

Editorial

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This special issue of the International Journal of Serious Games (IJSJG) collects some of the best papers presented at the Games and Learning Alliance Conference (GaLA Conf), that was held in Utrecht, December 5th-7th 2016. The conference was organized by the Serious Games Society and the Center for Game Research at Utrecht University.

We asked the authors of the selected papers for the best paper award and the keynote speakers to significantly extend and revise their papers and submit them to the IJSJG for the standard reviewing process. At the end of this process six papers were selected for this special issue. The selected papers address different and apparently distant issues which reflect the wide range of topics and perspectives assumed by research studies in serious games and games based learning.

The first paper, “Connected Gaming: An Inclusive Perspective for Serious Gaming”, is a write-up of the main ideas presented by Yasmin B. Kafai, University of Pennsylvania, USA, during her keynote speech at the GaLA Conf 2016 entitled “Connected gaming: what making video games can teach us about learning and literacy” [1]. The paper included in this special issue provides a nice, brief, overview of Yasmin Kafai work in this field, work which can be investigated more in-depth in her book on the same topic [2]

The second paper, “Acceptance of Game-Based Learning and Intrinsic Motivation as Predictors for Learning Success and Flow Experience”, is written by Manuel Ninaus, Kristian Kiili, Jake McMullen, and Korbinian Moeller on the basis of the paper that won the best paper award at GaLA Conf 2016: “A Game-Based Approach to Examining Students’ Conceptual Knowledge of Fractions” [3]. In the journal paper the authors show that students’ learning success and their quality of playing experience are predicted by measures of acceptance of game-based learning and intrinsic motivation for math.

The third paper, “Evaluation of Spatial Perspective Taking Skills Using a Digital Game with Different Levels of Immersion”, written by Laura Freina, Rosa Bottino, Mauro Tavella and Carlo Chiorri [4], shows that in immersive versions of a spatial perspective taking (SPT) game, players perform better than in a non-immersive version, suggesting that an immersive tool can better support performance in SPT tasks even if a completely immersive game (e.g. with a head mounted display) does not provide significantly better results than semi-immersive versions.

The fourth paper from Silvia Erika Kober, Johanna Louise Reichert, Daniela Schweiger, Christa Neuper, Guilherme Wood entitled “Does Feedback Design Matter? A Neurofeedback Study Comparing Immersive Virtual Reality and Traditional Training Screens in Elderly” [5], discusses the opportunities and problems offered by the use of virtual reality as a feedback modality in Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) applications

The fifth paper describes “RAGE Game Software Components Repository for Supporting Applied Game Development” and is written by A. Georgiev, A. Grigorov, B. Bontchev, P. Boytchev, K. Stefanov, W. Westera, R. Prada, P. Hollins, and P. Moreno, all participants in the European H2020 RAGE (Realising an Applied Gaming Eco-system) project [6]. This paper presents the architecture of the RAGE repository, which is a unique and dedicated infrastructure that provides access to a wide variety of advanced technology components for applied game development.

The sixth paper “EscapED: A Framework for Creating Educational Escape Rooms and Interactive Games for Higher/Further Education” by Samantha Clarke, Daryl J. Peel, Sylvester Arnab, Luca Morini, Helen Keegan and Oliver Wood [7] deals with how to develop a non-digital game based learning approach in education. The paper presents the framework on which the proposed approach is based and a discussion of a concrete use of such framework.

The guest editors are proud of presenting a varied mix of papers, especially in terms of perspectives and topics addressed. The special issue shows that a large amount of work is being done to develop models and methods for effective serious game deployment. However, we believe that more extensive/comparative user studies are necessary for a better validation of serious game effectiveness and for understanding when and how to use games to complement other educational means and approaches.

Finally, we would like to invite you to participate in the sixth GaLA Conference, which will be held from 5th to 7th of December 2017 in Lisbon (<http://www.galaconf.org>). It will be a great opportunity to share knowledge, opinions and ideas. There is a nice program with both methodological and technical papers. The program includes several tutorials and hands-on sessions, where projects and paper authors give live demonstrations of their games and interactive environments. Best paper and best game award are also foreseen and will be announced at the conference.

References

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