

INSTANT REPLAY

Virtual Worlds, Real Communities

Spring 2021



Cultivating Virtual and Hybrid Communities

Welcome back to another autumn at the GI—we are excited to finally bring you back into the physical GI space!

At the start of each new term, we take time to reflect, rewind, and remember the amazing work our members have been doing to contribute to the fields of game and interactive media studies, game and interaction science, and interactive media for understanding.

The start of the Spring 2021 term marked a full year into the Covid-19 pandemic when the GI closed its physical doors. Last year, we lead the charge in moving, adapting, and creating in(to) virtual environments; this year we face another change—hybridization, accessibility, and the continued challenge of simultaneous community building within the virtual and real worlds.

Despite these challenges, GI members thrived as they nurtured and grew our community. And so, we present to you the Spring 2021 installment of Instant Replay; a snapshot into the time of championing real communities in virtual worlds.



NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

[International Conference on Games and Narrative](#)

GI Members at [CGSA](#) and [CHI](#)

The GI Jam and Panel on [Therapeutic Gaming](#)

[New Grants](#)

Research Spotlight on [Dr. Oliver Schneider](#) and the CanHaptics Network



CGSA focuses on highlighting research in games, however, they have always diligently used their platform for diversity, inclusivity and anti-oppression. CGSA's work on including marginalized communities in the academic world as well as uplifting games research that actively works against the status quo of the industry came to the fore after the unfortunate events that took place during the 2019 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (CONGRESS). *Dr. Shelby McPhee* of the Black Canadian Studies Association (BCSA) was racially harassed and CGSA chose to be active allies.

CGSA unequivocally supports BCSA and, in solidarity with a number of other associations, separated from CONGRESS.

Dr. Gerald Voorhees, GI faculty member, is acting President of CGSA and the GI was one of the sponsors for the conference alongside: UW's Office of Research, the Kule Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Alberta, Concordia's TAG Lab, and University of Montreal's LUDOV Lab.

CGSA ran the conference virtually; participants pre-submitted their presentations in video format. Attendees had a chance to view the recordings ahead of the panels, and, during the panels themselves, presenters recapped their main arguments with a Q&A period following.

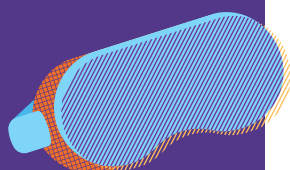
Some of the presentations are still available to view online!



GI members acting as chairs: **Betsy Brey**, **Patrick Dolan**, **Dr. Michael Hancock**, **Nicholas Hobin**, **Dr. Gerald Voorhees**, **Dr. Jen Whitson**, and **Dr. Steve Wilcox**

GI members presenting:

- **Betsy Brey**, "Building a Story: Architectural Narrative in Skyrim"
- **Dr. Michael Hancock**, "Ergod Propter Hoc: A Reinvention of Ergodicity Through Gamebooks"
- **Nicholas Hobin**, "Confronting Awful Animals"
- **Lindsay Meaning**, "Imperial Justifications: Nationalism and Nation Building in Popular Board Games"
- **Apoorva Sanagavarapu**, "Where are you Baby Pikachu?: A PowerPoint Presentation/[Prototype] Location-Based Mobile Game"
- **Sabrina Sgandurra** "Rewriting Nuclear Gandhi: Dismantling Colonial Rhetoric in Civilization VI"
- **Dr. Gerald Voorhees**, "Bubble-gum Cyberpunk: High-Tech Orientalism as Mass Culture in Watch Dogs: Legion"
- **Dr. Steve Wilcox**, "Hello, Worlds: Gameplay as Viable Interpretation"



CONFERENCE ON HUMAN FACTORS IN COMPUTING SYSTEMS (CHI)

CHI is considered one of the most prestigious conferences in human-computer interaction; it is also one of the top-ranked conferences in computer science globally. An open space to discuss the latest in interactive technology, CHI took a different approach from CGSA and ICGaN by hosting a hybrid conference. GI members, who participated, pre-submitted their presentations in video format to explore this year's conference theme "Making Waves, Combining Strengths".

GI members presenting:

- **"Feels Like Team Spirit: Biometric and Strategic Interdependence in Asymmetric Multiplayer VR Games"** (**Drs. Katja Rogers and Lennart Nacke**)
- **"Provocations from #vanlife: Investigating Life and Work in a Community Extensively Using Technology Not Designed for Them"** (Ali Rizvi, Kateryna Morayko, Arden Song, and Dr. Mark Hancock)
- **"Scrappy: Using Scrap Material as Infill to Make Fabrication More Sustainable"** (Ludwig Wall, Dr. Daniel Vogel, Dr. Oliver Schneider)
- **"You're Making Me Sick: A Systematic Review of How Virtual Reality Considers Gender & Cybersickness"** (Cayley MacArthur, Arielle Grinberg, Dr. Daniel Harley, and Dr. Mark Hancock)

The Spring term marks conference season for both Humanities and HCI researchers with June hosting both Canadian Game Studies Association (CGSA) and Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI). This year, the GI also launched the annual International Conference on Games and Narrative series (ICGaN).

All three showcased the research prowess of the Institute, the dedication to excellent research outputs despite the challenges of the pandemic and highlighted the sense of community that each conference uniquely cultivated.



As Dr. Ken Hirschkop noted, "we didn't expect all of them to actually accept our invitation!"

International Conference on Games and Narrative (ICGaN)

The GI's Games and Narrative Reading Group (whose goal is to investigate traditional texts on narrative theory alongside emerging theories in multimedia and games to theorize on what narrative in video games truly means) created the basis for the ICGaN. Guided by **Drs. Ken Hirschkop** and **Neil Randall**, the goal of the conference series is to challenge the complexities around narrative theories and functionality in games.

And so, from June 12th to 16th, the GI held its inaugural International Conference on Games and Narrative. This 5-day conference welcomed participants and speakers from 47 universities, 28 of which were from outside of North America, as far as Australia and Southeast Asia. Presentations included scholars at the forefront of games studies; with **Drs. Elizabeth LaPensée, Souvik Mukherjee, Clara Fernández-Vara, Jan-Noel Thön, Astrid Ensslin, and Kishonna Gray** as keynote speakers—some of whom are considered the living, founding figures of the discipline itself!

Conference topics included: narrative structure in videogames, narrative co-creation in games, narratives and social difference, gameplay and narrative, game worlds, and technology and presence. Participants had the opportunity to examine the intersection between videogames and narrative through a variety of online formats: live lectures, speaker panels, video essays, workshops, and live streaming gameplay with commentary and discussion. The entire conference was available online, hosted on the [GI's Discord](#) and on GatherTown, in formats designed for maximum accessibility.

For more information on the next iterations of ICGaN, visit the [ICGaN webpages](#).

GI members acting as chairs: **Betsy Brey, Justin Carpenter, Alex Fleck, Dr. Ken Hirschkop, Nicholas Hobin, Lindsay Meaning, and Dr. Neil Randall**

GI members presenting:

- **Betsy Brey**, "Rejecting High Noon: Individually and Collectively Structured Narratives in Dungeons and Dragons"
- **Justin Carpenter**, "Generative Design as a Game Studies Paradigm: Authorship, Agency, and Emergence in No Man's Sky"
- **Dr. Michael Hancock**, "Tragedy Plus Time: The Mythic Adaptation in Time Loop Videogames"
- **Toben Racicot**, "More loot? Don't Mind if I Do: A Loot as a Worldbuilding Tool"
- **Sabrina Sgandurra**, "Modern Necromancy: The Revival of Communal Storytelling through Dungeons and Dragons"
- **Dr. Gerald Voorhees**, "Collaborative Storytelling and Imperial Forms (of Play)"

As GI Executive Director, Neil Randall put it:

"Huge thanks to Prof. Ken Hirschkop for spearheading the inaugural International Conference on Games and Narrative, which wound up its 5-day run last Wednesday...To say this was successful is an understatement...My deep gratitude to GI PhD students Lindsay Meaning, Alex Fleck, Justin Carpenter, and Nicholas Hobin, who did hours of work setting this up, chairing and moderating sessions and keeping everything going, and to the GI staff – Grace VanDam, Pam Schmidt, Marisa Benjamin, and Jenn Rickert (okay, Jenn's both PhD student and part-time staffie) – for making sure nothing went off the rails. Superb stuff, and we hope to do the second one next year."

OTHER CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS BY GI MEMBERS

- **Dr. Shana MacDonald** was Program Director and President at the annual Film Studies Association of Canada conference and also presented:
 - "maybe it's basic and trendy, or maybe it's a global feminist awakening": Witch Memes as Feminist Shadow Resistance" The Witch Institute Symposium, Queen's University,
 - "The Hermeneutics of Generativity" co-presented with members of the qColloaborative and GI, **Drs. Jennifer-Roberts Smith, Brianna Wiens, and Aynur Kadir**, at the Canadian Society of Digital Humanities,
 - Chaired a panel called "Contemporary and Historical Feminisms: Continuities, Comparisons, and Contradictions," at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies conference,
 - "Digital Feminist Research Hacks – Undermining Platform Capitalism on the 'gram" at the Chesapeake Digital Humanities Consortium 2021 Conference: *Social Justice and Online Activism*.
- **Dr. John Muñoz** participated in a panel hosted by UW's Centre for Bioengineering and Biotechnology (CBB) titled "Novel Tools for Physiological Computing and Interactive Systems."
- **Dr. Lennart Nacke** was interviewed in a [MacLean's story](#) about speedrunning, which was later picked up by [Screenrant](#).
- **Dr. Oliver Schneider** presented a paper at World Haptics; several other works in progress were also presented by members of his lab.
- **Dr. Gerald Voorhees** presented on white feminism in games discourse at the Popular Culture Association conference.



EVENTS

Spreading Virtual Jam: Highlights from the S21 Game Jam

The third virtual GI Game Jam took place between June 23rd and 27th; 8 teams presented their games on the final day. The Jam organizers collaborated with start-up Quickscope, a platform focused on bringing game developers, employers and researchers together, exploring new ways of discussion, voting, and celebrating final submissions.

The Jam's theme this term was "It Spreads" which resulted in a lot of "quirky and fun games, including a cleverly designed zombie platformer and a conga-line creation game" as per the Jam co-captain **Ekaterina Durmanova**.

Although participation in this term's Jam was smaller in comparison to previous years, those who attended were active, enthusiastic, and "felt really closely knit ... this may have been one of the most wholesome Jams to date," Ekaterina fondly described. **Arielle Grinberg**, the other GI Jam co-captain, summed it up best: "People just had a heckin' good time."

While the core Jam activities were hosted on the GI's Discord server, keynote addresses were delivered on Quickscope and included: *Renee Gittins*, Executive Director of the International Game Development Association (IGDA), and *Franciso, Jake and Vishal*, developers at the award-winning indie gaming studio HitGrab, the creators of [Clan O'Conall](#).

All previous GI Jam Showcases are available on the GI's Discord under "Our Collections 📁".





Therapeutic Gaming Panel

On July 14th, GI member **Dr. John Muñoz** (JohnHCI) moderated a panel full of industry experts from the digital therapeutics sector to discuss academic and industry perspectives on the benefits of therapeutic gaming. Dr. Muñoz guided the speakers through a variety of topics related to the use of games for therapeutic purposes, including: cognitive training, physical activity promotion, emotional regulation, brain assessment and optimization, and pain management.

Panelists included *Joaquin Anguera*, Director of the Clinical Division of Neuroscape, and Associate Professor at the University of California; and *Josh Sackman*, President and Co-founder of AppliedVR. The international audience for this panel extended as far as the U.S., Mexico, Portugal, and Israel.

NEW GRANTS



- **Dr. Shana MacDonald** was awarded:
 - SSHRC Insight grant titled Feminist Digital Media (2016-2020): Building Affective and Activist Worlds,
 - Archives Unleashed Cohorts Program 2021 - June 2022 Everything Old is New Again: A Comparative Analysis of Feminist Media Tactics between the 2nd and 4th Waves,
 - Co-Investigator, NSERC Encouraging Vaccine Confidence in Canada Grant titled Connect, Collaborate, and Tailor: Multimedia tools to Promote Vaccine Confidence.
- **Dr. Lennart Nacke** was awarded a CIHR grant titled Exergetic project; hosted at the UW Stratford School of Interactive Design.
- **Dr. Oliver Schneider** was awarded a NFRF Exploration grant titled "Incorporating Social Justice into Haptic VR Storytelling", co-investigators include: **Drs. Michael Barnett-Cowan**, Jennifer Llewellyn, **Kristina Llewellyn**, and **Jennifer Roberts-Smith**.

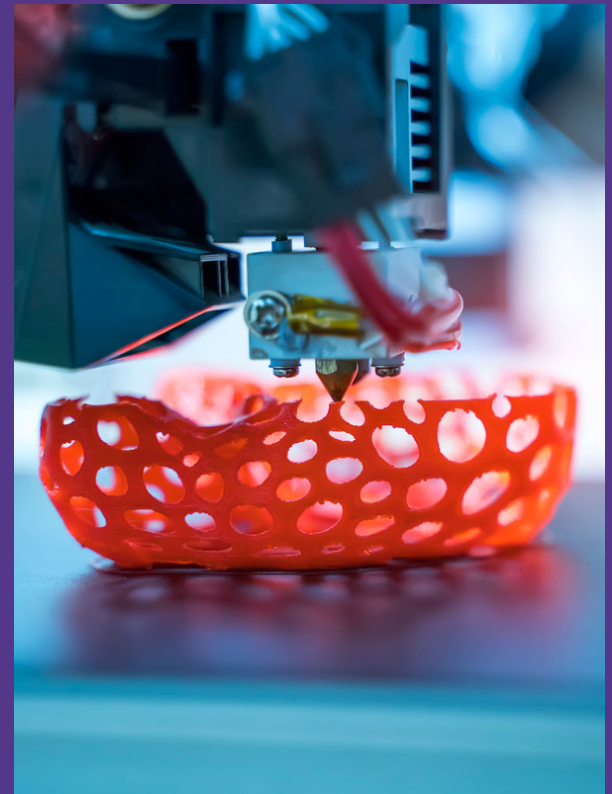


RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT: DR. OLIVER SCHNEIDER AND THE CANHAPTICS NETWORK

For the past few years, **Dr. Oliver Schneider** has been working hard to build a network of hapticians across Canada who, as it's described on the CanHaptics website, "make technology more human by making it physical – pushing out from the screen to be graspable, holdable, and engage with all of your senses – and do so *by putting people, not technology, first*". The Covid-19 pandemic put haptic technology research between a rock and a hard place; how does one study human interaction with technology when physical touch is limited, if not prohibited? The result was CanHaps501: a cross-institutional graduate course on haptic information design presented to students from across Canada and internationally.

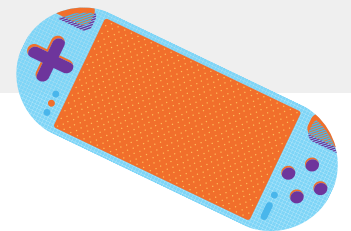
In Spring 2021, the CanHaptics Network focused on expanding and building their reach by hosting a CanHaptics seminar series. With one seminar per month, the focus of this miniseries was to feature researchers and their labs from across the network. This included:

- **Dr. Oliver Schneider**, leader of the Haptic Computing Lab, Games Institute, Waterloo,
- *Dr. Pourang Irani*, member of the Manitoba HCI Lab,
- *Dr. Jeremy Cooperstock*, leader of the Shared Reality Lab, McGill University,
- *Dr. Vincent Lévesque*, leader of the Haptic User Experience (HUX) Lab at École de Technologie Supérieure, Montreal,
- *Dr. Karon MacLean*, leader of the SPIN Lab, University of British Columbia.



AT A GLANCE...OTHER UPDATES

- Former GI Member and Post-Doctoral Fellow, **Dr. Kevin Barton** began working at Apocalypse Studios.
- **Dr. Randy Harris**, and the Rhetoricon Database group (who are building a citizen science game for harvesting rhetorical figures), [received an Honourable Mention in the Research category for the Cooperative and Experiential Education Employer Impact Awards.](#)
- **Dr. Lennart Nacke** won IJHCS best research paper of 2020 entitled "[Development and validation of the player experience inventory: a scale to measure player experiences at the level of functional and psychosocial consequences](#)". He also became one of the top ten 2021 AI 2000 Most Influential Scholars in Human-Computer Interaction.
- Former GI Member and Post-Doctoral Fellow, **Dr. Rita Orji** won the CHCCS Graphics Interface Early Career Research award.
- PhD student **Toben Racicot** was featured in the Environments of Change (SSHRC Partnership Grant at [UW's D.R.A.G.E.N Lab](#)) [annual report](#) for his outstanding work in developing an analogue board game inspired by the historical natural environment of late medieval Sussex and the Battle Abbey.
- **Drs. Neil Randall** and **Michael Barnett-Cowan** spoke to [Lifewire](#) about Vintage Games.
- Former GI M.A. **Caroline Wong** received a UXR job at Sunlife





NEW GI MEMBERS

1. AJ Abistado
2. Lydia Choong
3. Ana Lucia Derby
4. Mel Edens
5. Bibhushan Joshi
6. Dr. Kaylena Martens
7. Ally Suarez

GRADUATING MEMBERS

1. Karina Arrambide
2. Cayley MacArthur
3. Rina Wehbe

Need some cozy reading for foggy, autumn days? Why not start with articles and books published by our GI Members. We may even have them in hard copy!



GI READING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lei, S., Guo, Z., Tan, X., Chen, X., Li, C., Zou, J., Cao, S., & Feng, G. (2021). Cognitive abilities predict safety performance: A study examining High-Speed Railway dispatchers. *Journal of Advanced Transportation*
- Media Studies: Texts, Production. Context 3rd ed., editors: Paul Long and Shana MacDonald et al. Routledge, forthcoming
- #SelfCareisforWhiteWomen: Moving from an Ostentatious Politics of 'Self-Care' towards Intersectional Feminist Politics, co-authored by Shana MacDonald and Brianna I. Wiens, *NECSUS: European Journal of Media*
- "Not Influencers, but Amplifiers: @aesthetic.resistance as Feminist IG Hack" by Shana MacDonald in *Visualizing Objects, Places, and Spaces: A Digital Project Handbook*, editors: Hanna Jacobs and Beth Fischer
- Prototyping Across the Disciplines: Designing Better Futures, edited by Jennifer Roberts-Smith, Stan Ruecker, and Milena Radzikowska, *intellect*
- Tabletop RPG Design in Theory and Practice a the Forge, 2001-2012 Designs and Discussions by William White, editors: Neil Randall and Steve Wilcox, *Palgrave Games in Context*
- Game History and the Local by Melanie Swalwell, editors: Neil Randall and Steve Wilcox, *Palgrave Games in Context*



Bolded names in this document denote GI members while *italicized names* denote collaborators and guests.

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.

SSHRC  **CRSH**

