

The Convergence of Past, Present and Future: ISEA Archive Innovations

Bonnie Mitchell, Wim van der Plas

Bowling Green State University, Co-founder of ISEA

Bowling Green, USA, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

bonniem@bgsu.edu, wvdplas@xs4all.nl

Abstract

This institutional presentation investigates how the preservation of past ISEA digital artifacts influences the future, defines the present and contributes to the international exchange of knowledge. The process of constructing an innovative content management system containing 30 year's worth of data has been met with challenges as well as rewards. This presentation will critically analyze the state of the ISEA archive and discuss the innovative engine which was custom built to manage the ISEA data. It will discuss the process of dealing with thousands of digital artifacts and the connections created between archival systems. The project's ultimate goal is to envision a unified system of knowledge within the international Electronic Arts community and the construction of the ISEA archive is a key component to realizing that goal.

Keywords

ISEA, archive, preservation, electronic arts, digital arts, research repository, artifact

Introduction

Through the process of constructing the ISEA Symposium Archive, we have encountered a number of challenges and yet have succeeded in collecting, digitizing, and entering 30 year's worth of data into the archive. This material is located in a limited system as pages of information without cross relationships established between datum. At the same time, the development of a new sophisticated custom-built content management system is under construction. The lack of financial and administrative support has resulted in volunteer effort being the driving force behind the project. Through years of accumulating printed artifacts, Wim van der Plas (The Netherlands), the original co-founder of the ISEA, has been able to convert his physical collection into digital artifacts. The proceedings, scholarly papers, abstracts of presentations, artist bios, images of artworks, performances and other events make up the bulk of the material in the archive. Bonnie Mitchell (USA) and her team of students are working on the construction of the innovative custom-built content management system. The backbone is built upon the WordPress web development system using PODs and other Plug-in technologies. The goal is to create a system that is able to cross-reference information from various sources and serve advanced custom sort and search queries. Although the archive is in a constant development phase, it has garnished attention and has spurred discussions of the possibility of connecting archives across organizations.

Past

The ISEA archive's significant collection of papers, abstracts, artist statements, images, proceedings, catalogs, biographies, and other artifacts document the development of interdisciplinary practices in the arts, humanities, science, and electronic technology over the past 30 years. Consisting of thousands of artifacts, the collection contains groundbreaking ideas that paved the direction of research, development, and dissemination in the fields of electronic art and the humanities and sciences. One of the most important result has been the online documentation of the contributions of individuals involved in ISEA symposia. Seminal papers and other artifacts that have been hidden away on shelves in personal collections are now available. Yet ISEA, like all other electronic media organizations, houses its collection in a silo separated from other related information.

Present

The preservation of the past leads to a richer present. The artifacts in the ISEA archives are now being used by scholars as key components of their research and creative activities. The relatively new fields of Media Archeology and Digital Media History rely on the ISEA archives for a glimpse into the past. Contributors to ISEA symposia depend on an accurate record of their accomplishments to further their career goals. Artists gain inspiration from the innovative ideas of others that came before them. But the problem remains that the ISEA archives are separate and unconnected to other affiliated organizations' data collections.

Future

The formatting of data and the construction of the back-end content management system continues. Artifacts such as images, videos and audio files need to be acquired and entered. Funding sources need to be obtained to push the limits of what can be done. But the larger picture of connecting the resources of affiliated electronic media art organizations has begun. A meeting at the ISEA2018 symposium coupled with email exchanges has garnered interest in the idea. Mitchell's association with ACM SIGGRAPH has fostered a relationship resulting in shared resources. Overall the ISEA archive has become the catalyst for the creation of a unified system of knowledge within the international Electronic Arts community.

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OVERVIEW

This website is an archive of the printed and digital materials from the **International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA)**. Since 1988, this nomadic symposium has been organized in a different city by a different team each time. The ISEA symposium is overseen by ISEA International (<http://www.isea-web.org/>), a non-profit organization fostering interdisciplinary academic discourse and exchange among culturally diverse organizations and individuals working with art, science, the humanities and emerging technologies.

UPDATE

Since the fall of 2013, Wim van der Plas and Bonnie Mitchell have been working on version 2.0 of the archive, updating it to the present day. As of Feb. 2019 this new site, version 3.0, is being developed by a team of Bowling Green State University students led by Bonnie Mitchell and Jan Searleman and will incorporate numerous new features including cross connections between the data.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Archive Development Directors:

- Bonnie Mitchell – Bowling Green State University
- Jan Searleman – Clarkson University

Archive Content Director:

- Wim van der Plas – co-founder, ISEA

With Support from:

- Terry Wong – Hong Kong

2019 Student Development Team:

- Chase Fabianich – Bowling Green State University Junior
- Dietrich Wiles – Bowling Green State University Junior
- Deanna Granata – Bowling Green State University Junior

ISEA International Board Archive Committee (in formation):

- Mike Phillips (chair)
- Ricardo Dal Farra
- in liaison with Bonnie Mitchell & Wim van der Plas