionnaire, one or two of the answers didn't
83 come out very clearly what you thought – I don't whether my printer didn't work very
84 well.... I asked you which of the following were a problem for you, and the answers were
85 'confusing plot, no excitement, no sense of an ending'. I'm not sure which one you chose
86 from those – do you remember, offhand?
87

88 MP: I obviously didn't get to the end, so that didn't...
89

90 Researcher: Actually, did you feel that you stopped before you found the ending or did you
91 feel you'd done all you could do with it and there wasn't going to be an ending?
92

93 MP: No, I would say I did all I was prepared to do, you know, and I was not getting very
94 much further and I just got fed up with it.
95
96 Researcher: So, on the question did you enjoy the story structure, i.e. the plot, the answer to
97 that would be 'no', I guess, wouldn't it?
98
99 MP: No.
100
101 Researcher: OK. You said that you re-read some sections?
102
103 MP: Only those bits that lighted up, and most of the time I had already seen it and it was
104 boring to have it, to look at it again.
105
106 Researcher: Yes. So that was, were you revisiting places accidentally, thinking that there
107 might be something new there but actually it was just the same?
108
109 MP: No, I couldn't remember whether I'd seen it or not.
110
111 Researcher: And that's different from when you read a book, isn't it? You do know where
112 you've been when you read a book.
113
114 MP: Yes.
115
116 Researcher: You do forget things when you read a large novel, but you tend to sort of know
117 where you've been and you go back and have another look, if you want to. Um, you said
118 that you couldn't summarise the story to a friend – is that because you felt there really
119 wasn't a story?
120
121 MP: Well, I didn't get the story, because I got fed up and stopped! I'm not saying there
122 wasn't a story, but I didn't get to it.
123
124 Researcher: And that's what I'm interested in finding out, because if you got fed up before
125 you discovered the story, then in a way the writer has failed because she hasn't kept your
126 interest long enough. Just to summarise then – and I'm conscious of time and I don't want
127 to take up your Saturday morning – the main problems for you were that the story didn't
128 develop, but if the story had developed then you would have been reasonably interested to
129 carry on with it in terms of the way it operated.
130
131 MP: Yes...
132
133 Researcher: It wasn't that so much, it was the fact that the story didn't seem to develop in a
134 dramatic way. It's very interesting, you might just want to know what the others said on
135 Tuesday night –
136
137 MP: Yes...
138

139 Researcher: Very similar to what you're saying: those that didn't like it so much would
140 have gone along with it a bit longer in terms of playing with, it if you like, if there'd been
141 more drama. And those that did like it, who were quite keen on the idea of exploring ad
142 wandering around and not being quite sure where they were, they quite liked that, also said
143 that it didn't really come to any kind of climax as a story. So I think that's very interesting:
144 we've got at the root at the problem, with this particular piece – it's very different from
145 some of the other pieces – she's got a very good technical grasp but actually didn't tell a
146 very exciting story...
147
148 MP: Yes, yes....
149
150 Researcher: Is there anything else? We're only talking about this one piece, and I'm very
151 grateful for the time you've put in. But is there anything else you feel burning to tell me about
152 that would help me to understand your reactions to it? I'm interested in anything really that
153 helps me to understand how readers read these kinds of pieces, or how they view them.
154
155 MP: Well, I'm just not that interested, you know, because it's on a computer for a start.
156
157 Researcher: So actually the technology would need to be different for you?
158
159 MP: I much prefer to read a book wherever I choose to read it, and I would need some
160 incentive to read any other form of, you know, book.
161
162 Researcher: It's very kind of you to have taken part, and what you've told me and the data
163 I've got is all very valuable, and alongside what the others have told me it's been a great
164 session. So thanks very much.
165
166 MP: You're welcome.
167
168 Researcher: Thanks very much for speaking to me.
169
170 ENDS

1 7/3/06
2 by telephone
3
4 *Of Day Of Night*
5 Discussion (O3/D)
6 Present: AP
7
8
9 Researcher: I really appreciate that you had a go at it and positive or negative it's all
10 valuable information for me. One of the things that you said in the questionnaire was that in
11 terms of reading conventional prose you're fairly happy to roam around, explore, be
12 challenged etc. You said you're prepared to go along with difficult plots for instance, so in
13 that respect you were a prime candidate for looking at something as different as the piece
14 you looked at. But from your comments I see you didn't find the challenge and the puzzle
15 particularly engaging with *Of Day Of Night*. So could you summarise what went wrong?
16
17 AP: Yeah, I couldn't, I didn't feel like I progressed through it. I went to the little Help file
18 which gave me the idea that she's got problems with dreaming and she wants to, she's
19 gonna collect things and those are gonna be randomly arranged in the form of a dream. So
20 I thought 'OK, I get the concept'.
21
22 Researcher: At that point was that interesting, would have made you want to continue?
23
24 AP: Absolutely, yeah. I was quite, I thought 'Ok I'll give that a go'. But what I found was I
25 was having difficulty navigating really, because if you think about the map that you go
26 back to, and obviously different things appear on that as you progress, I got to the stage
27 where the things like the market were turning up and the street, and I could visit those
28 places. And I could apparently start collecting objects, things like the little tin and the bottle
29 opener and so on – if you clicked on them a picture would emerge. But at that point it was
30 a dead end, I couldn't, I thought 'what now?' I could look at these things, I could click on
31 that one and that one, I couldn't get out of that screen. So, either I was missing
32 something...
33
34 Researcher: So you mean when you clicked on an object you got a little bit of film, didn't
35 you, which shows her collecting things and picking it up? And then to get out of that screen
36 it was quite difficult. There is actually a button at the bottom right hand corner that appears,
37 but it actually is invisible. I found that quite frustrating myself. It's not your fault, it's bad
38 design.
39
40 AP: It's literally invisible is it?
41
42 Researcher: It appears when you roll your mouse over it, but it's not visible unless you do.
43
44 AP: I didn't roll over that particular point... I went through this process a few times, each
45 time the only way I could get out of it was to hit escape which obviously takes you out of
46 the whole thing...

47 Researcher: So that was a structural issue to do with the way the interface was designed.
48 That could be overcome, just by having that back button visible all the time. Did that
49 completely block everything else then?
50
51 AP: It did really, because in my mind I was thinking this process I've got to go through is to
52 collect things, and I wasn't even clear if just by seeing the close-up picture of the item,
53 does that mean I've collected it? There was no kind of ... I suppose in a gaming or
54 shopping scenario you'd have some little thing where you could review what you'd
55 collected.
56
57 Researcher: Like a shopping basket when you buy things from Amazon?
58
59 AP: Yes, that's what I was thinking, so I thought 'have I collected that, have I not?' Plus I
60 was also of the mind, is that a bug, the fact that I couldn't get out of that screen. I just
61 couldn't see how to progress really.
62
63 Researcher: Did you get to the section where you could arrange all the items in a cabinet?
64
65 AP: No. I knew that was coming, but I couldn't... now I know how to get there.
66
67 Researcher: So in that case presumably you didn't get to the section where each of the
68 items tells its own little story which is all in text?
69
70 AP: Ah, see there you go... it's all starting to sound much more interesting now.
71
72 Researcher: But what you're telling me is extremely important really, because these design
73 factors aren't really being talked about in academics, and I think people are missing some
74 very basic design elements which would have made that a much more successful piece.
75 You'd have probably pressed on with it if that initial glitch had been resolved.
76
77 AP: Oh yes, absolutely.
78
79 Researcher: You weren't averse to trying.
80
81 AP: I did try. I plugged away at it, and I just couldn't find that missing button. I'll probably
82 go back to it now.
83
84 Researcher: One of the questions in the questionnaire asks whether reading at the
85 computer is an issue, and you did say you preferred reading in your chair or in bed. Do you
86 think that's going to be a problem always or can you imagine a time when you'd be used to
87 reading on a computer?
88
89 AP: For me the issue is that I spend all day at the computer, so it hasn't got, you know, the
90 idea of using the computer as recreation isn't as appealing as it might be.
91

92 Researcher: Another thing you mentioned, perhaps because of the interface deficiencies, is
93 that you didn't find the text. Do you like the idea of a piece of literature that isn't solely text
94 or is even more visual? How did you feel about a story that would be told through film and
95 graphics and sound effects, other things than just written text?
96

97 AP: My feeling about what I saw, it was often just a voice-over if you like, with her
98 walking into camera all the time which didn't excite me. I didn't think the visual was
99 adding much, but when you got to all the little items I guess the visual was actually
100 contributing something, you know when you were seeing what she was picking up and so
101 on.
102

103 Researcher : Do you think the idea of a storytelling form that combines all sorts of modes is
104 potentially, it could go somewhere? Or is too offbeat – it's not a book, it's not a film, it's
105 not a game, it's not a website... too many breakings with convention?
106

107 AP: Well, it's an interesting question because one of the things I was thinking as I was
108 looking at these little images, was that if this was a video and I was watching a video I
109 would just watch it all the way through and I would absorb it. Now, because I was sat at a
110 computer all I wanted to do was to click past it, I wanted to take control and say 'no this
111 isn't interesting, I want to get, let's get to the next bit' and I was frustrated because I
112 couldn't do that. So I was wanting to interact with it, in a kind of negative way I suppose.
113

114 Researcher: Are you saying that the fact that there was some interactivity at all then made
115 you want to behave in a quite different way?
116

117 AP: It made me very much less receptive to the images, I thought. I didn't want to sit there
118 and let them just swash over me. I wanted to be more in control of them.
119

120 Researcher: And I can imagine that if you went back to that piece for further readings, or if
121 you wanted to break off and come back the next day, you wouldn't want to watch those
122 pieces again all the way through, you'd want to jump them wouldn't you?
123

124 AP: That is another issue. You get this with a lot of software, it's got defined paths through
125 it, and if you ever find yourself having to get back to a certain point, you find yourself
126 having to follow that path and thinking 'oh my God, now I've got to do this and this...'.
127 You don't want to follow that path but you've got to, to get back to where you want to be.
128

129 Researcher: Could you imagine spending a long time with a piece like this, as kids do with
130 games where they spend hours and hours exploring and building up their knowledge. If this
131 was a really developed piece with several chapters and sections you read one a time, stop,
132 come back the next day, could you imagine it ever working for you? Or do you feel you're
133 too much in the 'passive' reading habit to be able to change?
134

135 AP: No, I'm quite open to new ideas and I think it would very much come down to it being
136 sufficiently interesting to hold my attention. If it was, I'd very much want to explore. To
137 me it's not that different to what I do a lot of which is Googling on the web. If I'm

138 interested in something I will Google, I will jump from place to place to suck out
139 information. This kind of hypertext novel isn't a million miles away from that, you know,
140 leaping around in a non-linear fashion to build up a picture of something.
141

142 Researcher: I can see that, but there's still something because it's a story that needs to
143 unfold in a different way. When you do a Google you build up your own story, it's not
144 pre-designed beginning, middle and end and you don't care when you stop, you stop when
145 you've found the information or when you're tired or whatever. But with this were you
146 looking for something from the artist that was more than you just exploring, finding a
147 bunch of stuff, collecting it, putting it together and thinking 'OK I've done that, it's
148 finished'. Were you still looking for something from the artist?
149

150 AP: Yes, I would have looked for something from the artist, but I was stymied before
151 I'd gone very far down that path. But I did assume that she was offering something
152 interesting.
153

154 Researcher: There would be something conclusive, some feeling of satisfaction. In your
155 questionnaire you said very little carried you along. All those possibilities of language,
156 character, or action or surprise weren't really there.
157

158 AP: They weren't really there for me. I was, what would have carried me along was this
159 fact that it was new form I was interested in looking at, also this business about dreams
160 being formed by putting together random objects - I thought that was quite an interesting
161 idea.
162

163 Researcher: You put in your questionnaire that you clicked on interesting words, words
164 that seemed to signify something. You also said that you were attempting to follow the
165 story. So do you think that every link that was available, whichever one you picked should
166 in some way progress the story? Or do you think it's possible to have links which take you
167 off in a tangential direction?
168

169 AP: Yes, that's OK. It's OK to have little dead ends which are perhaps interesting and
170 amusing in their own right, as you would in a story - you have characters that are there for
171 decoration or whatever. The point I was making, I suppose it's more of a technical one.
172 You know the way you move your mouse over certain parts of the screen and little words
173 will light up: sometimes those were links and other times they were just seemed to light up,
174 it was just the word and didn't go anywhere. One of them was very frustrating - I can't
175 remember which screen it was but you rolled over a word, it lit up and then there were more
176 words which it up above it, clearly connected to it and you thought 'oh that's where the link
177 is', and as you moved towards it, it disappeared! And that was incredibly frustrating! It
178 was almost perversely frustrating. Like it was done to annoy you.
179

180 Researcher: Some people say it's great to have the links because it's interesting and gives
181 you some control, some people say the presence of links on a page is actually distracting
182 and I don't need that many choices. Do you think there's an optimum amount of choice that
183 would be interesting before it then became distracting and frustrating?

184
185 AP: I quite like links. I don't know if you ever look at something like Wikipedia? That's
186 full of links and I quite like that because you read through it and you'll come across another
187 text and 'oh that's interesting' and you can leap off to it at that point.
188
189 Researcher: It seems to work well in that kind of context, but I'm wondering if links in a
190 narrative become too disorientating. I'm not sure, yet, how much readers can take when
191 they're looking for the story to unwrap as well.
192
193 AP: It comes back to navigation again. You really want to be able to get back to where you
194 were. Because a conventional linear narrative will do that, it will jump off at a tangent and
195 then take you back into the main thread, but the author is in control of that.
196
197 Researcher: Also the reader has faith in the author to bring you back.
198
199 AP: It almost makes you want to have a little map of the story, almost like a tube map
200 which shows where you've been if you like, and it's got a central spine which is the
201 narrative – you can see how far you've gone down that and you can also see how many of
202 the side branches you've been down.
203
204 Researcher: I do really appreciate your time and your comments are valuable.
205
206 ENDS

Appendix Eight

Master Questionnaire

MASTER QUESTIONNAIRE.....MAS/Q

Hypertext Questionnaire

This will take you no more than ten minutes. Each question requires a simple answer. Just select the answer or answers you prefer by highlighting it in Bold or changing its colour within your word processor or email application. Email it back to me at jpope@bournemouth.ac.uk

Your name (optional).....

The hypertext piece you read:.....

About You

1 Are you a regular PC user?

n= 36	%
Yes 36	100
No 0	0

2 Which of the following do you use your PC for?

Multimedia applications (eg Flash, Director, iTunes, Final Cut)	19
Online games	7
PC games	9
Mainly for email and browsing/ information seeking	34
Shopping	19
Other	music, design, graphics, work, research, education, blogging, MSN

Section 1 Reading Stories

1 Do you typically enjoy the feeling of being engrossed in a book?

n=36	%
Yes 31	86
No 5	14

2 What makes you choose to read a novel? (select any that apply to you)

A kind of story you already know you like	26
A kind of story you haven't tried before	21
An author you already like	29
An author you have never tried before	21
Recommendation from a friend	34
Review in the press or media	27
Anything else?	Critics, cover (x2), film, classics, price

3 What do expect from a 'good read'? (select any that apply to you)

Artistic/poetic/striking language	18
Familiar everyday language	16
Interesting characters	32
Emotional moments	22
Exciting action	17
Surprise	23
Tension	24
Satisfying conclusion	24
Anything else?	Laughter, challenge, plot points, happy ending, memorable, relaxation, stimulation, identification, enlightenment, learn about oneself

4 Do you prefer

n=36	%
An easy, light read 9	25
A deep, heavy read 3	8
Both 24	67

5 Do you prefer familiar plots (eg genre conventions such as romance or horror)?

n=35	%
Yes 5	14
No 7	20
Don't mind 23	66

6 Do you like to be challenged (puzzled, even baffled at times) by the story?

n=36	%
Yes 33	92
No 3	8

7 Are you prepared to go along with a difficult plot to find out how it ends?

n=36	%
Yes 34	94
No 2	6

8 What would make you give up on a book and not read any more of it?

Over complex plot	17
Uninteresting plot	28
Too familiar storyline	9
Uneventful	15
Dull characters	17
Poor writing	29
I never give up once I've started – I have to see it through to the last page	2
Anything else?	disturbing content, violence, repetitive, clichés

9 Do you want a neat conclusion with all loose ends tied up?

n=36	%
Yes 12	33.33
No 3	8.33
Don't mind 21	58.33

10 Do you like an open-ended or even puzzling conclusion?

n=37	%
Yes 8	22
No 11	31
Don't mind 18	47

Section 2 The Computer Interface

Thinking about the hypertext story you have read,

1 *How do you feel about reading a novel at a computer screen?*

No problem	9
Physically uncomfortable	14
Relaxing	1
Hurts my eyes	8
Prefer reading in my comfy chair/ bed	26

2 *Do you prefer small or large amounts of text to read on any single 'page'?*

n=32	%
Small 17	53
Large 7	22
Either 8	25

3 *Was the navigation system easy to learn?*

n=36	%
Yes 22	61
No 14	39

4 *Was it obvious where links were?*

n=34	%
Yes 17	50
No 17	50

5 *Could you move in any direction as you wanted?*

n=36	%
Yes 22	61
No 14	39

6 Did you want to be able to go 'home' from wherever you were?

n=30	%
Yes 22	73
No 8	27

7 Did you feel you knew where you were in the 'book' (site) at all times?

n=36	%
Yes 12	33
No 24	67

8 Did you feel you knew where you were in the story at all times?

n=36	%
Yes 9	25
No 27	75

9 Were you bothered or even irritated by the interface as you read?

n=36	%
Yes 7	19.4
No 12	33.33
Irritated 17	47.22

10 Did the interface 'vanish' and become second nature (eg as turning a page in a book would be)?

n=35	%
Yes 5	14
No 30	86

11 Were menus (if offered) easy to read and use?

n=35	%
Yes 17	49
No 14	40
No menus offered 4	11

12 Did the visual elements (pictures, menus, graphic layout) enhance the story telling?

n=34	%
Yes 18	53
No 7	21
No visual elements present 9	26

13 Did the visual elements distract you from actually reading the text?

n=34	%
Yes 7	21
No 18	53
N/A 9	26

14 Did multimedia elements (eg animation, sound, video) enhance your enjoyment?

n=29	%
Yes 15	42
No 5	44
N/A 9	14

15 Did the multimedia elements aid or disrupt your engagement with the story?

n=29	%
Aid 8	27
Disrupt 4	14
Neutral 13	45
N/A 4	14

Did not like
Uninteresting characters
Over complex plot
Confusing plot
No excitement
Too short or too long
Anything else that you didn't like?

Section 3 Hypertext Reading

1 Would you say hypertext is like (select any that apply)

Reading a book	9
Watching a film	3
Playing a game	17
Solving a puzzle	21
Something else?	Not sure, poetry, between book and game, difficult medium, meaningless prose, how to read hypertext?

2 What about the hypertext carried you along?

Artistic/ appealing language	7
Interesting characters	13
Emotional moments	7
Exciting action	4
Surprise	8
Tension	3
Satisfying conclusion	3
Nothing	10
Anything else I've forgotten?	Multimedia good, enjoyed characters' feelings, novelty, exploring, desire to find story, encouraged exploration, interest in medium, looking for conclusion, desperation

3 Were any of the following a problem for you?

Dull writing	4
Uninteresting characters	9
Over-complex plot	9
Confusing plot	17
No excitement	12
No sense of an ending	19
Anything else that you didn't like?	Pointless, didn't make sense, no plot (x2), no story, disjointed, no feel for characters, couldn't relate to characters, poor writing, poor interface, interface too plain, scrolling, layout very dull.

4 Did the links lead you to places that made sense and/or kept the story moving?

n=36	%
Yes 17	47
No 19	53

5 Did the activity of following links add to your enjoyment of the story?

n=34	%
Yes 14	41
No 5	15
Disrupted reading 15	44

6 How did you select links?

Just clicked on any interesting word	11
Word that seemed to signify something	17
Animated image	5
Icon	3
Attempting to follow the story	20
At random	15
Any other factor?	Tried to get all sections, testing process, clicked on everything clickable

7 Did you enjoy the story structure (plot)?

n=35	%
Yes 14	40
No 20	57
'not really' 1	3

8 Did you re-read any sections?

n=35	%
Yes	31
No	4

9 If 'yes' to question 8, was that:

n=31	%
intentional 8	26
accidental 5	16
both 18	58

10 If you did re-read sections was that:

interesting	12
exciting	0
annoying	12
frustrating	13

11 Do you feel you could summarise this story to a friend?

N=36	%
Yes 12	33
No 24	67

12 Did you feel satisfied with the ending?

n=33	%
Yes 10	30
No 22	67
'what ending?' 1	3

13 Would you say that you experienced the 'lost in a book' sensation?

n=36	%
Yes 6	17
No 30	83

14 *Would you read another hypertext novel?*

n=35	%
Yes 23	66
No 10	29
Don't know	5

15 *If 'yes' to question 14, why? Because it was*

Intriguing new medium	19
Great story	2
Satisfying experience	6
Anything else?	Might get used to no endings, would give it a fair chance if better constructed (x2), to see if another would be better, something new

16 *If 'no' to question 14, why? Because the hypertext was*

Boring	7
Confusing	8
Unsatisfying story	8
Did not operate easily	6
Anything else?	Plotless and pointless

Finally....

Thank you for your help

If you want to say anything else about the experience of reading hypertext fiction, please add below.

The next step will be to meet with your co-participants to discuss your reactions. I will pay for food and drink! I will be in touch.

Jim Pope