JOURNAL OF THE NEW TECHNO HUMANITIES

Call for Papers

Title: New Media, Interactive Audiences, and the Virtual. Next Generation Narratives

Short title: Interactivity and Virtual Reality

Submission Timeline:

Submission of Abstracts: 30 April 2021
Invitation to write a full article or commentary: 15 May
Submission of completed articles: 30 October
Peer review process: 6 months - estimated

Professional Commentaries

We will consider short futuristic interventions or signposts from pioneering professionals working in emerging narratives and technology.

Academic Articles

Background

This new journal targets at the creative aspect of the humanities still to be fully

recognized in the established classification and methodology of disciplines. By embracing the practical extension of the latest scientific and technological methods, the journal aims to provide a forum for transdisciplinary discussion and in-depth analysis on the nature and development of humanities, as well as the latter's interface with other disciplines.

The journal welcomes contributions from the pragmatic and experimental approaches by employing new technological methodologies, such as computational methods, visualization, data archives, processing and interaction, or surveys. The journal also welcomes philosophical, hermeneutic, critical, rhetorical, and historical approaches to interpretations of scientific and technological phenomena, focusing on their ontologies, nature, histories, methodologies and prospect of development.

New Techno Humanities will publish original research articles, review articles and book reviews on the topics including, but not limited to Methodology, Authorship attribution/ stylometry/ stylistics, Modelling, digital visualization, Digital cultural heritage, Digital cultural heritage, Data visualization, statistical analysis, big data, Semantic web technology, network theory, Translation studies with technological methods, Corpus analysis, and Textual analysis.

Motivation

In 2017 Klaus Schwab, chairperson of the World Economic Forum, described the fundamental changes brought about by the expansion of digital domain, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (among other developments) as the 'fourth industrial revolution'. He describes a world where individuals move between digital domains and offline reality with the use of connected technology to enable and manage their lives. This is significantly different to previous social and economic regimens in terms of its velocity, scope, and systems impact, and "it is disrupting almost every industry in every country. And the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance". In this arrangement, knowledge workers provide focus, creativity, and leverage in using those investments to achieve the organization's objectives more efficiently. In other words, knowledge is an integral part of total management and cuts across functional boundaries.

Much of what has been developed in the realm of 4IR is driven by advances in science, technology and software development. These are all essential components for the comprehension of phenomena; however, the content of software and creative outputs and manner in which people, both as creators and consumers, interface with the content, is often neglected. This special issue is intended specifically to focus on the aspect of the narrative in digital audio-visual formats, including gaming, motion books, virtual and augmented reality forms. It further aims to develop methods of visually representing the progress of narrative in these 'new' modalities, specifically in terms of its space-time compression and dilation. The value of the research is to shift the discussion of 4IR from the predominantly technicist to a more interdisciplinary and holistic dialogue of content, form and narrative that was available during the previous period of analogue media.

Where text-based film theorists prevailed during the 20st century, now in the 21st it is software programmers, gamers and media agencies who are driving both practice and theory. They are simultaneously relocating the interpreter (viewer) of new media from being a spectator to being a co-author of plot outcomes. The late 1980s saw a 'theoretical turn' towards the concept of the 'active audience', arguing that savvy media audiences do not receive information passively, but are actively involved in the sense-making of messages within the contexts of their social, class and personal experiences. The 'interactive' nature of digital media has extended this notion: not only do audiences make sense of what they consume, they actively co-create meaning. This is most clearly seen in gaming, in which the 'story line' is determined by the choice of the player's moves to shape the outcome of the narrative in various directions. Games and gamification are becoming a popular field of research, which New Techno Humanities will study.

The new theorists of the virtual (the new media) are addressing issues of multi-dimensional multi-platform interaction, and multi-media real time spectatorship that includes virtual-enabled interactions of various kinds. The issue here involves next-generation narratives, immersed audiences and interactive experiences with content enabled by new technologies. These are generated by cross-platform experiences that anticipate new types of audiences searching for deeper access to the minds of characters they encounter in the digital media, but also how they can shape narrative digestion.

A key question is: is the idea of spectatorship still relevant, or should it be reformulated in a loose Boalian performative sense of spect-actor where spectators become involved in the shaping of narrative outcomes?   Normative theories can be no longer automatically applied in the body-less, borderless, immersive dynamic intertextual media age, that is taking shape in the 4IR era. In semiology, film theory is treated as a language while

in Peirceian semiotics visual narrative theory is treated as a conversation between participant and text. New kinds of multi-faceted narrative arise out of these kinds of virtual relations that displace spectators from cinema seats into a networked world that involves spect-actors from anywhere.

A second research question thus concerns how individuals appropriate and use such technologies in their own lives. Thirdly, how can the content they create benefit to re-

balancing society in terms of both message making and product delivery? For instance, the infancy of intellectual property crypto currency solutions driven through blockchain such as Etheruem based Singles tokens and the Unlock protocol, instigate the roots for a potential democratization of an artist first-rights management system that significantly undermines the status quo of the current entertainment economy.

As a practitioner who can execute ‚future' narrative forms, as well as an academic who specializes in the theoretical discourse of various forms of narrative execution, the digital creator's ability is of storyform to develop a craft-first theory in the climate of the 4IR ‘digital area/canvas'. Where software companies are tech oriented, there is a need for associated critical analytical study of the sector and how it is applied, by who, with what effects.

The purpose of the special issue is the exploration of systems of representation that will allow us to model, or ‘see' the warping of time and space in relation to a specific narrative output. This process merges metaphysics with narrative architecture and visual and other representations of spatial-temporal signification. This aspect of visualizing digital narratology, including quite specifically virtual reality and enhanced reality, is key to providing tools to understand the ways in which the content of 4IR is understood.

Bakhtin's chronotope legitimizes the idea of the space-time meaning within the literary realm. However, in in this number of JNTH we want to include visual representations (models) of concrete visual narratives with the specific focus on space-time as the primary organizer of meaning, as well as an anchor of dramatic unfoldings (diegesis) or analysis of ‘fabric' within narrative. This fabric is of course metaphysical, rather than material. In a metaphorical manner it manifests itself as solidified, concrete expression of the space-time narrative. This is because in the case of digital texts, a trail of information is able to be indexed as a result of the digital pipeline through which the visual representation must occur. This information includes colour, light, narrative density among other indices.

This visual representation, or mapping, of space-time within a narrative, is dependent on a dialogue between metaphysics, visual representation, space-time rhetoric, trails of digital information, narratology and the configuration between audience and the represented fictional world to which the audience is potentially immersed. These concepts are understood as metaphysical, rather than material manifestations, and are not necessarily

bound to any specific narrative form, since any form of narrative is chronotopic in nature.

Submission Guidelines:

Guest Editors

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Dr Keyan G Tomaselli is Distinguished Professor, Humanities Dean's Office, University of Johannesburg, a Laureate Fellow of the International Communicology Institute, and a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. He is editor of Critical Arts and founder and co-editor of Journal of African Cinemas.

 Damien R Tomaselli

Dr Damien R Tomaselli is a postdoctoral fellow at the Visual Identities in Art and Design (VIAD), based at the University of Johannesburg. He works as a cinematic transmedia storyteller and is a Fellow of the International Communicology Institute. His Ph.D. thesis is entitled, 'Cosmology of the Relativistic Multi-Modal Chronotope. A metaphysical lens on how creators may rhetorically embed fictional spacetime into various story-world configurations for dramatic narratives.' He is also co-founder of an international storytelling association for professional practitioners involved with emerging narrative forms, called The Cauldron. He is also managing editor, Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa.