

Adventure Author

Adventure Author is a game-authoring tool designed to support interactive storytelling skills through the use of game technologies. Drawing on traditional role-playing techniques, it moves away from first-person-shooter game formats, by emphasising character, plot and narration.



Team

Dr Judy Robertson, School of Informatics, University of Edinburgh
Dr Judith Good, Assistant Professor, University of New Mexico
Mick Lockwood, Graphic Artist
Futurelab



Technology

Unreal Tournament 2003 Game Engine - an existing game engine through which the authoring tool and game were programmed.

3D Studio Max - graphics package through which the characters were developed.

Outline

By modifying existing game engine technology, Adventure Author has been developed as a means to guide the young people (10-14 year-olds) through a series of steps, via 'wizards', which are aimed at supporting thinking about character and storyline development on a scene-by-scene basis. In addition, an overall map easily allows users to arrange and link scenes to support non-linear storytelling.

Having authored their own game, the young people can then play this and share it with others. Through this process of play and critical feedback from peers, young people are offered the opportunity to improve their game design and storytelling techniques.

Learning and Research Objectives

Futurelab's key aims in supporting the development of the prototype of Adventure Author are to identify:

- 1 What are the most effective features of the game that support plot and character development?
- 2 What role does the wizard have in supporting plot and character development?
- 3 How does the 'plot map' support non-linear storytelling?
- 4 What are the main characteristics of the stories that the authors create?
- 5 What features of the experience do the users find motivating?
- 6 What are the users' reflections on the game making and playing?

As with all Futurelab projects we are also interested in:

- 1 What this project tells us about the best ways of designing educational digital resources.
- 2 What this project tells us about how learning processes can be transformed through use of these tools.
- 3 How this project helps us understand the potential of next generation technologies to create intrinsically motivating and engaging learning experiences.

Research and Development Process

Dr Judy Robertson (developer of Adventure Author) and Dr Judith Good (supporting the project), are working with Futurelab on developing the first prototype and researching it with young people in non-formal, science centre and storytelling workshop settings. In the early stages of development, Judy Robertson and colleagues at the School of Informatics, University of Edinburgh, held a 'Gamemaker' workshop as part of the Edinburgh International Science Festival, at the Museum of Scotland¹. Futurelab used this opportunity to identify how young people engage with existing authoring tools and what they consider is important to gaming, focusing in particular on their views of character and plot.



Development of Wee Jimmy character



Set of characters

Parallel to the 'Gamemaker' workshop, Judy Robertson in consultation with Judith Good created a 3D version of the game-authoring tool, while graphic designer Mick Lockwood was employed to develop the main characters for the game.

At the end of the project, the young people and all main partners are involved in a pilot evaluation of the prototype, which will investigate the young people's interactions and views on using the software for the first time and its role in supporting storytelling skills. Final results from the project will be available on the Futurelab website and directly from Judy Robertson.

¹ Robertson, J (2004) 'An analysis of the narrative features of computer games authored by children'. In the Proceedings of The Third International Conference for Narrative and Interactive Learning Environments, Edinburgh, Scotland, 10-13 August, 2004. <http://computing.unn.ac.uk/staff/cgpb4/nile/>

Supported by:



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