

ISEA Symposium Archives: Recent Developments

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on the ISEA Archives team's latest efforts in improving its online repositories to preserve the records of the ISEA Symposium series, a nomadic international cultural exchange experience over the last four decades: archiving the contributors and their works, including the documentation and videos of the paper presentations, artistic creations, presentations, exhibitions, performances, concerts, workshops, general events and the symposium organisation itself.

Keywords

ISEA, archive, symposium, preservation, electronic arts, digital arts, new media art, research repository, YouTube channel, connecting archives.

Introduction

Archiving a large nomadic symposium, consisting of academic papers and all kinds of art events that have been running for 35 years on all continents of the world, is a huge task. To do this without any financial means is an almost impossible job. Yet the ISEA Symposium Archives still manage to do this. In this talk, presenters from the ISEA Archives will guide you through the Archives' latest developments.

ISEA Symposium & Archives: Brief History

When the idea of the ISEA conference (subsequently called symposium) was conceived by Theo Hesper, he and Wim van der Plas started to work on realising it. The explicit aim was to start a network of organisations interested in the relationship between art and science. Even though they called it FIRST International Symposium on Electronic Art, their thoughts were not about starting a symposia series. History decided that after the first two symposia in the Netherlands, it was wanted in Sydney (AU), Minneapolis (US), Helsinki (FI), etc. And so, ISEA became a nomadic event. This nomadic character became one of its main characteristics.

ISEA was global, making it hard to find subsidisers or sponsors who would support a central organisation. Thus, coordination of the series of symposia was in the hands of unfunded volunteers (and that largely still is the situation). Due to these circumstances, there was never really a well-kept central archive. In 2006, a one-time subsidy by the Mondriaan Stichting (NL) allowed ISEA to start building an online archive. The first version was presented at ISEA2008 in Singapore.

ISEA Symposium Archives: Recent Developments

The ISEA Archives are currently archiving all the ISEA symposium editions with two versions of online archival repositories: the ISEA Classic Archive and the ISEA New Archive [1][2]. Both archive versions are constantly updated with information about the symposium series during the transition phase of fully migrating from the Classic to the New ISEA Archive. The Classic Archive has now included the full documentation of ISEA2022 (Barcelona), including a large amount of videos of the 2022 symposium entered to YouTube, where the archives have their own channel [3]. Also, during the last year, a large number of analogue video tapes from early ISEA symposia have been digitized and included in the YouTube channel, thanks to some financial help from the Heritage Volunteers Fund (NL).

The Classic archive is a text-based version developed in 2012 to restore the archival data from the earlier version started in 2006. To improve on the Classic, the New archive version was created in 2019 with enhanced data structures and embedded metadata, allowing better data management and searchability. Moreover, the New Archive can handle thousands of images, videos, and other rich media.

Nevertheless, data migration and developing a new archive repository pose a considerable risk of incorrect or lost data during the process. Some errors are easier to identify, but some of these inconsistencies need thorough cross-checking between the two versions. It is a very time-consuming process, and it can only rely on experienced archivists and trained volunteers in the archive team to proofread the content.

Acknowledgements

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References

- [1] ISEA Symposium Classic Archive Website, accessed March 09, 2022, <https://www.isea-archives.org>
- [2] ISEA Symposium New Archive Website, accessed March 09, 2022, <https://isea-archives.siggraph.org>
- [3] ISEA Symposium Archive YouTube channel Website, accessed March 09, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/@iseasympo-umarchivevideos6425>

Authors Biographies

Wim van der Plas is co-founder of ISEA and organiser of the three ISEA symposia held in the Netherlands. He led ISEA HQ in the first 8 years of its existence and was a board member of the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts and ISEA International (both of which he also was co-founder) until 2017. Since then, he is Honorary Chair of the ISEA International Advisory Committee and ISEA Symposium archivist. He received a Leonardo Pioneer Award in 2018.

Bonnie Mitchell is a new media artist and Professor at Bowling Green State University in Digital Arts, in Bowling Green, Ohio, USA. Mitchell is a member of the ISEA International Advisory Committee and ACM SIGGRAPH History and Digital Arts Committee where she focuses on the development of their online archives. She is currently the SIGGRAPH 2023 conference History Chair in charge of the immersive Time Tunnel, history displays and retrospective talks. Her current creative practice focuses on development of physically immersive data visualization environments that showcase climate change over time. Mitchell's artworks explore spatial and experiential relationships to our physical, social, cultural and psychological environment through interaction, abstraction and audio. She has created numerous abstract visual music installations and animations that have been shown in hundreds of venues world-wide.

Jan Searleman taught Computer Science at Clarkson University for 37 years, retired in 2015, and since retirement has been an Adjunct Research Professor at Clarkson. Her research areas are Virtual Environments, Human-Computer Interaction, and Artificial Intelligence. A senior member of the ACM, Jan is also on two ACM SIGGRAPH Committees: Digital Art (DAC) and History. Jan and Bonnie Mitchell coordinated a DAC Online Exhibition "The Earth, Our Home: Art, Technology and Critical Action". She is co-director of the ACM SIGGRAPH History Archive with Bonnie Mitchell. Jan also co-directs the ISEA Symposium Archive with Bonnie Mitchell, Wim van der Plas, and Terry C.W. Wong.

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 from 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 New Media Art Archiving Summit that takes place at a few editions of ISEA. 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 member of the ISEA2016 organizing team.