Special Issue: FuturePlay Selected Papers

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This special issue of *Loading…* brings together a selection of the most highly reviewed papers from the annual *ACM FuturePlay 2008 International Conference on the Future of Game Design and Technology* conference that was held in Toronto, Ontario, November 3-5, 2008. The conference had over 170 attendees over the three days and included keynote addresses from Don Daglow (Founder/President/CEO of Stormfront Studios), Ben Sawyer (Co-founder of Digitalmill, Co-founder of the Serious Games initiative), Katie Salen (Parsons, the New School for Design), John Buchanan (Relic Entertainment), Ken Perlin (New York State University), and Jackie Copland (Electronic Arts). *ACM FuturePlay 2008* focused on three main themes. The first theme, **future game development**, addressed academic research and emerging industry trends in the area of game technology and game design. The second theme, **future game impacts and applications**, included academic research and emerging industry trends focused on designing games for learning, for gender, for “serious” purposes, and to impact society. Finally, the third theme, **future game talent**, was designed to provide a number of industry and academic perspectives on the knowledge, skills, and attitude it takes to excel in the games industry. *Futureplay* is supported by the Association of Computing Machines Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI). The papers in this issue are expanded versions of the original confernce papers that appear in the ACM online database, and demonstrate the transdisciplinary and mixed methods approaches that characterize these themes and have begun to characterize research on digital games to date in general.

In each of the sections for this issue -- Borders, Foundations and Frames, Elements, and Techne -- the authors bring very different research agendas and approaches to the question of how to study games, players, game design, and game characters.

In *Borders* this issue we look at research that seeks a greater understanding of both the collaborative design process and the process of designing engaging and realistic characters in-game. Here, Tran and Biddles’ “An Ethnographic Study of Collaboration in a Game Development Team” explores collaborative practice within an organizational setting, while Eladhari and Sellers’ paper “Good Moods: discusses two systems designed to simulate the mood and mood-responses of non-player characters in games.

Germane to the work of Eladhair and Seller is Bailey and Katchabaw’s introduction of a framework for generating realistic NPCs in our *Foundations and Frames* section. This is coupled with the work of Jose Zagal who presents his own framework for determining “game literacy” which he argues can be assessed through how well students can explain, discuss, assess, interpret, deconstruct and situate games in a curricular setting.

Elements includes discussions of the overlooked elements of both game-play and game-design experiences. In "Affective Ludology, Flow and Immersion in a First-Person Shooter," Nacke and Lindley tackle the question of how to approach the gauging of player experience as they analyze the results of a methodology reliant on both subjective qualitative player data and physiological data in measuring player engagement. On the design side, 'Designing "Game Idea Generation" Games' by Kultima, Niemela, Paavilanen and Saarenpaa introduce new methods for fostering and supporting game designer experience, specifically, idea generation.

Our newest section, Techne, delves headlong into research that is tenaciously pushing the technical craft of game design forward. Our papers for this section include Cowan and Kapralos' work on the GPU-based generation of real-time spatial audio in virtual environments, Nitsche's experiments in looking at the promise of pre-visualization in real-time 3D engine design and Saleemi, Nybom, Bjorkqvist and Lilius's work on automated content-scheduling for location-based mobile games.

The editors wish to thank all the authors who have contributed to this special issue and the referees who donated their time to critically and constructively review these papers. We are confident our readers will find this issue and collection of papers thought provoking, and that the range of issues covered, suggestions for future research, and questions raised in these papers will promote and support research in game design and technology.