

Authoring for Interactive Storytelling

When, why, and do we actually need authoring tools?

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Abstract. One of the most significant challenges facing narrative systems research is the authoring of interactive stories, and the processes and technologies to support it. In this workshop we host a discussion and present new work in this space from researchers in creative and technical domains from both the Hypertext and Interactive Storytelling communities and explore the question: *When, why, and do we actually need authoring tools?*

Keywords: interactive storytelling, narrative systems, authoring tools

1 Topic, Goals, and Outcomes

The authoring of interactive stories, and the processes and technology to support it, remains one of the most significant challenges facing narrative systems research. Attempts have been made within both academia and industry to create tools to support the authoring of interactive stories, but few, if any, of these tools have gained widespread acceptance. At the same time, many interesting works have been created either without any specialized authoring tools, or by using more general-purpose authoring tools such as *Unity* and *Twine*. This raises the question: **When, why, and do we actually need authoring tools?** Progressing from previous iterations of this workshop, and in response to discussions at last year's workshop, this year the workshop aims to answer this question.

This workshop brings together creatives, technologists, and associated researchers in a collective meeting to share research and advances in this space. Relevant work discussed at recent workshops has evoked a number of underlying questions: "What is a tool, anyway, in the context of authoring for interactive storytelling?" From visual editors to graphs or textual notations including scripting languages and story formalizations, tools can be considered very broadly as any technology intended to assist interactive story creators. "What are the main merits of graphical or interactive tool creation?" In research projects, budget

limitations often create a trade-off between sophisticated engine development vs. usable tools. While often the motivation for the latter is a greater accessibility, creative storytellers recently also criticized formal limitations of expressivity in specialized tools, a discrepancy that clearly needs to be addressed. “Are interactive storytelling tools necessarily specific to inherent interactive modalities?” Experimental paradigms of story creation for different settings, such as location-based, language-based or using virtual and augmented reality, add new dimensions for consideration beyond just character and conflict, including interaction design for end-users. “Can tools be door-openers for non-programmers to AI-based storytelling?” While easy-to-learn editors and tools often allowed for creating explicit storylines and simple branching interactivity, there is still very little reported experience with the successful implicit configuration of procedural content for stories. “Who are the future interactive storytellers and what are their talents?” All in all, due to the long-term nature of authoring projects, publications of fully evaluated principles and tools with different target groups (including insights on pitfalls and failures) are not as common as for example in the domain of E-Learning. All of these questions relate to the basic assumptions underlying much existing research on authoring tools for interactive storytelling.

Paper contributions by participants address or contribute to exploring the questions and issues mentioned above. Accepted papers will be published online, as in the previous year’s workshop (see <http://narrativeandplay.org/ais>). A session at the workshop will be dedicated to collective discussion on the issues and positions presented beforehand. The outcomes of this discussion will be recorded and documented as a white paper after the workshop.

In summary, the workshop aims to:

- Create a meeting venue for active researchers in this area to come together and share their work,
- Foster a community around this work, as a step towards future collaboration, and provide a venue for publication of early work in this space, and
- Create a white paper summarizing the workshop discussion, and the main positions, regarding the need for and role of authoring tools.

2 Format and Schedule

This **Full Day** workshop is a mixture of structured paper sessions and less structured “unconference” sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to gather community feedback on early progress, and stimulate discussion with new ideas in the area. Paper sessions provide an opportunity for researchers to share early or evaluated work on authoring tools and principles, and for sharing of early position papers on new ideas. In contrast, the “unconference” can be seen as: “a meeting for which the agenda is defined by the attendees at the start of the meeting”. This format gives attendees an opportunity to launch more specific meetings and to use the workshop as a platform to host collaborations and conversations inspired by the earlier part of the workshop.