

Annotated list of research publications submitted for assessment

Dr. art. dissertation

Walker, Jill. *Fiction and Interaction: How Clicking a Mouse Can Make You Part of a Fictional World*. Dr. art. dissertation, Dept of Humanistic Informatics, University of Bergen.

My PhD dissertation is an exploration of digital art and narrative works where the user is positioned as a character in the fictional world of the work. I use narratological theories and Walton's theory of fictional worlds to untangle problems of what interaction with a digital work of art is. The question of control is important – users of these works submit to the work in many ways.

Here is an extract from the committee's assessment of the dissertation:

The originality of the dissertation lies in the following areas:

Data selected: Walker's study goes much beyond the well-studied genres of digital texts, namely literary hypertext and computer games. While these genres serve as standard of comparison, together with print fictions, Walker brings into the discussion texts that have not, to our knowledge, received extensive critical attention: Web-based texts that use e-mail or other devices to collect personal information from the user; digital hoaxes; and "pseudo" computer games whose main purpose is not to provide challenging player action but to convey a political message.

Theoretical approach: The issue of whether digital interactive texts are or are not narratives has been one of the most controversial in new media studies. Walker finds an elegant alternative to the dilemma by regarding these texts as fictions as invitations to the user to become part of an imaginary world. Kendall Walton's concept of "fiction as a game of make-believe" and his notion of "depiction" — which has not been tested before on digital texts — provides a very efficient approach to the issue of user participation in the worlds of digital fiction and place the texts under study in an interdisciplinary perspective. In fact, Walker may have located the true home, i.e. the strongest domain of application of Walton's theory. In its original form, this theory creates an analogy between children's games of make-believe and artistic texts, such as standard literary fiction and the visual arts. While "game of make-believe" describes literature and art only metaphorically, the notion applies quite literally to the interactive texts analyzed by Walker, since in these texts the user really performs actions, and since many of these texts are genuine games.

Critical analysis of interactivity: While earlier studies of digital texts have defended the view that interactivity empowers users by enabling them to participate in the creation of the fictional world, Walker takes a much more nuanced approach. She studies several cases of "fake interactivity" where the

program asks the user for input, but develops its narrative in a pre-determined way, without taking this input into consideration. But this “fake” or non-consequential interactivity is not without functionality, since it facilitates the user’s immersion in the fictional world. Walker also refines current conceptions of user participation in texts by proposing an original typology that cross-classifies two criteria into four categories: user internal vs. external to discourse; user internal vs. external to story.

Several parts of my dissertation were published elsewhere while I was working on it: Chapter 4 was published in the *Cybertext Yearbook 2000* and a version of chapter 3 was published in Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin’s anthology *First Person*, on MIT Press. A paper that grew into chapters 1 and 2 was published in the proceedings of MelbourneDAC 2003. Please see my CV for exact details.

Bloggning, Hypertext and the Shape of the Web

Rettberg, Jill Walker. *Bloggning*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

This monograph about blogging positions blogs in a broader context, historically and in terms of research on communication, narrativity, hypertext and social networks. There are chapters analysing blogs as journalism, commercial blogging and blogs as narratives, and also theoretical chapters that examine blogging as part of the history of communication and publication.

Polity Press is a level 2 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

"Weblog", Definition for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, Routledge 2005.

I was asked to write a 500 word definition of weblog for the Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, and used my own blog to receive comments on my drafts. This process was extremely useful, and the definition has been frequently cited. For a long time it was the number one hit on Google for “weblog definition” and it remains high in the results. At the time weblogs had been little discussed in terms of narrativity. My main contribution in this short definition is in pointing out that weblogs are serial and cumulative, similar to episodic forms of narrative but open-ended in a way that a printed book never can be.

Routledge is a level 2 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

Walker, Jill. "Blogging from Inside the Ivory Tower". In *Uses of Blogs*, edited by Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs. Peter Lang. 2006.

This contribution to an anthology on blogging discusses the difficulties of scholarly blogging.

Peter Lang is a level 1 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

Rettberg, Jill Walker. "Feral Hypertext: When Hypertext Literature Escapes Control", in Hunsinger, Jeremy et.al. (eds) *International Handbook of Internet Research*. Springer, 2009. (Earlier version published in the proceedings of *ACM Hypertext 2005, Salzburg September 6-9, 2005*.)

This article explores the historical development of hypertext, arguing that we have seen a transition from early visions and implementations of hypertext that primarily dealt with using hypertext to gain greater control over knowledge and ideas, to today's messy Web. Pre-Web hypertext can be seen as a domesticated species bred in captivity. On the Web, however, some breeds of hypertext have gone feral. Feral hypertext is no longer tame and domesticated, but is fundamentally out of our control. In order to understand and work with feral hypertext, we need to accept this and think more as hunter-gatherers than as the farmers we have been for domesticated hypertext. The article discusses hypertext in general with an emphasis on literary and creative hypertext practice.

Springer is a level 1 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

Walker, Jill. "Links and Power: The Political Economy of Linking on the Web." *Library Trends* Spring 2005 (53)4. 524-529.

In 2002 I presented a short paper on this topic at the ACM Hypertext conference, discussing how the ways Google uses links as indicators of value in its search algorithm greatly affect our access to information on the web. According to Google Scholar, this short paper is cited by 55 other research publications. A couple of years later I was asked to revise the paper for *Library Trends*, allowing me to include the introduction of Google Mail and Google's purchase of Blogger in my analysis. Were I to rework the paper today I would certainly include the commercialisation of blogging, where popular bloggers are sponsored by companies and not-so-popular-bloggers use services like "Pay-per-post" to earn \$5 for blogging about a particular product. To some extent, chapter 6 of my book *Blogging* continues this line of thought.

Library Trends is a level 1 journal in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

Social Media, Representation and Narrativity

This is the research area that currently interests me the most. The following articles were written separately, but I am currently working on a book project that will combine issues raised in these articles with work still in progress.

Rettberg, Jill Walker. 2009. "Freshly Generated for You, and Barack Obama": How Social Media Represent Your Life. *European Journal of Communication* 24(4) December 2009.

This paper discusses the ways in which social media help us craft the narratives of our lives. Many discussions of social media look at self-presentation and the construction of identity on social network sites in particular and the Internet in

general. This article switches the focus from the moment of self-construction and instead looks at ways in which social media represent our lives by filtering the data we feed into them through templates and by displaying simplified patterns, visualisations and narratives back to us. The paper argues that social media helps users to see themselves by taking their raw data and representing it in structured form, and gives examples of different ways in which this data is presented.

The European Journal of Communication is a level 2 journal in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

"Mirrors and Shadows: The Digital Aestheticisation of Oneself". Proceedings of Digital Arts and Culture, Copenhagen 2005. Pages 184-190.

Digital cameras have made self-portraits increasingly common, and frequently we post our self-portraits online. This paper compares online photographic self-portraiture with self-representations in weblogs and the creation of visual avatars. Contemporary projects and quotidian practice is connected to the history of self-writing and self-portraiture, as well as to psychoanalytic theories of how we use our own mirror images to come to an understanding of our selves. The paper concludes that our contemporary fascination with reflections and shadows is an expression of our newfound subjectivity as individuals able to represent ourselves rather than simply succumb to the generalisations of mass media.

"Distributed Narrative: Telling Stories Across Networks". In Consalvo, Mia, and Kate O'Riordan (eds.) *Internet Research Annual 2004*, Vol. 3. Peter Lang, New York, 2005. 91-103.

I proposed the term "distributed narratives" in a paper given at the Association of Internet Researchers' annual conference in 2004, and it was one of twelve papers selected for publication in the *Internet Research Annual* (there were over 100 papers presented at the conference). This paper was an early attempt to get to grips with the ways in which narratives work differently in social media and across websites than they do in traditional print and cinema, or even in single-work hypertexts such as those created with Storyspace and sold on diskettes in the 1990s. Distributed narratives don't bring media together to make a total artwork. Distributed narratives explode the work altogether, sending fragments and shards across media, through the network and sometimes into the physical spaces that we live in. This project explores this new narrative trend, looking at how narrative is spun across the network and into our lives.

Peter Lang is a level 1 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

Game Studies

Corneliussen, Hilde and Jill Walker Rettberg (eds.) *Digital Culture, Play and Identity: A World of Warcraft Reader*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008.

I co-edited this anthology on the popular Massively Multi-User Online Game (MMOG) with my colleague Hilde Corneliussen. We organised a symposium in Bergen for contributors and went through several iterations of revisions, leading to a volume published by MIT Press that was called “one of the finest thought-provoking collections of diverging perspectives on a single game that one is likely to find” by Alexander Mawyer in a review for *New Media & Society* 11(4). Corneliussen and I co-wrote the introduction, which contextualizes the game in relationship to research on games as well as its popular reception and global spread.

I also contributed a chapter to the anthology, “Quests in World of Warcraft: Deferral and Repetition”, which discusses the way in which quests and their simple narrative forms are used in making a network of stories for the game. I show that the kinds of quest offered are made up of only a few basic options, and use narratology and rhetorical analysis to describe these structures.

Corneliussen and I were equally involved in all the work for this anthology. My name is listed second for alphabetical purposes, not as a “second author”.

MIT Press is a level 2 publisher in the Norwegian register of scientific journals, series and publishers.

The anthology and my chapter in it represents my main work in game studies, although I also have a chapter in my dissertation that examines community-created web games that deal with the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the consequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.