

Bridging Knowledge: Connecting New Media Art Archives Panel

Carl Hoffmann, Paula Perissinotto, Terry C. W. Wong & Bonnie Mitchell

Center for Image Science, University for Continuing Education Krems, FILE – Electronic Language International Festival, ISEA, SIGGRAPH

Austria, Brasil, Canada, United States,

carl.hoffmann@donau-uni.ac.at, paula@file.org.br, terrywong.cw@gmail.com, bonniem@bgsu.edu

Abstract

The Connecting New Media Art Archives project has been developing a methodology to enable the sharing of information between currently 'siloes' online repositories of New Media Art. With representatives from collections across the globe, this panel will examine the design and technical implementation decisions required to actualize connecting information in the archives.

Creating connections between new media art archives involves technical, resource-availability and coordination challenges. To mitigate and adapt to such constraints, a clear articulation of the purpose(s) of connection can help to identify functional requirements and thus provide direction in technical choices. Accuracy, integrity and discoverability are our core principles. By creating an automatable methodology, the overarching goal to create a network of interconnected knowledge related to new media art is closer to realisation.

Keywords

archive, connectivity, new media art, online archive, discoverability, networked information, automation

Introduction

The Connecting New Media Art Archives pilot project is a joint effort between the Archive of Digital Art (ADA), Ars Electronica Archives, Electronic Language International Festival (FILE), International Symposium on Electronic Art Symposium Archives (ISEA) and ACM SIGGRAPH History Archives. These organizations have been focused on the development of online open access archives of information related to new media art in an effort to preserve this valuable knowledge. The Connecting Archives project has developed during the past year an approach which focuses on the accuracy, integrity and discoverability of information already documented, by conducting comparisons between archives' data structures, functionality, and a survey of data completeness. This quantitative approach identifies commonalities which can be leveraged for automation.

Accuracy and Integrity of Information

The archives that are involved in the Connecting Archives initiative all have different goals, and therefore content and structures. For example, ADA seeks to "expand the concept of documentation" by including technical material generated in support of the creation or exposition of a new

media art piece, whereas the SIGGRAPH History, ISEA and FILE archives document specific artifacts, experiences and presentations presented at a specific exposition.

Given the different purposes, maturity, and resources found across the domain of our overlapping collections, the comprehensiveness of information may vary between archives. Thus over the past year the project has surveyed information held in each archive by creating a Common Data Model. By analysing the model, the project has identified and selected data related to "persons" as a starting point for our "connecting" activities prototype activities. Through the use of a central hub, an archive will be able to indicate that it has content about a specific individual and thus provide an opportunity for other archives to reconcile this information with their own.

Discoverability

The initial investigations described above focus on a methodology which lends itself to automation, which is key to enhancing discoverability: Researchers, educators, artists and community members seeking information about new media artists and scholars currently depend on Internet search engines, which prioritize results based on algorithms which often de-emphasise less traversed sites and obscure information. However, search engines do weight the results of the search on the number of other sites which link to matching pages, as well as other criteria. Thus, a higher degree of links between disparate online archives increases discoverability by search engines. Developing automations for this process will sustainably increase the prominence of archives without operational burdens of the archives' administrators. Using the connection of information related to people as a starting point, the next step will be to connect information related to art events. By linking data related to people and art events located in each archive, we seek to broaden the publicly available information related to new media art with the hopes of inspiring future generations and facilitating innovative research.

Archive of Digital Art (ADA)

The Archive of Digital Art has documented the rapidly evolving field of digital art since 1999. This research-oriented overview of works at the intersection of art, science, and technology has been developed in cooperation with international media artists, researchers and institutions as a collective project. Since today's digital artworks are processual, ephemeral, interactive, multimedia-based, and fundamentally context dependent, they require a modified, or "expanded concept of documentation." Thus ADA documents, in addition to artworks themselves, technical information and media preservation data through cooperation with artists.

Electronic Language International Festival (FILE)

Throughout its history, FILE - Electronic Language International Festival, has built a unique collection of its kind, having held 50 exhibitions, exhibiting more than 8,000 national and international works in the field of art and technology, and exhibiting artists from 48 countries. The FILE archive uses a free software plugin, TAINACAN, and includes files in different formats, such as digitized publications, biographies, synopses, photographic records of exhibitions and works, as well as information on symposiums, workshops, artistic performances, and festival awards.

ISEA Symposium Archives

The International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA), consists of an academic conference, accompanied by art events and supported by workshops. The ISEA archive initiative documents the material presented and exhibited at ISEA symposia. Currently there are two online archives. The Classic contains text, PDF and links to videos whereas the New Archive is built using a database and taxonomies and includes relationships between data fields. The two archives act in tandem with text information researched, formatted, and added to the classic archive and then moved to the new archive to be interconnected to the existing data.

ACM SIGGRAPH History Archive

ACM SIGGRAPH is a Special Interest Group of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques. Since 1974, the SIGGRAPH organization has hosted an annual conference showcasing some of the world's most innovative and creative research and endeavors in the field. The ACM SIGGRAPH History archive serves as the central repository for information from the SIGGRAPH conferences, the SIGGRAPH Asia conferences, the Digital Art Community online exhibitions, and other SIGGRAPH content. This online archive is supported by a physical archive containing printed material and artifacts which is currently housed at Bowling Green State University.

Author(s) Biography(ies)

Carl Hoffmann is an information architect and project manager specialising in the development and lifecycle of semi-structured information repositories with experience across a variety of industries and cultural domains. He is currently Project Manager of the "Infrastructures for Digital Arts Teaching and Research in Higher Education" a 4 year project at the Center for Image Science at the University for Continuing Education, on the Danube in Krems, Austria while pursuing his Master of Arts in Media Art History.

Paula Perissinotto is specialized in new media, contemporary art and digital culture. Co-founder, organizer and curator of FILE, the International Electronic Language Festival. PHD student at Arts | ECA, in Visual Poetics. Member of the Realidades Research Group licensed by CNPq, led by Profa. Dr. Silvia Laurentiz. Master's in Visual Poetics by ECA (School of Communications and Arts of USP University of São Paulo) with specialization in Curatorship and Cultural Practices in Art and New Media by MECAD / ESDI in (Barcelona / ES). Since 2020 has been coordinating the FILE archive Project. archive.file.org.br.

Terry C. W. Wong is an archivist and co-organizer for the ISEA Archives. He has a bachelor's degree from the Applied Science Department of the University of British Columbia and a Master's degree in Fine Art at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Currently, he is working on his graduate research study on connecting new media art archiving worldwide in the School of Interactive Arts and Technology at Simon Fraser University. Terry has been involved with the development and organizing the New Media Art Archiving Summit since 2017. He is currently a member of the organizing committee for the Summit. Before working in new media art archiving, he was also an engineer, artist, and a member of the ISEA2016 organizing team.

Bonnie Mitchell is a digital artist, animator, archivist as well as a professor of Digital Arts at Bowling Green State University in the USA. Her creative work includes interactive installation art, environmental data visualization art, experimental visual music animation, net-art, and new media art archive development. Bonnie is the co-director of the SIGGRAPH History and ISEA Symposium online Archives. She is also a member of the ISEA International Advisory Committee, the ACM SIGGRAPH History and Digital Arts Committees and is the SIGGRAPH 2023 History Chair in charge of the 50th conference celebration.