

Alessandro De Gloria – 1955-2023

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Alessandro De Gloria, 6 March 1955 – 20 March 2023

The editorial of this issue of the International Journal of Serious Games is the last one signed by our Editor in Chief and Founder, Prof. Alessandro De Gloria. Alessandro passed away in Genova, Italy, on March 20th, few days after his 68th birthday.

He founded the Serious Games Society and served as its first President, then as Honorary President. He founded also the Games and Learning Alliance Conference, of which he was the first General Chair and Honorary Chair.

Alessandro was Full Professor of Electronic Engineering at the Electrical, Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering and Naval Architecture Department of the University of Genova, where he was teaching at the Electronic Engineering MSc, Engineering Technology for Strategy MSc., Computer Science MSc. and Art History MA. He was the founder and leader of the ELIOS Lab research group in Electronic Engineering.

Culminating a prestigious and rapid academic career in the field of digital electronic, computer architecture and embedded systems, Alessandro, towards the end of the millennium, had the intuition that applications of electronic systems would soon have had a significant impact on the daily life of a large part of the people. Particularly, he committed to study and develop the application of two then early emerging technologies: touch screen and 3D virtual-reality. Serious Games represented a challenging domain for both these technologies, with an aim to build potentially great tools for education and training.

Leading and/or participating to European research projects (particularly, e-Tour, games@large, ELU, Chi:Kho, VitalMind), he and his team designed and implemented applications that now look like early prototypes of smartphones' apps. The tour guide for the Genoa's Aquarium [1] and the VeGame territorial game for the city of Venice [2] were developed as demonstrators of such new and widely spreading technologies. The Strada Nuova project, on the other hand, realized a 3D Virtual Reality video clip illustrating the history of the Renaissance "Via Aurea" road that was built as the representative district of the at that time world-powerful Genoese bank families. The clip was exhibited for years in the Museo Rosso, and Ciampi, the Italian President of the Republic, watched it with interest with the 3D glasses.

Based on these and similar experiences he proposed the Games and Learning Alliance (GaLA) project, which was accepted as a Network of Excellence (NoE) (2010-2014). GALA involved thirty partners from all over Europe.

To continue aims of the GALA NoE after the end of the public funding, Alessandro founded the Serious Games Society (SGS) in July 2012. Co-founders were Sylvester Arnab (Coventry University), Jannicke Baalsrud Hauge (BIBA- Bremer Institut fuer Produktion und Logistik), Francesco Bellotti (Università di Genova), Riccardo Berta (Università di Genova), Rosa Maria Bottino (CNR-ITD), Sara De Freitas (Coventry University), Igor Stefan Mayer (Delft University of Technology), Rob Nadolski (Open University of the Netherlands), Johann Riedel (Nottingham University), Wim Westera (Open University of the Netherlands). Alessandro was SGS president from 2012 to 2017, and then Emeritus President.

From the SGS two main high-value initiatives blossomed: the International Journal of Serious Games (IJSG) and the Games and Learning Alliance (GALA) Conference. The IJSG, which Alessandro firmly wanted to be a gold open access publication, with no charges nor for authors nor for readers, has now reached the tenth year of publications. Alessandro was its Editor in Chief since the foundation up to his death. Under his direction, the IJSG has been indexed by Scopus and ESCI Web of Science. GALA Conf will reach its 12th edition in Dublin, November 2023. He was general chair of the first four editions (Genova 2012, which was joint with VS-Games; Paris 2013; Bucharest 2014; Rome 2015). All GALA proceedings are indexed Scopus and Web of Science.

Looking back at these years, with Alessandro strongly committed to the goals of SGS, we can say that these two activities have been fundamental to create a proper science of digital serious games.

As a strong academic and charismatic leader, Alessandro has been a highly valued supervisor and mentor for many generations of students, doctoral candidates and an essential support for his colleagues at the University of Genova. He was the founder and leader of the Elios Lab, which developed pioneer serious games (e.g., Travel in Europe [3], Team [4], SciGame, besides the above mentioned VeGame) and made theoretical and experimental contributions that are now considered as foundations of the serious games research field (e.g. [5]), particularly in the areas of user assessment and profiling [6], mechanics [7], system architecture [8], flow and neural signals analysis [9], adaptivity [10].

As the research field got a certain level of maturity, Alessandro elaborated the idea of a new MSc degree program, focused on strategy. In 2018, after some years of academic fight, conducted with his proverbial conviction and strength, the MSc program in Engineering Technology for Strategy (and security) saw the light of day, and is now one of the most



attended MSc programs of the University of Genova, with students coming from all over the world.

We mourn a great friend, and a pioneer researcher and creative teacher, with a broad, constructive vision and outstanding team-building skills. The good he made will remain in time.

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