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Web/Comics 2023

Webcomics and/as Hypertext

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ABSTRACT

Web/Comics 2023 is the first in a new workshop series for the ACM Hypertext conference. The Web/Comics workshop focuses on the transformation of the comics medium enacted by hypertext through the emergence of webcomics, or “graphic sequential narratives that are created, published, and read online” [1].

The Web/Comics workshop brings together interdisciplinary perspectives from the humanities and technological communities to share work and discuss the latest research on webcomics from the perspectives of both communities. It wants to act as a bridge to increase collaboration between the comics and hypertext research communities.

Researchers and practitioners working with webcomics or hypertext are invited to attend this workshop. Participants are asked to submit a short (between 2 and 4 pages) position paper on their current work. The planned event is a half day hybrid workshop with sessions based around short presentations, with emphasis on opportunities for dialogue and discussion in the final roundtable session.

CCS CONCEPTS

•Applied computing~Arts and humanities~Media arts •Human-centered computing~Human computer interaction (HCI)~Empirical studies in HCI •Information systems~World Wide Web~Web applications

KEYWORDS

Webcomics, Hypercomics, Transmedia, Interfaces.

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1 Description of the Workshop (topics and goals)

Web/Comics 2023 has the goal of becoming a focal point for the community of scholars interested in conceptualising and analysing webcomics through a hypertext lens. It targets scholars from various fields in the humanities and in computing, including hypertext studies, comic studies, electronic literature, that explore the interconnections between media and technology.

Web/Comics wants to investigate whether webcomics exemplify the expansion of hypertext beyond the linearity of information processing systems into a type of interactivity that is nonlinear (multicursal) and ludic. It uses webcomics to explore the boundaries of hypertext, for example by assessing its utility to the reader or user and its effects on “readers’ ongoing process of establishing meaning and coherence”, as discussed by Mangen and Van der Weel [2].

Proposed topics include (but are not limited to):

- Hypertext systems for webcomics publishing
- Cognitive processing, hypertext and webcomics
- Emergent webcomics formats
- Webcomics and transmedia
- User interface in webcomics
- Reading webcomics as hypertexts
- Authoring webcomics
- Issues in interdisciplinary webcomics research

2 Relevance of the Workshop to the Hypertext communities

Comics have always been hypertextual. From their origins in newspapers to their present as pillars of multi-billion dollar media franchises, comics have always existed within networks of texts, images, and other media. Hypertext represents the last in a series of transformations of the comics medium and has the potential of being among the most profound, enabling for example new models of interactions between authors, readers and publishers [3].

Through the popular medium of webcomics and its unique form of storytelling, the Web/Comics workshop will look at how hypertext has transformed and has been transformed. Webcomics are the ideal context through which to challenge and expand theoretical assumptions of hypertext, such as Nelson's visions of the future or Atzenbeck and Nürnberg's proposals for hypertext as method [4], and to connect comics studies to hypertext studies, electronic literature and book studies.

3 Motivation

Considering hypertext in relation to webcomics is akin to going back to the roots of hypertext Ted Nelson in 1974 coined the term "hyper-comics" in "No More Teacher's Dirty Looks." (1970) [5]. Nelson described it as "the simplest and most straightforward hyper-medium" and gave it a prominent place in his proposed media revolution. This workshop interrogates whether Nelson's vision for comics has been realised in the twenty-first century from multiple perspectives, including systems, cognition, archiving and creativity.

4 Workshop Organizers' Bios

4.1 Francesca Benatti

Francesca Benatti is a Research Fellow in Digital Humanities at The Open University. Her research interests include the history of the book and reading, comic studies and hypertext. She has published on webcomics in the *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics and Interactive Storytelling* and is the author of the forthcoming *Innovations in Digital Comics* (Cambridge Elements in Publishing and Book Culture).

4.2 Linda Berube

Linda Berube is a AHRC Collaborative Partnership doctoral student investigating UK digital comics creation, production, and consumption processes, supported by the British Library and the Human-Computer Interaction Department (HCID) at City, University of London. She has published on reader interaction with web archives and other nonprint legal deposit collections at UK national libraries and is the author of *Do You Web 2.0? Public Libraries and Social Networking* (Elsevier, 2011).

4.3 Ernesto Priego

Ernesto Priego is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at City, University of London. He has researched comics since the early 1990s. As a researcher based at the Centre for Human-Computer Interaction Design, he explores the role of comics as narrative, conceptual and speculative design tools and applies user-centred, participatory co-design methods to the creation of comics within public health or social interest domains. He leads the "Parables of Care. Responses to Dementia Care" project, which explores the potential of comics to enhance the impact of dementia care research. He co-founded *The Comics Grid: Journal of Comics Scholarship* in 2010 and has co-edited the journal since January 2011.

5 Program Committee

- Jen Aggleton (Open University)
- Ian Cooke (British Library)
- Simon Grennan (University of Chester)
- Nicolas Labarre (Université Bordeaux Montaigne)
- Leah Misemer (Georgia Institute of Technology)
- Anastasia Salter (University of Central Florida)

6 Submission formats

Submissions will be accepted in the short paper format (2-4 pages, single-column review format). The workshop will take place in a hybrid modality. While in-person attendance is preferred, it will allow remote presentations to maximize inclusivity.

7 Any plan for further publication

The workshop organisers are investigating publication of selected articles in a special issue of *The Comics Grid* journal.

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