UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO | THE GAMES INSTITUTE

INSTANT REPLAY

Games Institute Globetrotters

Spring 2023

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many conference organizing committees have thought about the ways in which audiences engage in the conference experience. At the GI, it's been no different as our membership pondered over the implications of travel, what do in-person experiences bring in value over virtual, and the question of hybridity.

Over the spring term, GI members have been getting active and keeping busy and it's been all about conferences both near and far. Many members travelled abroad to finally regain a semblance of the quintessential conference vibe, while here at the GI, we explored this challenge by choosing to make the International Conference on Games and Narrative (ICGaN) entirely hybrid, allowing participants the choice of speaking in person or virtually.

In this term's Instant Replay, we take a look at some of the conference proceedings and presentations that our members got involved with. Read up on who participated in CGSA this year, who ended up flying to the likes of Spain and Netherlands to showcase their research, and how the ICGaN Conference organized a fully hybrid experience from the GI.

Catch up on all the latest news and more in this installment of Instant Replay!
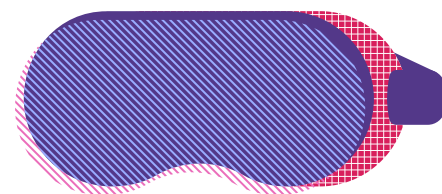
NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

ICGaN 2023
Isolation and Return Through the World of Hybrid Viewing

From May 15 – 19, 2023, the Games Institute (GI) hosted the second International Conference on Games and Narrative (ICGaN). It focused on the theme Isolation and Return: The Making of Narrative Worlds. Speakers from 40 universities joined from around the world explained how, societally, we have all been forced to consider and rethink personal and communal lives necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The final turnout of the 2023 conference resulted in 17 sessions, 47 unique presentations, 5 keynotes, 3 workshops, 4 academic game streams, and a game jam.

Entering into the second iteration of ICGaN required a lot of consideration as to how it would be organized. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, it has greatly impacted how emerging and established scholars can share their work with wider audiences and gain valuable connections that often lead to opportunities for further education, research assistant-ships, and jobs. Many conferences turned exclusively to virtual formats, including the first iteration of ICGaN hosted in 2021, before conferences began to re-consider in-person activities. However, a large part of any conference is the in-person experiences and networking opportunities people can enjoy.

Sitting down with Alex Fleck and Lindsay Meaning (both PhD students in English, members of the GI and the Organizing Committee), we take a closer look at ICGaN, the highlights of the 2023 conference, and the future direction of the series as a whole.

A Conference from the Ground Up

Alex and Lindsay were both members of the Games and Narrative Research Group, and when the discussions of managing a conference surfaced, they both saw it as an opportunity to be a part of something unique among other games studies conferences.

[Alex Fleck]   [Lindsay Meaning]

They joined the ICGaN Organizing Committee, along with other graduate students, to plan, organize, and run the conference, all the while balancing their responsibilities as students. It would allow for participants and submissions to interpret narrative in games as something that was delivered either through the actual mechanics and gameplay of the game or as something inherent to the story.

After the resounding success of the inaugural conference in 2021, the Organizing Committee settled on a bi-annual schedule with the second conference to take place every two years to accommodate for the schedules of graduate students and give them the time they needed for their own research and studies. As 2023 came around and many COVID-19 restrictions began to lift, the next question they had to answer was: do they continue with a virtual format or push for in-person attendance?

The Challenging Necessity of Hybridity

Upon reflecting on the fully virtual format of the 2021 conference, Alex and Lindsay both saw room for improvement. For Lindsay, it was an issue of no one wanting to socialize online. "Online spaces are really great for the academic part of the conference," she said. "But it's hard to know when to say something."

[Drs. Mark Wolf (left) and Neil Randall (right) starting a board game]

Maintaining a virtual presence remained an important aspect of the conference's logistics as the Committed discussed moving towards a hybrid format. While many of the in-person aspects of conferences—such as the interactions, socialization, and networking—had been missed since the start of the pandemic, travel wasn't a reality for everyone who wished to take part. Financial and environmental concerns added to the considerations. The damaging effects of social isolation and how many vital conferencing aspects were untranslatable in an online format had to be balanced with the need to have the conference truly accessible. In the end, the decision came down to make it hybrid with more questions and considerations to take into account.

Suddenly, the hybrid format involved double the amount of work and physical labour compared to what was required for a fully virtual conference. As the virtual spaces on Discord and Gather were being built, the Organizing Committee, volunteers, and GI administrative staff were at the GI and setting up the space to accommodate speakers planning to present in person. The set-up allowed for a more seamless interaction between the virtual and in-person audiences, affording them spaces to present, socialize, and play games with each other.

To support the unique hybrid nature of this event, the conference used Dr. Randall's CFI-funded Storyboard Lab. The Storyboard Lab challenges what it means to do work and research in a hybrid format by utilizing large, interactive touch screens. Seven of these along with two 360-degree Owl cameras spread throughout the facility of the GI were used to create the conference facility, allowing the in-person audiences to sit in on different concurrent sessions.

To facilitate the virtual portion of the conference, participants used Discord and Gather. Discord has become increasingly popular over the pandemic, as its virtual spaces were built to connect people online more fluidly over voice and video chats with the ability to set up text-based chats, offering a high degree of customization and categorization. Gather, on the other hand, is a novel web-conferencing software with the addition of virtual "rooms" that can be occupied by online avatars. In Gather, users would be able to fully design virtual conference spaces that would allow participants to have high degrees of interaction and replicate small side conversations, intimate table discussions, and large lecture halls.

[Top: The Keynote Address state in Gather]
[Bottom: Dr. Kishonna Gray delivers her keynote address]
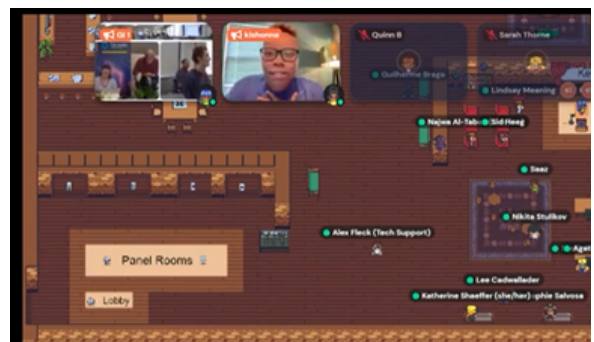
For the 2023 conference, Lindsay and Alex knew that they wanted to keep the same synergy of Discord and Gather to facilitate the online portion of the conference. Lindsay was responsible for designing the Gather space for the 2023 conference. When she designed the space, she had to consider the types of spaces people need to come together in a way similar to a conference. She designed the areas for the breakrooms for panels and workshops to appear like smaller classrooms. The area where the keynote speakers would present was given a stage and decorated with chairs, tables, and even a buffet table. It was Lindsay's goal to make the space feel lively. She found ways to embed objects and notes into the design of the space to deliver instructions and other materials to prepare the conference attendees. The entire online setup mimicked the real-world facilities.

Speaking of real world spaces, many GI labs were put to use for the entirety of the conference, giving volunteers and presenters the physical space and equipment they needed. In person, this set up allowed everyone a flexibility to drop in when they would like to catch a panel, while also having the ability to still watch online with the other virtual audience members. This modular design made it easy to reconfigure the facility to suit the needs of what was occurring at that time. Whether it was for keynotes, panels, or even games sessions such as The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom streaming relay, the multipurpose design of the GI facility made it easy to construct the layouts that were needed to support the activities taking place.

Lindsay, who was able to come in person, said that the hybrid set up "made the in-person interactions feel more spontaneous, organic, and off the cuff."

[Day 1 of the conference ended with a round of Captain's Gambit with creator AC Atienza]

Those within reasonable distance to Waterloo decided to travel to the GI to spend a day in-person at the conference, especially for the chance at socializing. The hybrid format allowed for a level of spontaneity so that people could join when and wherever they were and what fitted with their schedule. Even people like Alex, who was remotely helping and participating from the Netherlands, were able to take part in some of the more social activities like the Tabletop RPG Play Session on May 18.


[Day 4 of the conference brought out Sasha Soraine, Geneva M. Smith, and Noel Brett from McMaster University for a Tabletop RPG Play session]

This hybrid format was important given how people's attitudes around travel had changed post-pandemic. Many academics are rethinking the way they participate in conferences if it requires travel not just from a health standpoint, but from an environmental one as well, taking into consideration of one's own individual carbon footprint. And with the stage set, the schedule drafted, Gather up and running, the 2023 conference was set to begin.

[Session chair Mohamed Fouda leading the session "Shaping the Shadowverse: Language, Immersion, Time, Community, and Character"]
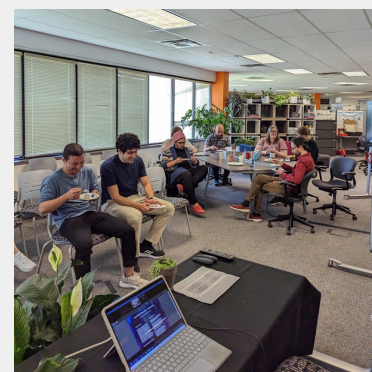
[Conference attendees enjoying a break before the next session begins]

Isolation and Return

When settling on a theme for the 2023 conference, the Organizing Committee felt it was fitting to centre the conversation around isolation and return in a post COVID-19 world. While the conference has always been focused more on narrative within games, Alex was quite impressed by the wide range of presentations.

"I appreciated the breadth of material in the submissions," he said. "[There were even] scientists who came out to talk about their game designs."

For example, Dr. Sjors Groeneveld (Saxion University) presented "Gamifying Community Health Nursing Competencies: A Hybrid Learning EnvironmentDesign using Serious Gaming" which focused on a game designed to help train nursing students through forms of gamification. Dr. Katherine Shaeffer (Shadow Health) and PhD Candidate Najwa Al-Tabba (University of Florida) presented "Diversifying the 'Verse: Social Determinants of Health Meet Character Creation", a training simulation that uses forms of narrative to create character profiles and better train healthcare professionals on how to approach new patients with different backgrounds and experiences. In both cases, the developers used narratives and story lines to make the games feel immersive and improve skill and knowledge retention among healthcare professionals, demonstrating how narratives are built from the very start of development.

[Dr. Sjors Groeneveld presents his case study on the serious game Carion]

The workshops and presentations offered a look at the practice and application of narrative within game development, and when deciding on the keynote speakers, the Organizing Committee looked for a balance in both theory and application of narrative techniques.

Alex and Lindsay both noted their personal highlights of the keynote speakers, with Lindsay appreciating that Dr. Szamałek, narrative director of The Witcher 3 and CyberPunk 2077, while Alex loved how Dr. Wolf incorporated the theme of isolation and return in his examination of single-player, open-world video games. There was a balance of the industry side of creating narratives and incorporating them into the design of it as well as the socio-cultural aspects of narrative such as race and gender, noted by Dr. Gray in her keynote.

[Dr. Jakub Szamałek delivers his keynote address "Why is Video Game Writing Bad?"]

Lessons Learned and Future Plans

The delivery of the conference could not have been possible if not for the herculean effort of the GI administrative staff, the Organizing Committee, and volunteers who helped to set-up, keep engagement high, and share and promote the work being done through social media networks.

So what's next for ICGaN? What's next for students like Alex and Lindsay? Neither knows if they will return to the Committee for the third iteration of the conference, as they both have their dissertations to look towards in the near future. But they both came away with some ideas for the future and some tips for graduate students who might want to be involved with a conference like ICGaN.

For Alex, he considered the use of conference proceedings. "Another illuminating point from the organization of the conference is how other disciplines approach conference proceedings and presentations as viable research outputs," he said.

Conference proceedings are highly valued in human-computer interaction (HCI) disciplines and bring a lot of credibility to researchers. Alex added that "the humanities disciplines don't rely so heavily on conference proceedings, and it was very interesting to see people approach ICGaN in different disciplinary manners."

"I would love to actually experience the conference and the panels, rather than be part of the go-to "fix-it" people," Lindsay said. "Perhaps in a more specialized role like just putting together a schedule?" This was the second time that Lindsay put together the schedule while taking into account different time zones, an experience she greatly enjoyed.

"It's a different experience than research," Alex added. "If it's there, try it, and you may find you're really enjoying it."

Organizing a conference is no simple feat as both have learned, but they both appreciate the opportunities it afforded them. Learning how to manage a crisis, picking up project management, how to implement timelines and as Lindsay put it, "knowing when **not** to write that extra email." (Emphasis added.)

Going forward, ICGaN will continue to offer a hybrid conference experience while supporting emerging scholars and a space for game designers and developers to talk about the narrative approaches of their games.

Read the full Spotlight on the GI Website! Thank you to all the volunteers who made this conference possible.
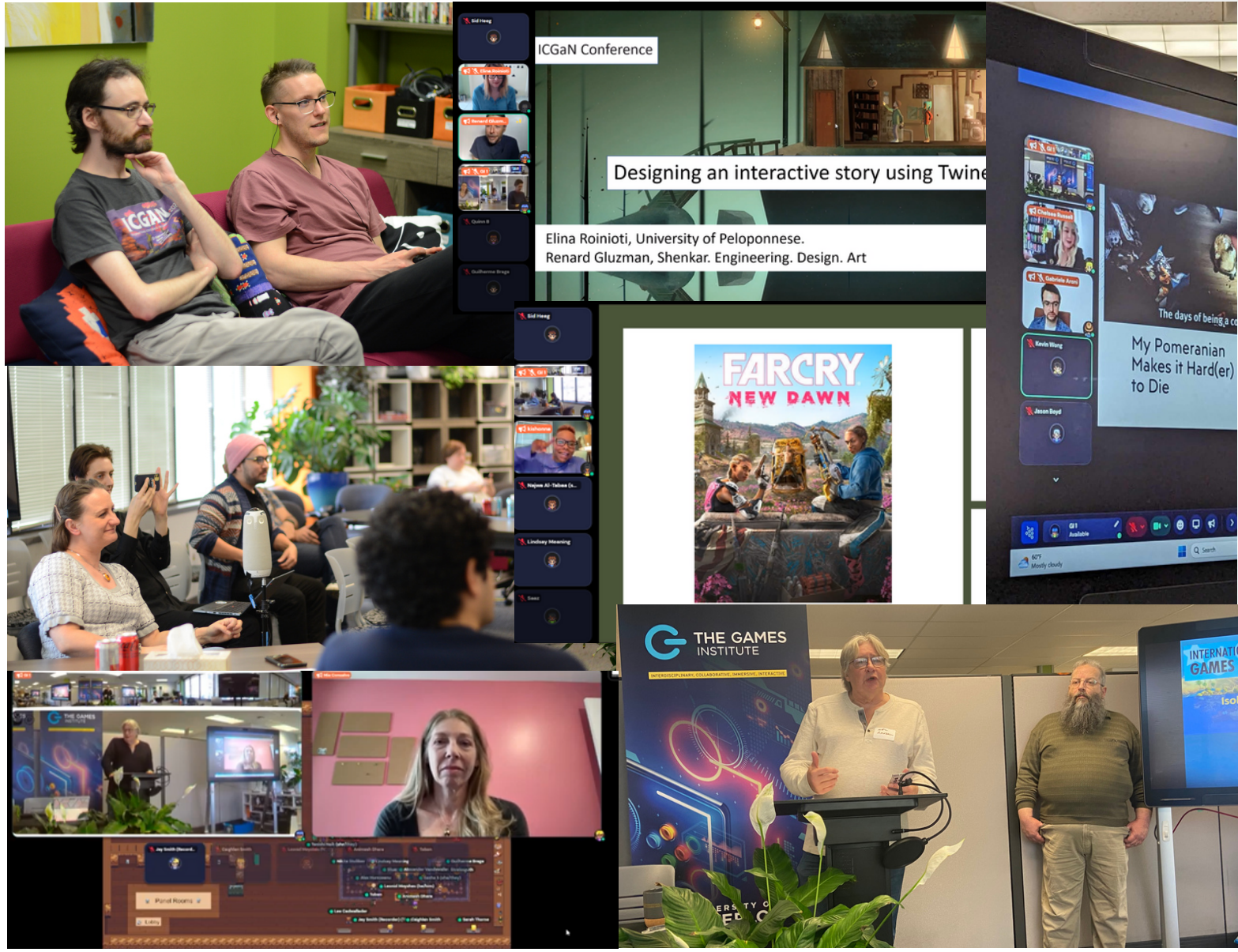
[A collage of presentations, addresses, events and attendees at the conference]

GI Members Attend the Canadian Game Studies Association Conference of 2023

The Canadian Game Studies Association (CGSA) held its annual conference from June 6 to June 9 in a virtual format. For this year's theme of Sustainable Action/Sustaining Action, speakers explored a wide range of issues associated with decolonial studies, ecofeminism, queer studies, and more all in the direction of making games more sustainable for players.

Several GI members including students, alums, and faculty participated. A full list of their presentations can be found on page 12.

- **Aleksander Franiczek** (English)
- **Dr. Betsy Brey** (English)
- **Dr. Jason Hawreliak** (A)
- **Dr. Jennifer Whitson** (Sociology and Legal Studies)
- **Joey Femia** (English)
- **Dr. Michael Hancock** (A)
- **Dr. Steve Wilcox** (A)

Sabrina Sgandurra Presents at the Digital Games Association Conference

PhD Candidate **Sabrina Sgandurra** (English) presented at the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) 2023 Conference which ran from June 19 – 23 in Seville, Spain. Her presentation, titled "Our Player Friend Here… They Already Hold the Key…": Redefining Genre Limits in Inscryption", focused on the game Inscryption, a rogue-like deckbuilding game with escape-room style puzzles to the tune of psychological horror.

The central argument of Sgandurra's presentation sought to categorize and synthesize how Inscryption's use of genre-blending establishes its lore through media-mixing, also known as intermediality which is when multiple forms of media are engaged at the same time. She categorized mechanics and gameplay elements in terms of what is present, what is hidden and made clear through additional playthroughs, and what is hidden in the game's code. All of this contributes to the overall horror of the game's story and is greatly enhanced by the game's community, who come together to examine the source code and speculation on the game's lore. This is further enhanced by intermediality when presented in this form.

[A banner for DiGRA in Seville, Spain]

Dr. Eugene Kukshinov Presents at Lupina Foundation Showcase

On June 19, 2023, **Dr. Eugene Kukshinov** (Psychology) presented his research at the Lupina Foundation Postdoctoral Research showcase. As a recipient of the foundation in 2022, he demonstrated the current state of his research progress and the direction his work will take in the next year.

His presentation, titled "Well Represented": The Positive Effect of Avatar Customization (via Presence) On Mental Well-Being in Social VR" focused on how digital environments often exclude marginalized groups. His work on this topic will further explore the effects of avatar customization and how this positively impacts a user's mental health with how they see themselves represented in the design of VR applications.

[Dr. Eugene Kukshinov presents his work on Social VR]

GI Members Attend the World Haptics Conference

[Dr. Oliver Schneider (bottom left) and Bibhushan Joshi (bottom right) with Titan Haptics collaborators. Photo credit: Titan Haptics]

Bibhushan Raj Joshi (Management Sciences) and **Dr. Oliver Schneider** (Management Sciences) attended the World Haptics Conference which took place in the Netherlands from July 10 – 13, 2023.

Joshi organized and presented at the workshop "CollabJam: Collaborative Rapid-Prototyping of Vibrotactile Patterns for Multi-Actuator Interfaces" where he provided hands-on interactive toolkits to attendees to demonstrate a collaborative haptic design process.

Dr. Schneider co-chaired the panel titled "Vibrotractile and Electrotactile Displays" which involved a variety of short papers and presentations centering on the topics of viobrotactile sensations—also known as the feeling of sounds—and devices.

Samira Mehrabi Receives Canadian Institute of Health Research Award

In April 2023, PhD Candidate **Samira Mehrabi** (Aging, Health and Well-being) received the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) award and attended the Summer Program in Aging (SPA) as part of it. The award and accompanying program took place on June 4 – 9, 2023, in Nova Scotia, giving Mehrabi and many other students the opportunity to network and receive training from national and international mentors. Mehrabi was able to demonstrate and talk about her research in immersive VR exergames to promote health and well-being in older adults.

## Physiological Measure for Games and VR: Novel Tools and Approaches

On August 9, 2023, *Dr. Ifi Mavridou* and **Dr. John E. Muñoz** (J&F Alliance, Adjunct) held a panel on the use of physiological monitoring, biofeedback equipment, and tools for VR applications and research. Both researcher are experts in this field, with Mavridou tackled topics regarding creation and design of hardware while Muñoz covered design and use of software. The panel was aimed at providing researchers and students with a novel approach on how to use these tools by sharing multiple case studies on what these tools can offer for research in games and more. The applications that both Mavridou and Muñoz work with, and shared in this panel, are cutting edge and provide researchers with a toolkit on how they can design and approach their studies. Work like theirs that personalizes and tailors the study design not only to make it easier for researchers but also for participants is just the next step in designing and studying immersive experiences. Read the full breakdown of the event on the GI website!

Machine Talk: Speech in Human-Agent Interaction

On August 10, 2023, PhD Candidate **Nima Zargham (**HCI Games Group) gave a lecture as part of the Student Speaker Series on the approaches and design of human-agent speech interaction. Zargham's focus is on systems like Siri and Cortana. He explored how the use of speech interactions are now used for a variety of different reasons, including smart homes, educational environments, entertainment, and video games. Because they are becoming more ubiquitous, there are more consumer complaints and unsatisfactory experiences. Zargham showed how his research looks at why these unsatisfactory experiences exist and how to improve speech interactions. One of the solutions he's explored is understanding how the voice of the speech agents can be further personalized through different speech characteristics and even the personality of the agent (is it funny? Is it moody?) to make it a more engaging experience.

Dr. Cayley MacArthur Gives Keynote Speech at the Jeux & Accessibilité Conference
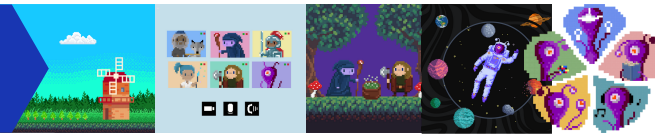
Dr. Cayley MacArthur (Stratford) delivered the keynote address at the inaugural Jeux & Accessibilité / Game Accessibility conference took place on August 17 – 18, 2023 in Montreal, Québec. Her address - "Can Making Games Inclusively Help to Make More Inclusive Games?" – responded to the conference themes of video game accessibility.

MacArthur examined how bias is encoded in technologies from the moment they are designed and how these technologies cannot be used for equity because of that bias. Drawing from her experience running game jams during her graduate studies, MacArthur noticed how certain groups of people feel excluded from game jams—and statistically, 70% of women who were there on the first day would leave before the event concluded. Read the full breakdown of her keynote address on the GI website!

[Dr. Cayley MacArthur (top right) presents her keynote address]

GI Podcast co-hosts **Sid Heeg** (Sustainability Management) and **Toben Racicot** (English) return with four new episodes this term, sitting down with many faculty and postdocs at the GI. Catch the episodes wherever you listen to podcasts!

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PODCAST
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- Social Consensus and Empathy with Dr. Steve Wilcox
- Social Media and Activism with Dr. Brianna Wiens
- Living History and the DMZ Project with Dr. Daria Ho
- Serious Games for the Aging Population with Drs. Lili Liu and Hector Perez

GI VISITS

Every term, the GI welcomes in visiting scholars, researchers, and collaborators to show them the type of work our members do on a daily basis. This term, we were visited by two unique groups!

Several members of BMO, Unity, and Rogers visited the GI on May 3 for a collaborative design challenge in partnership with UWaterloo. In coming here, they learned about the diversity of projects GI members work on and introduced to all the ways GI members collaborate with partners.

In June 16, a group of high school students visiting from Mexico came for a tour and were given an extensive viewing of the Haptics Experience Lab and demonstration by **Marco Moran-Ledesma** (Systems Design Engineering). The students were part of the RoboSEIP program managed by Renison University. We hope they enjoyed their time here!

[Marco (right) demonstrates his knee project to RoboSEIP students]

THE GI GETS SOCIAL!

Coffee and Games
The weekly Coffee and Games continued this term every Thursday afternoon, captained by **Montana White** (Operations Coordinator) and **Shae Ashcroft** (Research Communications Coordinator). An honourable mention goes out to **AC Atienza** (A), the unofficial third host, who introduced the group to new games they designed, including "Road to Victory". Everyone's participation and interest is what made the semester special, leading to a very successful Spring 2023 run!

S23 Research Speed Dating
Research Speed Dating returned for another iteration this term where GI members participated in a 'speed dating' event to get to know people outside of their lab groups and disciplines. This term, we were joined by the faculty and student members of CBB! GI and CBB faculty members had the chance to directly speak to one another about partnerships and funding opportunities. Students were similarly paired with each other to discuss their research interests and respond to questions within thirty second intervals. This was followed up by a BBQ outside. Thanks to everyone who came out!


[Top: CBB and GI student members talk to each other during a round of speed dating. Bottom left: CBB and GI faculty members chat during speed dating]

NEW GAMES INSTITUTE MEMBERS

- **Bella Chen** (she/her) is a short-term exchange student of industrial design from China. Currently, she is focusing on human-computer interaction research. She has several experiences designing and researching with children.
- **Derrick Wang** (he/him) is a first-year PhD student in Systems Design Engineering at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Lennart E. Nacke. His research interests involve video games (especially MMORPGs), Virtual Reality, Exergames, and mental health.
- **Ellie Sanoubari** (she/they) works on REMind, which is a transformational game that uses social robots to help children learn how to intervene in bullying situations. Inspired by drama techniques, the game engages children in an interactive story that allows them to observe a bullying scenario between two robots, and then intervene by controlling a third bystander robot. REMind is designed to promote internal reflection and situated learning.
- **Federica Gini** (she/her) is a visiting Ph.D. student from the University of Trento in Cognitive Science. Her research focuses on gamification, and is particularly interested in the benefits and limitations of cooperative gamification.
- **Kristina Kölln** (she/her) is a PhD student at the university of Seville under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Maria José Escalona and Prof. Dr. Maria Rauschenberger. She works as a research associate at the university of applied sciences Emden/Leer. Her research is about finding the best gamification strategy for a specific use case.
- **Montana White** (she/her) is the Operations Coordinator for S23! She is in Honours Psychology, in her last year. Her favourite things to do are eat pizza and watch Peaky Blinders.
- **Nic Hobson** (he/him) is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Health. His research interests lie in better understanding the effects with which physical activity and other positive health modifiers have on brain function, cognitive ability and neuroplasticity across the lifespan.
- **Nima Zargham** (he/him) is a Ph.D. student in the Digital Media Lab at the University of Bremen. His research focuses on human-agent speech interaction.
- **Dr. Sebastian Maximilian Cmentowski** (he/him) is a postdoctoral fellow at the HCI Games Group. His research, funded through the Provost's Program for Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Scholars, will center on using VR exergames to trigger behavioral change and fight sedentary lifestyles.
- **Seyed Sina Torabi** (he/him) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Media Studies at Western University. He is interested to learn more about the peculiar interaction between narrative structures, issues of human identity, and agency in video games.
- **Shae Ashcroft** (she/her) is the Research Communications Coordinator for the Spring 2023 term. She just completed her Undergraduate degree from the University of Waterloo with an Honours Arts in English Literature and rhetoric, as well as a minor in history and legal studies, a specialization in technical writing. She enjoys reading, writing, and art as well as hiking in her free time!
- **Sukran Karaosmanoglu** (she/her) is a PhD student in the Human-Computer Interaction group at Universität Hamburg (Germany). She will be visiting visit Prof. Dr. Lennart E. Nacke's lab this summer.
- **Tor-Salve Dalsgaard** (he/him) does research on haptic interactions and experiences. He is currently being supervised by Dr. Oliver Schneider.

Unofficial Busy Bee award goes to Dr. Shana MacDonald!
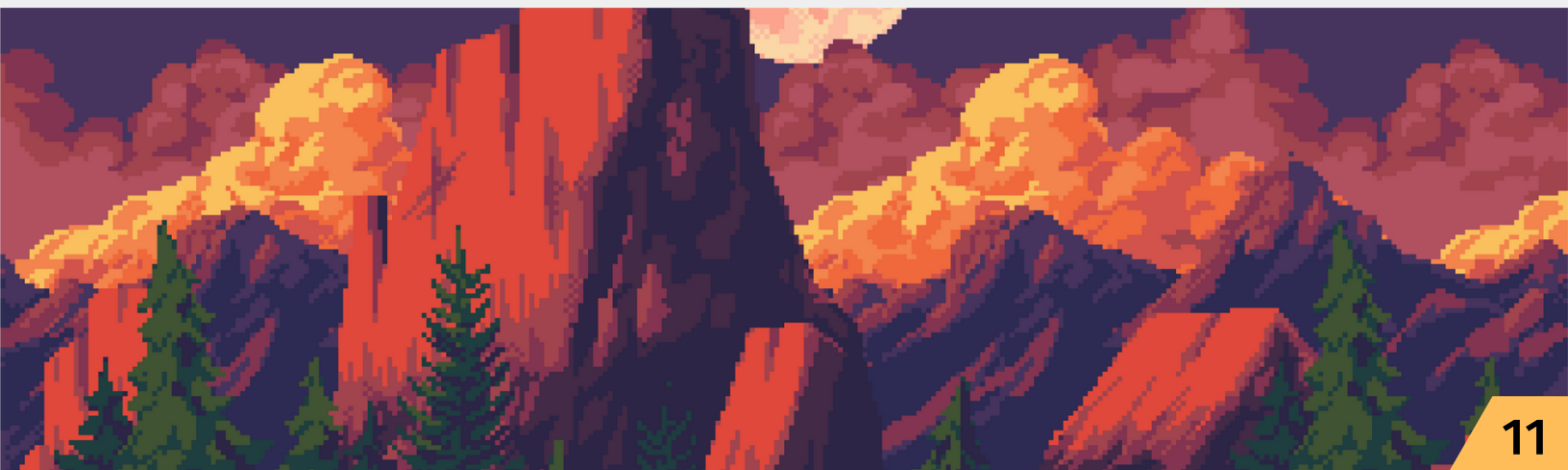
Conference Presentations and Talks:

- **Aleksander Franiczek** (English). (June 2023) "Interpreting Gameplay Experience through Narrative Design." CGSA 2023.
- **Dr. Betsy Brey** (English). (June 2023) "Queer Dialogics: A Method for the Study of Video Game Narrative." CGSA 2023.
- **Dr. Brianna Wiens** (English) and **Dr. Shana MacDonald** (Communication Arts). (May 2023). "The Feminine Urge to RESIST: Feminist Memes as Affective Socio-Political Vernaculars." International Communication Association.
- **Dr. Brianna Wiens** (English) and **Dr. Shana MacDonald** (Communication Arts). (May 2023) "DH@Guelph Summer Workshops."
- **Dr. Cayley MacArthur** (Stratford). (August 2023) "Can Making Games Inclusively Help to Make More Inclusive Games?" Jeux & Accessibilité Montréal. CHI 2022.
- *Christine Tran* and **Dr. Jennifer Whitson** (Sociology and Legal Studies). (June 2023) "Seminar/Workshop: Collaborative Co-authorship." CGSA 2023.
- *Donal Degraen, Georg Freitag, Bruno Fruchard,* **Bibhushan Raj Joshi** (Management Sciences), *Alexander Ramian, Nihar Sabnis,* and *Dennis Wittchen.* (July 2023) "CollabJam: Collaborative Rapid-Prototyping of Vibrotactile Patterns for Multi-Actuator Interfaces." IEEE World Haptics Conference.
- **Dr. Eugene Kukshinov** (Psychology). (June 2023) ""Well Represented": The Positive Effect of Avatar Customization (via Presence) On Mental Well-Being in Social VR." Lupina Foundation Postdoctoral Research Showcase.
- **Dr. Jason Hawreliak** (A) and *Arianna Maiorani.* (June 2023) "Meaning in Motion: A Kinesemiotic Approach to Videogame Analysis." CGSA 2023.
- **Joey Femia** (English). (June 2023) "Reparative Play as Disability Narrative Methodology." CGSA 2023.
- *Megan Goar,* **Dr. Michael Barnett-Cowan** (Kinesiology), *William McIlroy,* and *Brian Horslen.* (July 2023) "Sensorimotor gain reweighting of vestibular reflexes in the presence of vestibular-light touch conflict." ISPGR 2023.
- **Dr. Michael Hancock** (A). (June 2023) "Retelling and Replaying: The Time Loop in Videogame Adaptations of Myths." CGSA 2023.
- **Dr. John E. Muñoz** (J&F Alliance, Adjunct), *Jose Lopez, Felipe Villada,* and *David Lopez.* (June 2023) "Virtual Reality Exergames in Rehabilitation." International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine.
- **Dr. John E. Muñoz** (J&F Alliance, Adjunct) and *Andres Anaya.* (June 2023) "Realidad Virtual E Inteligencia Artificial Aplicada A Medicina Y Enternamiento." Universidad de Antioquia.
- **Dr. Oliver Schneider** (Management Sciences) acted as a sessional chair at the IEEE World Haptics conference in July, 2023.
- **Sabrina Sgandurra** (English). (June 2023) "Our Player Friend Here… They Already Hold the Key…": Redefining Genre Limits in Inscryption." Digital Games Research Association.
- **Samira Mehrabi** (Aging, Health, and Well-being), **Dr. John E. Muñoz** (J&F Alliance, Adjunct), *Sarah Mazen, Aysha Basharat, Shi Cao, Jennifer Boger,* **Dr. Michael Barnett-Cowan** (Kinesiology), and *Laura Middleston,* (May 2023) "Exploring the Feasibility and Usability of a Custom-made VR Exergame as a Home-Based Exercise Tool in Older Adults." International Conference on Aging, Innovation and Rehabilitation.

- **Samira Mehrabi** (Aging, Health, and Well-being), *Sara Drisdelle, Hanna R. Dutt,* and *Laura E. Middleton.* (May 2023) "Breaking barriers: Exercise professionals' perspective of remote physical activity supports for older adults during and beyond the pandemic." Symposium on Aging Research.
- **Dr. Steve Wilcox** (A). (June 2023) "Interpretive Agency: Strategies and Tactics for Developing Moral Agency." CGSA 2023.

Publications

- **Dr. Daniel Harley** (Stratford) and **Dr. Cayley MacArthur** (Stratford). (July 2023) "Sharing Play Spaces: Design Lessons from Reddit Posts Showing Virtual Reality in the Home." Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference.
- **Joey Femia** (English). (May 2023) "Reparative Play in Dungeons and Dragons." International Journal of Role-Playing.
- *Ken Pfeuffer, Jan Obernolte, Felix Dietz,* **Dr. Ville Mäkelä** (Stratford), *Ludwig Sidenmark, Pavel Manakhov, Minna Pakanen,* and *Florian Alt.* (June 2023) "PalmGazer: Unimanual Eye-hand Menus in Augmented Reality." arXiv preprint.
- **Nima Zargham** (HCI Games Groups), *Vino Avanesi, Leon Reicherts, Ava Elizabeth Scott, Yvonne Rogers,* and *Rainer Malaka.* (July 2023) ""Funny How?" A Serious Look at Humor in Conversational Agents." Studies.
- **Dr. Reza Hadi Mogavi** (Stratford), *Chao Deng, Justin Juho Kim, Pengyuan Zhou, Young D. Kwon, Ahmed Hosny Saleh Metwally, Ahmed Tlili,* **Simone Bassanelli** (A), *Antonio Bucchiarone, Sujit Gujar,* **Dr. Lennart E. Nacke** (Stratford), and *Pan Hui.* (June 2023) "Exploring User Perspectives on ChatGPT: Applications, Perceptions, and Implications for AI-Integrated Education." arXiv preprint.
- **Dr. Shana MacDonald** (Communication Arts) and *Dr. Alysia Kolentsis.* (June, 2023) "The Stabbing Attack at the University of Waterloo Underscores the Dangers of Polarizing Rhetoric about Gender." The Conversation.

Media Interviews

- **Dr. Marcel O'Gorman** (English) was interviewed by Global News on June 15, 2023, in "How one Ontario city is blazing the trail for public sector AI use."
- **Dr. Michael Barnett-Cowan** (Kinesiology) was interviewed on the CBC Radio KW and CTV News about the work of the Multisensory Brain and Cognition Lab in May, 2023.
- **Dr. Kishonna Gray** (External Member) was interviewed by Kotaku in the article "The Brilliant Scholar Who's Challenging Racism In Game Design", published on June 2, 2023.
- **Dr. Shana MacDonald** (Communication Arts) was a guest on The Big Story podcast on July 5, 2023 in "Did online rhetoric lead to violence in the classroom?"
- **Dr. Shana MacDonald** (Communication Arts) and **Dr. Brianna Wiens** (English) were interviewed by the Waterloo Region Record on July 31, 2023 in "Social media sparking new feminist wave, say Waterloo researchers."

It's always exciting to welcome new international members to the GI and to Canada at large!

- **Florian Marcher** joined the GI in Spring 2022 as an International Visiting Graduate Student, working alongside Dr. Lennart Nacke and on his master's thesis "Procedural Generational Tool for Green Spaces." He has since gone back to Austria to finish his Master's in Computer Science at the Graz University of Technology in Austria.

No matter how long members have been with us, whether it's a few weeks to a few years, we always like to recognize their time with us. Thank you to all the co-ops and (U)RAs!

- **Alexa Huxley** (she/her) is from the University of Bath and worked with Dr. Oliver Schneider.
- **Blair Knyspel** (they/she/he) is an undergraduate math and computing student from Scotland and joined Waterloo to research bringing real-life objects into virtual reality. They were selected as a Mitacs Globalink Intern and worked with Dr. Ville Mäkelä.
- **Irtika Khan** (she/her) is a full-time undergraduate computer engineering student at Dr. D.Y. Patil University, Mumbai, India. She was selected as a Mitacs Globalink Intern '23 and worked with Dr. Ville Mäkelä.
- **Jay Ren** (he/him) joined the Rhetoricon project as a senior high school student.
- **Kartik Chinda** (he/him) is an undergraduate student, selected as a Mitacs Globalink Intern and worked with Dr. Ville Mäkelä.
- **Kristine Yuan** (she/her) is a 3B Computer Science Undergraduate Student at University of Waterloo. She was a Full Stack Developer for the Rhetoricon project for Spring 2023.
- **Nimun Kaur Bajwa** (she/her) is a 4A Computer Science student at UW and worked with Professor Randy Harris this summer on Rhetoricon.
- **Nirali Modi** (she/her) is undergoing Btech in Material Engineering with a minor in Computer Science in Indian Institute of Technology, Jammu. She worked with Dr. Cayley MacArthur.
- **Pradipti Mondal** (she/her) worked with Dr. Oliver Schneider as a summer intern and worked on the Haptiverse project.
- **Siddarth Vagavolu** (he/him) is a 3rd Year Mathematics Students at University of Waterloo and lead Rhetoricon project development for Spring 2023.
- **Trisha Sharad Pawar** (she/her) is a design student who loves research. She worked with Dr. Cayley MacArthur as an RA.
- **Vanessa Duong** (she/her) is an undergraduate health sciences student and worked with Dr. Jim Wallace as an USRA.

Awards and Grants:

- **Dr. Jennifer Whitson** (Sociology and Legal Studies) was a recipient of the Outstanding Performance Award, awarded by the University of Waterloo.
- **Drs. Lai-Tze Fan** (Sociology and Legal Studies) and **Randy Harris** (English) both received the Arts Award for Excellence in Research.

New Jobs

- **Ana Lucia** (Systems Design Engineering) has joined Territorium as a UX Design Consultant.
- **Alex Glover** (Systems Design Engineering) joined the indie game development studio Riyo Games as an Intermediate Game Programmer.
- **Dr. Hector Perez** (Aging and Innovation Research Program) has finished his time at Waterloo as a postdoctoral fellow and has been hired to join the Hamilton Police Services as Program and Project Manager and Evaluation Specialist.
- **Dr. John E. Muñoz** (J&F Alliance, Adjunct) received a promotion to Chief Scientific Officer at J&F Alliance.
- **Mohamed Fouda** (Haptics Experience Lab) was hired as a Team Lead for GC Notify, a Government of Canada service.

Bolded names in this document denote GI members while *italicized names* denote collaborators and guests. Names marked with "(A)" denote former GI members. (Stratford) denotes affiliation to the Stratford School of Interaction Design and Business. (English) denotes affiliation to the English Language and Literature department.

All names are listed alphabetically by first name.

The Games Institute and its members acknowledge that the land on which our community works and lives today is the traditional land of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. We recognize that the University of Waterloo, of which the Games Institute is part, is situated on the Haldimand Tract – the land taken without consent and subsequently promised to the Six Nations – that includes ten kilometers on either side of the Grand River.

We recognize the enduring presence and deep traditional knowledge, laws and philosophies of the Indigenous Peoples with whom we share this land today. As the Games Institute facilitates researchers of games, digital spaces, and interactive technologies, we undertake to make space for Indigenous scholars, designers, commentators and creators to uplift voices that are marginalized in the academic and gaming community.