

Editorial

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In less than three months from now, a lot of us will be in Rome for the fourth edition of the Game and Learning Alliance – Gala Conf 2015 (<http://www.galaconf.org>). The conference has reached a huge number of submissions and we are sure that the level of the presentations will be further higher than in the previous editions. We will be pleased to have representatives from several continents, if not all, and with very different backgrounds, stressing the importance of different disciplines for the development of a good serious game and the possibility of a variety of application domains.

IJSG is proud to host a special issue, around April next year, with a significantly extended version of the selected best papers.

During the conference, the SGS serious games awards will be assigned to the best games from a very important category for market increase (i.e., students, newcomers, amateurs developers and small studios). Submissions are still open until October 8th. Moreover, there will be an exhibition of serious game products, with significant participation from the international industrial world active in the field of serious games.

The featured workshops, that will be held on the initial day of the conference (December 9th, 2015), are representative of significant trends in serious games.

“Games for health” represent probably the best established field for serious games. This is confirmed by the high number of submission received, covering areas such as exergames, care of elderly people and adults with Down syndrome, personal health management and physical and cognitive rehabilitation.

“Games for Mobility and Intelligent Transportation Systems” (G4MITS) is the first peer-reviewed workshop dedicated to mobility and Intelligent Transportation Systems. Mobility is a key aspect in everybody’s life. The goal of this workshop is to investigate how serious games could contribute to improving safety, efficiency, effectiveness and user experience in the new mobility scenarios enabled by the Internet of the Things.

“Proto World” is a tutorial where participants will customize a simulation game environment to model and plan urban mobility. The game utilizes a federating simulation platform through which users will be able to discuss and test different strategies for monitoring and control of complex transportation systems.

“Pergamon” will present a case study about the development of a pervasive game that promotes the management of chronic disease through the use of sensors integrated within gameplay and a personal coach to give bespoke feedback to players. The goal is to encourage new forms of gameplay and longer player retention, particularly in the mobile game space.

I now proceed with a short presentation to the papers featured in the current issue of the IJSG.

Ortiz et al., [1] examine the effects of using serious games for training on task performance and declarative knowledge outcomes. Results of the study offered support for the potential of serious games to be more effective than traditional methods of training when it comes to task performance. Doumanis and Smith [2] investigate the employment of embodied conversational agents (ECAs) in serious games. The paper presents a framework for research in gamified mobile-guide applications using ECAs and synthesizes the results of six empirical studies conducted within this research framework, also providing design guidelines for effective gamification of mobile guide applications. Results show that an ECA can positively affect the quality of the player’s experience, but it did not elicit better player retention of cultural narratives and navigation of routes.

Kastronova and Knowles [3] present a case study of how a board game can be modified to generate a serious game, arguing that board games are an interesting medium for serious games, especially when the goal is to teach players about particularly complex systems. The authors show how a few major changes to the original game’s point systems, as well as removal of certain extraneous features, can significantly improve the game, adding an instructional value.

Van der Kooij et al. [4] investigate the validation of Games for Behavioral Change, particularly considering and connecting the playful and serious aspect intrinsic in a (well designed) serious game. They present and use the Persuasive Game Design model to connect game design features, such as the gamification method and the intended transfer effect, to factors that determine the



conclusion validity of an RCT. The goal is to offer game designers and researchers handles on how to develop tailor-made validation methods.

Picca et al. [5] have made a review of the employment of Natural Language Processing (NLP) in serious games. They investigate the modality of employment, the type of algorithm and the purpose for different actors interacting in the serious game (players, trainers, moderators). The authors conclude that there is a wide room for improvement along all the three investigated dimensions.

References

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