TURN ON LITERATURE

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Electronic Literature in Libraries

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TURN ON LITERATURE

How can libraries introduce new digital literature to the public?

It has been the objective of the "Turn on Literature" project to find solutions to this question. The partners have approached the field of digital literature through the work with literary installations, exhibitions and workshops in Romania, Denmark and Norway. The general idea has been to seize the opportunities that digital literature offers for audience development and to reposition the library.

Digital literature is an emerging field where authors combine language with the affordances of digital devices (such as computers, tablets, sensors, RFID chips, smart phones etc.) to create contemporary literature. This partnership would like to pave the way for the cultural sector to reach new generations of readers and present new ways of staying relevant.

In this publication we present all the experiences we have collected, our best practice tips, recommendations and lots of digital literature. We hope to inspire you to get started with digital literature in your organization.

The Turn on Literature partnership, Ramnicu Valcea, Roskilde, Bergen, 2018

Being a Part of Literature's Digital Adventure - Right Here and Right Now

Literature is always on the move. The experimental arena of digital literature is one of those moves to follow. The modern library and cultural institutions should seize the opportunity to reposition themselves and suit their visitors' needs in an increasingly digitized world. It is time to move and be moved.

Photo and work by Jason Nelson & Alinta Krauth. Digital projection at Bergen Public Library

Literature has always been the place where the new and discomforting has been addressed. People have looked to literature to understand the development of society and our own role in it. This also applies to digital literature, a fictional space, where we can make our own experiences with the urgent digital transformation happening right here and now. In an increasingly digitized world, where cultural consumption has moved to screens and digital devices, literature should still play a key role as a space of reflection and criticism. If the novel, as some say, was the literary expression of industrialized society, then digital literature arguably is the literary form of the digital age.

Although one should rather not talk of a form of digital literature, but a plurality of forms. Digital literature takes many different directions and comes in many shapes. Interactive novels, app-literature, installations mixing physical and digital media, game-like applications, generative and combinatory poetry, social media literature. So all kinds of wondrous stuff. One does not know what to expect next and

that is one of the constants in digital literature: you will be surprised.

The role of the author might be a different one in the future. Programming, sound, video, animation, user interaction are all creative languages that are at the service of the digital writer. All are part of the poetic expression and they can have as strong an impact as the written language. To create digital writing you need to combine these modes of expression. This means that the author needs technical skills or, as is often the case, enter into a collaboration with others. Authors' new opportunities to engage readers have meant that many works are visual, playful and involving readers in a active and creative mode. For libraries these characteristics have proved particularly fruitful for reaching young people, creating surprising experiences in the library space and opening up for collaboration with schools. The experience from Turn on Literature is that digital literature fits right into modern school curricula, where there is a strong emphasis on digital literacy and multimodal reading. We have experienced it is possible with e-lit to reach to new audiences that are fascinated by the digital and interactive. When literature is presented in new formats, some of the prejudices and barriers surrounding ”fine” literature can be transcended. Young gamers and social media savvies can feel more comfortable reading poetry.

Literature is always on the move and so should cultural institutions be. With digital literature we embark on a new journey that challenges libraries, but also brings literature to the platforms where people are spending their time.

A Definition of Digital Literature

E-lit, interactive narratives, digital literature, app-literature …. digital forms of literature has many names, may take many forms and can be defined in just as many ways. In Turn on literature we have outlined the field with our own definition.

Digital literature is:

- Born digital
- Consciously using the affordances of new media
- Dynamic and interactive
- Language oriented and with a literary intent

Any definition is of course debatable, but there are (at least) two important points, which our definition solves. Firstly it differentiate digital literature from digitized books (not born digital) and e-books (not using the affordances of new media). Secondly the criteria of literary intent distinguish digital literature from other forms of digital expressions, such as digital art, computer games and so on.

EXHIBITIONS

The Exhibitions in the project were established to show that literature is not confined to books, but also unfolds in other media. The three countries have created three different exhibitions tailored to fit the context of each library and country. The exhibitions have shown works from the shortlist of the contest held by the project and locally selected works.

Turn on Literature Prize

In the spring of 2017 over 50 international works of digital literature from esteemed authors were submitted to the Turn on Literature Prize, the call was open to all and the winning work would be displayed in the libraries participating in the project.

Seven works were shortlisted and among those the winner ABRA was chosen. Eight more works got an honorable mention due to the high quality of the works.

In the following section you can read the accounts from the three participating libraries about their experiences with the exhibitions. When it comes to digital literature, traditional library approaches like lending out materials and presenting physical objects on shelves are for obvious reasons out of the question. Instead, exhibitions in combination with talks, workshops and guided tours were chosen as the primary platforms to increase public awareness of digital literature. This had a very different outcome in the three participating libraries.

An Exhibition as Part of a Larger Event

Large event with mayor Marte Mjøs Persen (in red) and head of culture Bergen municipality Julie Andersland (in blue) with prize winning author Ian Hatcher.

In Bergen, the library took advantage of their highly profiled centennial anniversary to reach a larger audience. The opening of the exhibition of Turn on Literature was set to the big 100 anniversary event at the library, a 3-day event that focused on the past, present and future. Making the exhibition a part of a larger event had advantages, and of course some challenges. It gave many visitors the opportunity to experience the exhibition, as its central location in the library made this inevitable.

QUOTE Library worker, Bergen:

It was essential to make contact with visitors. Without me coming over I think they would have just had a quick look, wondered at what this was and walked on. To interact with the works it was important to create interest, especially for the child, but also the mother. They had great fun exploring the works together.

The exhibition became this way an extra and for many, surprising bonus to their visit to the library. Digital literature is after all still a rather small part of literature and it might be hard to draw large crowds to experience an exhibition alone. By combining the exhibition with a major event, the Turn on Literature exhibition received attention from politicians, the mayor and municipality officials (library owner) as well as the general public.

The opening also featured two special events by the poetry machine author Morten Langeland and Ian Hatcher, winner of the Turn on Literature Prize. During the 5 weeks display at the library visitors had a printed catalogue at hand, guiding them through the works of the exhibition. Next to each work was a short description of how to engage with the work and a stipulation of the minimum time needed. How did visitors respond to this new literary experience? The Norwegian library observed that children that came to the library was easily engaged with the exhibition and this created interest also with their parents to explore the works. Young library users and students were often comfortable with the technical aspect of digital literature, but were perhaps also a little harder to surprise?

The exhibition worked very well as a social reading/co-creation experience.

The traditional library users were often more difficult to engage. For the older users this may be caused by their unfamiliarity with electronic devices. The library event especially for seniors with poet Morten Langeland created interest in the process and work behind the creation of content, but when invited to try the machine, they were not so ready to engage.

Workshops and collaboration with schools

For the workshops with young adults we found it useful to curate a smaller exhibition after the main exhibition period.

This was curated especially for the young users, exhibiting 8 works instead of 18. The workshops were held in a calmer period both for the library and the school terms. The workshops were popular with the students who especially liked the poetry machine, the gaming inspired work and the easily accessible narratives.

Collaboration with schools is especially recommended, and the workshops were enjoyed as a good learning experience by students, teachers and library workers alike.

Wild Forms of Literature

The exhibition "Literature in wild forms – from A to 3D" ran at Roskilde Libraries from 4 October to 13 November 2017. Roskilde Library hosted over 20 new Danish and international digital works along with artist books, book sculptures and old 17th century books print. Visitors were taken on a journey through literature's many forms and formats. It was arguably the largest overall presentation of digital literary works in Denmark in 2017 and it certainly was the most

ambitious exposure of digital literature at the library so far. That said, it can be problematic to exhibit in a library. At libraries, like the one in Roskilde, you have many different activities and services close to each other in the same space. The multipurpose spaces often makes it difficult for visitors to see exhibitions as a whole. Earlier experiences at Roskilde Library had shown that visitors did not always understand the displayed works as part of a larger curated exhibition. Staff were unable to clear the confusion, as they did not know enough about the exhibited works. Signs and written explanations were overlooked. In addition, people visiting the library often visit on their own, with a specific purpose and with little time for detours.

"Literature in Wild Forms" needed to challenge these issues. The threefold task was clear. 1) Let people know there is an exhibition. 2) Let staff guide users. 3) Guide people to see the exhibition as a whole. The ambition was to encourage library visitors to have the expectations and curious frame of mind you would have when visiting a museum and to go to the library just to see the exhibition with the catalogue in your hand and staff to guide you.

To achieve this a national PR campaign was carried out with advertising in national and regional magazine and newspapers as well as Facebook boosting. National advertising was a first for the library. An exhibition designer created the layout and the visual expression of the displays. To further increase the understanding printed catalogues were made available.

INTERVIEW: "You visit the library and all kind of things are happening"

What does the library visitor think of digital literature in the public space? We sat down with Tina Tønnes Sørensen, an avid reader of novels and a regular visitor at the library, to hear her view on things.

"I think the exhibition is really well put together and you illustrate quite well a question like: What are the limits of literature? And I don't believe that the lovely book , that we enjoy spending time with is on it's way out, but there's no doubt that the limits of literature have dissolved.

I'm incredible happy that this exhibition is set in a library. In my vision - and as Roskilde Library is on it's way to do, it is the future; that you visit the library and all kind of things are happening there as it has always been. You pop by the library browsing through the books, touching them, immersing yourself in the stories and reading them.

These digital works show precisely that it is still how it's going to be. You will still go to the library and have that kind of experience. As it is in a public space, where everybody can interact with the screens and works, this is going to be the future for people. I believe that an exhibition like this points to the future. The library has been very forward looking in engaging in this."

To create enthusiasm for the exhibition and a sense of ownership among the staff a great effort was made in Denmark to introduce and teach the staff at the library about digital literature and the exhibition.

There were weekly guided tours just for the staff and presentations of works on the library intranet. Staff was then assigned to be available in the exhibition and greet visitors. As a result the staff played an important part in creating a good experience for the visitors.

In conjunction with the exhibition we offered the local schools and high schools tours of the library and a workshop on how to review and discuss digital literature.

Those workshops were overbooked and we had to expand the number of workshops.

This shows that working with digital literature is a field that schools are increasingly focusing on.

Ramnicu Valcea
A National Premiere – A Digital Literature Exhibition

When arriving at the county library in downtown Ramnicu Valcea the first thing to meet you in the impressive entrance hall would be the Turn on Literature exhibition. Highly visible to anyone entering, the works would inevitably rase questions.

The most common one being: "How does it work?". Once the display had triggered the users' curiosity there were a genuine interest in the works and the novelty of the exhibition. The staff was ready and prepared to demonstrate how to work the computers in order to see the works.

This was essential. As people knew very little about digital literature, the librarians had an important role in explaining the genre.

The exhibition was a successful first for the Antim Ivireanul Valcea Library. It was in fact the first exhibition of digital literature in Romania, where digital literature is scarcely known. Even in the academic field only a few papers has been published and there has only been few attempts to publish or to create digital literature works.

While the Norwegian and Danish partner libraries had some tradition of working with digital literature, the library in Ramnicu Valcea had none, which is probably the case for most European libraries. The library managed to put together an exhibition of the newest digital works only with the equipment already at hand in the library and to spur the curiosity of their everyday visitors. This is a testament to the view that digital literature can play a part in any forward-minded library. It is an approachable and user-engaging augmentation of the library.

Workshops

A great help in better understanding this new literary form was obtained by guided tours and workshops held in the library with the pupils from several schools from Ramnicu Valcea.

By presenting some works and explaining how to use them, the library managed to capture the interest of the children and teenagers and encouraged them to use the computers from the exhibitions themselves. The main point of interest was represented by the poetry machine and it captured the attention of the most important part of the people coming into the library. It was strategically placed in the centre of the exhibition, the people were interested in using it and in just a few minutes, even the youngest of our users were capable to use the poetry machine. The exhibition was promoted through local media (newspapers and TV stations) and the campaign attracted a significant number of people, but activities were mainly focused on the schools from Ramnicu Valcea. The workshops with young people and the presentations were done in the presence of many children and teenagers with significant results. The work with digital literature will continue. Exhibitions in some of the most important cities in Romania will be organised in cooperation with other libraries. To conclude; it was the first experience of presenting digital literature in Ramnicu Valcea and the feedback has been very positive. Having said that more has to be done. People really don't know a thing about this field. Digital literature is new to them, but people are at the same time very intrigued by it. This means that digital literature has a huge potential for libraries to engage the public in a different way. That's why the library in Ramnicu Valcea is sure to engage in exhibitions all over Romania in the future.

Interview: Elena, High school student, Ramnicu Valcea

What do you think about this exhibition in our library?

I think it is a great idea. I didn't know about digital literature before. Now I can have some idea what it represents.

What about the works you have seen in our exhibition? Are they literature, art, games?

Well, it is difficult to say all this. Some of the works can be considered literature because they are like other literary works, but when I see a game I cannot say 100% it is literature but I liked them.

Would you like to see more exhibitions like this?

Yes, I would certainly like that.

If we invite you to take part in a workshop what would you say?

For sure yes. Please let me know when you organize a workshop because I would like to take part.

POETRY MACHINES

Poetry Machines Are a Physical and Interactive Experience for Library Visitors

A brand new approach to literature and the library visit has resulted in interactive literature installations in Romania, Norway and Denmark. Poetry machines have introduced reading as a playful and social activity that you can exercise in the modern library.

Authors, researchers, technicians and cultural specialists from libraries in Romania, Norway and Denmark have collaborated to create unique installations specific for public spaces.

Each participating country has their own version of the "Turn on Literature"-machine, and each machine can work with any of the three separate bodies of text written by the authors. The installations joins the playfulness, social and co-creative qualities of digital practices with the linguistic ingenuity, thought and wonder of poetry. The complete interaction brings you from the physical book used as an interactive tool, to the screen, back to print and then leaves the text online with other poems written with the use of the machine. From an initial sea of floating words on the screen, you form a poem that can then be fixed on paper.

Partnering with Centre for Advanced Visual Interaction (CAVI) at Aarhus University Turn on Literature created three distinct poetry machines.

How it Works

In all three national adaptations of the machine you begin the interaction by choosing between three enhanced physical books. A line of poetry then appears on the screen. You can now guide the line into the writing space on the left side of the screen. The line is selected randomly from a group of lines that the author has written for that specific physical book. By applying pressure to the book, you select between three variations made by the author of the suggested poetry line (or discard the line entirely). Three users can work on the poem simultaneously. A Library receipt pops out of the machine, when you have finished your poem. You can now re-read your personal masterpiece in print or visit the blog online, were the complete production of poems are collected.

Poetry is not for everyone, some might say. With the poetry machine this is no longer true. You are invited to invest your attention in two minutes fun interaction that line by line guide you through a poem. Your participation in the process connects you with the writing and makes it approachable. The visual and game-like approach opens a door to poetry for everyone.

QUOTE: Sofie, Roskilde High School

Question: You have tried the Poetry Machine. Do you think of it as Literature?

Sofie: “I believe it’s an art form. It’s definitely literature.

I think it’s a cool thing that provokes thought in a way that’s different from just sitting with your book.”

For sure yes. Please let me know when you organize a workshop because I would like to take part.

The installation is combining elements from the world of reading with the digital world; it leaves space both for inward and outward activity, social and solitary, noisy and calm, wordy and visual. It brings to light a new understanding of literature and technology.

The Turn on Literature-machines have been exhibited in large digital literature exhibitions in Denmark, Norway, Romania and Portugal and used in writing workshops on literature and digital literacy.

Oblivion -The Norwegian Poetry Machine

The Norwegian Poetry Machine is playful in style. The three “books” written by the acclaimed, prizewinning young poet Morten Langeland all contain surprising and humorous lines, making the exploration and co-creation fun for the user.

The function of the poetry machine makes the user see each line’s potent poetic meaning, exposing us to the poetry of language. Everyday sentences become suddenly something more and their meaning and layers change. The three norwegian books are named Book of Vowels, LexiConfrontationa and Sentiments. The English version of the texts is eminently translated by Barbara Haveland, who is also a translator of Ibsen and Karl Ove Knausgård.

The furniture of the machine is designed by the Norwegian designer Gulleik Løvskar and is inspired by the flight case. The wooden materials are to change with time and travel, and the steel construction gives it a rough mad inventor touch. In the work with the design emphasis is put on portability, to make it possible for it to tour other libraries or public areas.

Here is an example of a poem from the Norwegian Poetry Machine:

happenstance, August 3, 2018, 14:34:39 – 14:36:00

the years leave a thin film of rime.
everything you'll actually never experience again in a cloud.
in my experience most things dissolve themselves.

open, open, open.
are you awake?
and like that, you know?

a fount of happiness is not to be sniffed at.
and to all those out travelling, this is for you.
are you you or are you i?

Turn on Literature - IFLA 2017

About Writing for the Poetry Machine

The following is the Norwegian author, Morten Langeland's interesting talk about what it means for an author to co-work with a machine. The original talk was presented at the storytelling festival in Skellefteå, Sweden (2017). It can be seen online at https://youtu.be/mp3pAfryURI (in Norwegian).

Morten Langeland

I was asked by The Bergen Public Library to make a poetry machine in October 2016. Exactly one year later I published my newest book of poetry - a book that no doubt would not have been written, or resembled it self, had it not been for the work with the poetry machine. I will here say something about my experience with the poetry machine. About what I found most interesting with the work, and about the result.

I will talk about three things:

The difference between a poetry machine and a book of poetry

The writing process behind the poetry machine, or the collection process

And some examples from the final result.

The invitation to write material for the poetry machine was like this:

The assignment is to create texts/lines to a poetry machine. This involves 3 separate "volumes" of approximately 100 sentences in three variations that the "user" , the reader of the machine, helps putting together to a poetic text. The text is uploaded to a blog, and the user of the poetry machine can print out a "receipt" with the text that he/she can take home.

It is somehow like playing with poetry, together, you as the author and the reader, with the help of a (computer) machine.

To focus on this as a game is spot on, and the victim of the game is author.

For what do you give away when you let the user choose between the sentences you have written, and even decide the sequence of those lines?

You give up what the Greek retoric's called DISPOSITIO. That is the composition and the sequence - maybe the artistic essence of writing a good poem - to put the words where they belong!

A good poem is known to not to say too much, but to say just enough. The first thing you are told when taking a writing class is to remove the last line - it makes the poem stronger - and here I was to join a project where it was not possible to decide what line would be neither first nor last!

It is a challenge, but a very entertaining challenge - you have to think in a whole different way. You stop being a poet and becomes more of a potato - very adaptable.

On a practical level you are to just feed the machine sentences, that the library users use a minute or two to choose from and put in sequence. Before the poem is printed on a receipt and uploaded on a website.

One thing I noticed about the poetry machine is that it in contrast to smartphones and the internet, is place specific: The poem is to be made in a place by a person in a short space of time. This place is the library. The library is used by all sorts of people, so potentially anybody might bump into the machine and compose a poem. The situation is thereby different to the printed book most often read at home or in a private sphere.It was an advantage in the writing process to think about the situation around the machine- what kind of thoughts, connotations, and incidents happen at the library? And can these be used?

I did this specifically by alluring directly to the library and the writing situation in the material - one sentence in the poetry machine is for example: "Why do the librarians speak so loudly?" For the user it is both a stranger's "I", but also a chosen "I" that is on the poem that comes out of the machine and can be read out loud. Because of this the address, the inclusion of the other, the contact, was extra important to me.

The writing started the usual way by the writing desk. But I quickly understood that to write several hundred lines - the good one liners - is not that easy. And I did not know if hundred good one liners is the best material for the machine. It may quickly be too many good points, even in a poem.

An important part of the poetry machine is that the actual writing is a shared process. I wrote the material, but it is the user that puts the lines in sequence and choose what lines he or she wants in the poem. This opens for playing with pronouns: Who are "you" and who am "I" when the poem comes out.

Quite soon I came to realize that I wanted different kinds of language use. Language from different kinds of spheres - both strange sentences, simple nonsense and ordinary phrases from everyday language turned askew. And ordinary sentences. How much is a coke? When does the bus leave? What is for dinner? Do you have to pay to use the toilet?

Yesterday I sat on the plane and heard : "cabin crew please take your seats". If I had still written for the poetry machine I would have included that. I would have thought: That is an interesting sentence. It is a command, a performative sentence: When the words are uttered it changes things in the cabin. The aircraft cabin is also a theatre, and the cabin crew follows instruction from the pilot - or director.

But removed from the cabin the utterance is something different. Poetry is often read as if it is about life - and then "cabin crew" becomes a more mythic entity: What is the cabin crew in this poem, in this life - Can one be cabin crew in one's own life?

Language changing lanes, from aircraft cabin to library, or from the street to poetry machine, also changes meaning - and those meanings it is up to the reader to open up for, or not. For some people it becomes nonsense, a waste of time, but for others it may initiate reflection and joy.

I therefore started to work as a collector. A Grimm Brother of our time, a collector of language use. A compliator. Since I gave myself this free role, the first thing I did was to send an email to ten collegues and ask if they could each write me ten interesting sentences. What is interesting is interpreted very differently, some couldn't do it, others sendt many more than ten. Those sentences went straight into the machine - I had given up being selective, autonom, author.

The collection process - or writing if you like - I did in notebooks over a couple of months. Everything I found interesting or strange or weird (artificial) I wrote down and plotted into the machine. I also stole a lot: From newspapers, radio, books, film, and not least from signs and advertisements. I noted down bits and pieces of sentences from the pub, from lectures and conversations on the street. If I heard an English pop song I spontaneously translated it and wrote it down. That is, all by chance and quite uncritical - but canalized through my taste of what is interesting. Since this is about digital literature it could be worth to reflect on the fact that we live in a time where it is the amount of information that is most noticeable: The avalanche of text and images that meets us night and day. To choose among these is an act of editing more than an act of writing.

In the history of literature one could say that the anthology is a thousand year old genre that works the same way: It takes pieces of text and puts them together in

a book. Or that the first avantgarde did something similar when they cut and pasted together poems from newspapers on Cabaret Voltaire a hundred years ago.
At least one can say that so is Ida Börjel's Skåneradio (Scania County Radio) a collection of poetry based on transcriptions from the radio of Skåne in Sweden, it uses the same method. So it is not original, but a way to work with large amounts of text. As generative literature.
The material I collected was to be used as content for the three separate remote controls, shaped as books. The material had to be divided into three. And their content should each have a distinct character. We may take a look at the three different books in the Norwegian poetry machine. The last dispositio I could give before the users would be putting together poems as they wanted:
Since the situation that the reader is also a writer and the whole happens at the library, was an essential aspect of the machine, I decided to name one of the books LexiConfrontation. It was to consist of direct address and confrontational lines. But also sense of humour, some snappy lightness that will work well when several people are gathered around the machine together.
One could be :" Remember to press the book (the remote) to change lines". A direct address that talks to the user as if it is the machine talking.
Another one was " you are a simple angel." That one I took from a short Swedish internett series where one of the participants says: I am only a simple angel". Another sentence is more even of a statement, and might evoke more of a reflection than confrontation " The warmth of the society left with the seventies".

Book number two I called The book of vowels. Here I collected all the sentences that started with a vowel. A part from this there were no further requirements. The hope was that this would be more of a singing book. But a vowel in the start of a sentence is not enough for that. The remotes work like this; if you press hard in the middle of the book you get a new version of the sentence on the screen in front of you. From the vowel book I here quote three sentences that it will switch between, to show how the variants could be quite different from each other, and this way let the reader make a choice.
The first sentence was: the bounds of futility's grounds run down the hillside. the second one was In the gloaming the trees lead the way, in the sighing, in the stillness. And the third variant became: iPhone chargers dangle intravenously from the ceiling.
So quite dissimilar.
The last book I made got the name Sentiments. It contains more poetic sentences with pathos. Filled with

emotions. Here are three examples:
"kisses bewingéd with hermés's shoes."
and "razor blade on the blue chute." and last: "the dog does but display and bay. "
My impression of digital literature as a user generated literature is correct concerning the poetry machine. The reader/user is taking part in the creation of the result. I have also had writing workshops on the poetry machine. There the young students got to sit and cut in newspapers or created lines themselves. Thereafter we fed their lines into the machine, so that the content, all the lines were their own. That worked very well -and is a method that can not only make them want to write - but by opening up for cut and paste and a computer, the threshold to participate seemed lower. They all participated, and they seemed to like to choose among their own and their friends sentences afterwards - my job was finally superfluous! The author was finally fifty percent dead!
The randomness of the sequence of the lines in the poetry machine give all the poems a "strange" composition, that most people can accept as a part of poetry. So the silly and playful entrance can open up for more participation among the students. And the students' poetry machine made pretty much the same type of poems as my poetry machine did.
Were the poems good? Well, some. Is it important in a project like this? Well, the most important thing is perhaps rather to spread the feeling of creating something. Give some ways to wake an awareness around formulating and expressing. Maybe just for a couple of seconds, but sometime seconds are enough.
What I finally want to tell you is what I did when the work with the poetry machine was finished. I sat there with several hundred lines and sentences from a variation of language use and about different topics. And as I now had such a huge material I wanted to try to make a book of my own from it as well -not just give it away as potatoes to the machine. And I thought that the opposite of limitless combinations of lines would be to use a stringent form.
I soon thought of the Sonnet, the fourteen line rhyming poetry form of love, known from Shakespeare and Petrarca. Or Erik Lindergren's torn sonnets in Mannen utan väg (The man without a way) as another example.
The opposite of random sequence is a stringent form. With rhyme rules. A prison to put all the random sentences in - and try to put them together in meaningful and closed entities.
Or poems as they are also called.
After a lot of rewriting the material at last became the basis of my book that were called Zoo-nights (Zoo-netter) . That means nights in the zoo. The zoo is a prison for the animals, and thereby the opposite of the poetry machine: For that is more like the wild west.

Full of Questions – The Danish Poetry Machine

Is a poetry machine a work of literature? A game? An art installation? The Danish Poetry Machine leaves you full of questions.

With the idea of an installation that could open the library to new generations of visitors and expand our love for literature into the digital realm, we approached the famous Danish writer Ursula Andkær Olsen. She open-mindedly accepted the challenge to write the text for our Poetry Machine and even to let users combine her text in new ways. She decided on three headings: “I’m full of love, I’m full of hate, I’m full of questions”. One for each of the enhanced books to use to interact with the installation. The last heading then gave the title to the Danish poetry machine. She had previously in workshops with students worked with the Malaysian poetry form Pantoum, where lines repeat according to a certain pattern. Ursula Andkjær Olsen decided that the poems created on the Poetry Machine should follow the Pantoum pattern, the purpose being that the repetitive structure would help to form the users’ poems.

I AM FULL OF HATE, JULY 21, 2017, 19:17:28 – 19:18:22

I worship discipline
My method is not easy
I will fake my way to love
The loser is an animal
My method is not easy
I have cut away anger
The loser is an animal
And then a shark
I have cut away anger
The dead appear on my surface
And then a shark
Where everything rustles dryly.
The dead appear on my surface
I will fake my way to love
Where everything rustles dryly.
I worship discipline

An example of a translated user poem from the Danish poetry Machine

A beautiful piece of wooden furniture by designer Mitten Ferrar completed the technical installation and enabled us to exhibit it at the Electronic Literature Organizations festival in Oporto, Portugal, as well as 5 weeks at our national exhibition in Roskilde Libraries in the autumn of 2017. Among the students from public schools and high schools invited to guided tours in the extensive exhibition the Poetry Machine was among the most popular. Among many words of praise, an interpretation from a highschool student stood out. She felt that the initial sea of words represented the multitude of thoughts in her head and creating the poem meant giving order and expression to them. The Poetry Machines represented to her the idea that writing can formulate and fixate feelings and thoughts on paper.

Since the exhibition versions of the poetry machine has been lent to other libraries but the original one has remained in our library on permanent display.

Ursula Andkjær Olsen:

“Pretty cool how different media can add to each other”

At the opening of the Danish exhibition we had a talk with Poetry Machine Author Ursula Andkjær Olsen. Here is what she said about the potential of digital literature.

“Humanity has lived perfectly well with books for a long time and you could of course just continue with books but it is obvious that when you have new media then you would be curious to use them. Digital literature, I think, is a field in development and new formats will emerge and open themselves to us. Like ABRA, Work no 1 in the exhibition, that is a touch sensitive app.

Which I think is really beautiful. What is sophisticated about that work is that what is on the screen refers back to the book so you have both an app and a book. In that book you realize ... “oh maybe I can touch the pages”.

And there is a kind of cuneiform signs that you only can relate to by touching it, right? Instead of the book being a thing you just look at you now have to interact with it and touch it and breathe on it. It worked nicely, as we found out, if you breathe out on the pages. Well, I find that pretty cool. In that way the different media can add something to each other.”

The Poetry Machine is another thing. It is a way to begin with poetry, because it turns writing into something informal. You are casually putting some sentences together and then watch what happens. I just talked to some highschool students. One of them referred to this: Oh, the blank paper! It makes you feel pretentious when writing poems. You’re beyond all that with the Poetry Machine.”

The Machine Voice - The Romanian Poetry Machine

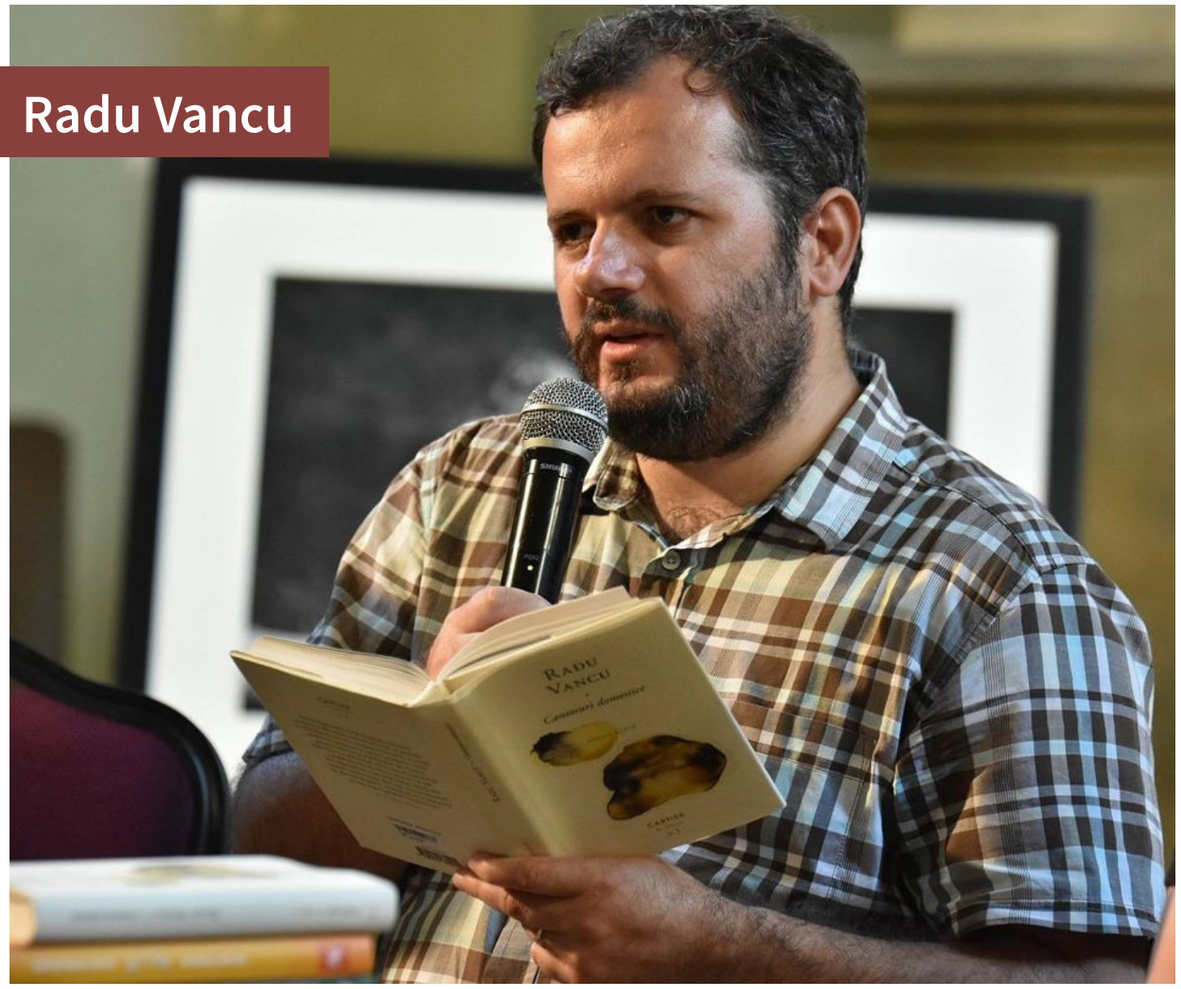
In Romania the Poetry Machine was nicknamed “The poetry monster” and it is true that the poems are constructed from parts of different (text)bodies like the famous Frankenstein’s monster. The library i Ramnicu Valcea gave the task of feeding the poetry monster to the acclaimed Romanian poet, scholar and translator, Radu Vancu (Sibiu, Romania, 1978). He works as an associate professor at the Faculty of Letters and Arts at the „Lucian Blaga” University from Sibiu and as an editor of the Poesis International magazine. The Poetry Machine author chopped his text in three parts called The Machine Voice, The Romanian Book and The Vampire Texts. The result can be seen in this example of an user’s poem:

Poetry Machine - Romanian Poems 12.06.18

13:25:00 to 13:26:46

one with the knife in the heart,
over the sad tresses.
and only then could i understand
of survival. like pressing delete
and to stick the world in its point
desolated and yet full of hope,
when the day is breaking dear,
here it has already started
to not hate & not love your memories

Radu Vancu



Poetry on the Global Screen

Poetry is human emotion converted into words. Programs are human intelligence converted into words. It was therefore just a matter of time before poetry and computer programs would become an exercise of shared writing. I was really happy to be a part of a project which mixed poetry and computers - in an attempt to help poetry reach further into the world.

We live in a world that looks more and more like a global screen, Gilles Lipovetsky famously wrote; our project was meant to bring poetry onto this global screen.

And it did.

And it looked great.

I am sure now, even more than before this project, that poetry will not be removed from our human activities. Even in a posthuman world, even in a world of technological screens, poetry is still present - as humanly consistent and powerful as ever.

Interview with visitor: Maria, former teacher, Ramnicu Valcea

I saw you were interested in Poetry Machine. What do you think of creating literature with a computer?

It is very interesting and a very interesting perspective on literature. I was interested in creating my own poem. I am not very good at writing poems but I find it very easy to have a poem created in this way.

What do you think about showing these works to the children?

The young people are working and using computers very often and they can better understand how these works were created. Maybe they can start creating literature in this way, or maybe they can be more interested in literature in general because it is a relaxing and sometimes fun way to read, to write or to create text, poems, videos.

Would you like to see more often digital literature exhibitions in our library?

Yes, I find it very interesting and I am glad to come to see exhibitions like this.

Turn on Literature partners discussing digital literature with authors, scholars and cultural professionals. Bergen Library 2017.

Turn on Text

By Søren Bro Pold, Associate Professor, PhD, Aarhus University, Denmark

Digital literature is still a relatively overlooked phenomenon – even if it is more or less as old as the computer and has had a lasting influence on the development of computers and networks.

Digital literature has continuously been part of IT development, especially related to how we read and write (with) the computer and its networks. Digital literature develops, explores

and teaches us how digital text is developing, from the different layers of the interface (e.g. the relations between text and code or reading and how the reading is captured) to networked texts (e.g. hypertext and WWW) and to relations between text and other modalities and media (sound, visual, space).

Even if many visitors of a typical library public have not met digital literature before, most have been confronted with the ways our textual and literary culture is changing through e-books, search engines, social media and more. As documented from interviews from the project many visitors to the exhibitions recognize the ways our everyday digital textuality is explored through digital literature – many even see digital literature as an eyeopener on how online services such as Google and Facebook function or in relation to contemporary discussions of 'fake news' or data profiling.

In fact, Turn On Literature demonstrates that digital literature is a way for libraries to explore and reflect on digital media, including a way to interact with education, communities and other groups of readers. The project suggests that finding ways to open the discussions of digital media and textualities and including audiences in the reflections of the current challenges and changes of literary culture, including questions of authorship, literary quality, the spaces, limits and frames of the literary, etc. is rewarding, including using digital literature as a way to discuss the actual and future roles of libraries. From interviews and workshops we have held, it is amazing to observe that all kinds of readers reflect on questions normally reserved for literature professionals, in quite sophisticated ways, and that they are also acknowledging and recognizing quality in the exhibited works, e.g. recognizing the winner of the Turn On Literature prize, ABRA – A Living Text by Kate Durbin, Amaranth Borsum and Ian Hatcher. The project in this way demonstrates that libraries can use digital literature to explore and reflect on digital media through literature, not only through workshops and maker spaces, and in this way also point to how literature is continuously relevant in a digital age.

As part of the project, three authors, Radu Vancu, Morten Langeland and Ursula Andkjær Olsen have created new versions of the Poetry Machine installation in Romanian, Norwegian, Danish and everything is translated into English. This has created an interesting dialogue across Europe and across relatively small European languages, which emphasizes that the many languages and cultures are an important part of European identity and literature, including also digital literature. Each national literature is in a deep relationship to its traditions and language, and the project has pointed to the importance of translation for understanding and appreciating this. Besides exhibition and presentation, libraries could be important places for archiving and preserving digital literature, including translating it to new languages, platforms and software. A European project like Turn On Literature demonstrates the importance of this and the value of translating and creating connections between the many

different European cultures and languages. It has provided a path for future work with collecting, exhibiting, distributing and translating digital literature both nationally, on a European scale and internationally.

The printed book is not disappearing, but literature is changing and taking part in the many interfaces of digital media, and the library is needed as a space for all of this.

Libraries are an important part of European cultural traditions and education and Turn On Literature has indeed demonstrated that libraries can still be a great space for this in a digital age. The project has been hosting exhibitions with more than 100.000 visitors across Bergen, Roskilde and The Antim Ivireanul Valcea County Libraries, which might be the most visited exhibitions of digital literature ever. This is quite an effort and definitely worth continuing.

Turn on, tune in, don't drop out!

HOW TO?

Recommendations, tools and works to get you started

By now, you might have taken an interest in digital literature and its possibilities for your organisation. However, where do you begin? This chapter will address this question. First of all we have gathered 10 recommendations for the work with digital literature based on the findings from our activities in the Turn on Literature project. Secondly we look into how to find works and what to look for when distinguishing good digital literature.

Recommendations

Here is condensed list of things to think about, when presenting digital literature to new audience

1. Curating is important. Be selective in your choice of works, but preserve diversity. Present high quality , interesting works. A few really interesting works is all you need for an exhibition.
2. Users respond positively to works that offer the possibility of interaction.
3. Training of staff is important. Computers and tablets are seldom enough to generate interest. Introduction of the works by staff helps create interest and knowledge.
4. Challenging the library and users with digital literature helps build a general discussion about literature and the future development of libraries.
5. Digital literature is a great way to teach and reflect on digital literacy and digital media in general.
6. Prioritize central location, visibility and spatial quality when presenting digital works in the library space.

7. A combination of activities e.g. xhibition, workshops, readings and events is fruitful. Guided tours are popular and useful for both staff and visitors. Combine information/instructions with practical exploration of the works.
8. Collaborate with educators. Teachers are eager to work with digitalmedia in interesting ways.
9. Seek to collaborate with authors, many are eager to reach a wider audience.
10. Supply good explanatory texts. Exhibition catalogues works well with larger exhibitions. Introduce the public to a definition of what digital literature is early on.

Display furniture, power sockets, internet and securing expensive equipment are all important practical things to take in consideration before exhibiting.

What to Look for in Digital Literature?

What should one look for when reading digital literature? This is a question that often pops up when working in this field. In “Turn on Literature” the question certainly arose when we received all the answers from our open call for digital literature and had to select the best works for exhibition. For that purpose we constructed a scoreboard for digital literature to assist the selection process. It is presented here below. The scoreboard also came in handy when we needed an activity for young adults visiting the exhibition. It worked as tool to open up works and create an conversation around the works.

Scoreboard for works of electronic literature

Give points from 1 to 5 (5 for highest score)

Readability/literacy

How interesting, satisfying or meaningful is the language, narrative, plot, rhetoric, poetic expression or other literary elements?

Interactivity

How interesting, satisfying or meaningful is the user’s interaction with the work?

Multimodality - Use of different forms of expression

How interesting, satisfactory or meaningful is the use of different modalities and forms of expression such as text, video, audio, image, graphics, animation. How are they included in the work? How do the different forms of expression relate to each other? Oppose, add, elaborate, support each other?

Display-ability

How suited is the work for display in a public space such as a library?

Usability

How easy is it to read the work and understand the navigation / interaction?

Technical performance

How well does the work perform from a technical point of view? Are there any technical issues?

Finding Works

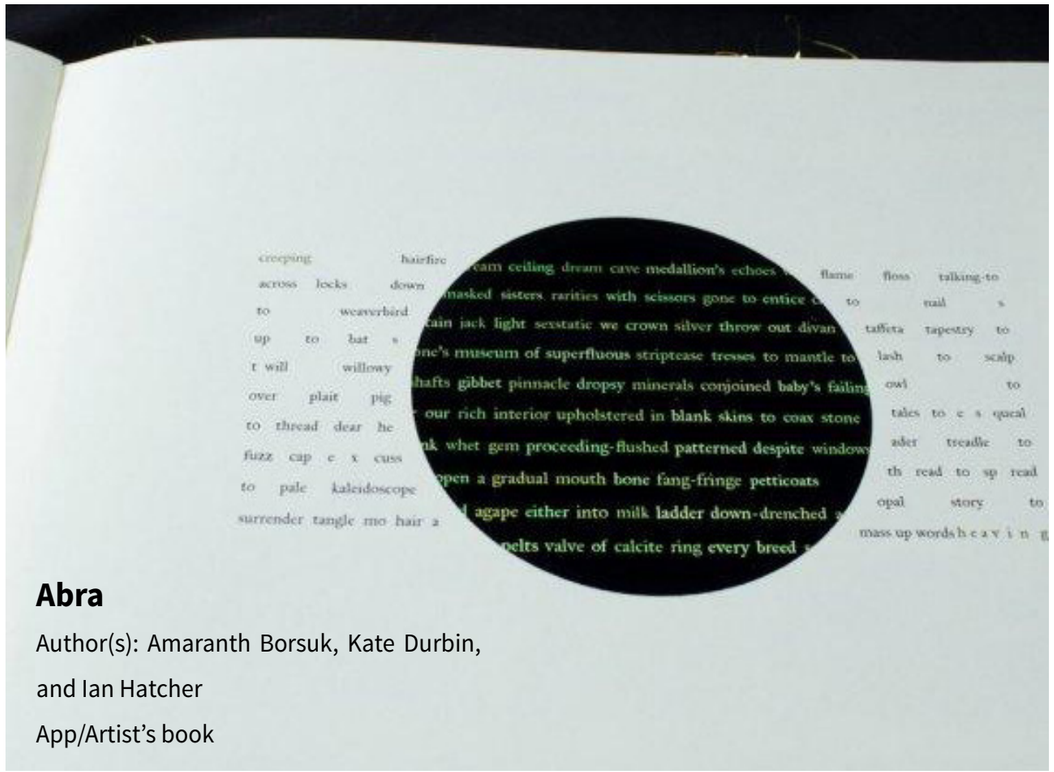
Finding works for display isn’t as difficult as you might think. There are plenty of collections online that you can consult. Open calls or literature competitions are another way of collecting new literature. Below we present the projects selection of works. However, if you want a broader view, here are two of the best online collection:

collection.eliterature.org The international Electronic Literature Organization regularly review new works on their website. Their extensive online collections are the perfect starting point for you adventure into digital literature.

elmcip.net/knowledgebase Elmcip’s electronic literature knowledgebase is regularly updated and has thousands of works to explore.

Works That Turn on Literature

Here are seven great works of digital literature from 2017 to get you started with digital literature. These where the international works selected for the Turn on Literature exhibitions in Romania, Denmark and Norway. Below are further nine works that we think deserve an honorable mention and are worth looking at as well. You can find the collection online as well at turnonliterature.eu/works



Abra

Author(s): Amaranth Borsuk, Kate Durbin, and Ian Hatcher

App/Artist's book

Abra is a living text that unifies the artist's book with the ipad.

According to the authors themselves, this work is "an exploration and celebration of the book's potential in the 21st century ".

The piece is composed of a handmade book printed with heat-sensitive ink, that responds to the reader's exhalations or warm hands, and a highly interactive app where the reader can explore the text by rubbing on the words.

The work creates a unique tangible experience by inviting the reader to see page and screen as a continuous touch screen interface.

Abra's unique combination of the papers tactile quality and digital user involvement, made it a winner of the International Turn on Literature Prize.

All The Delicate Duplicates

Authors: Mez Breeze and Andy Campbell

PC game

This visually astounding and unusual narrative has proved to have great appeal for young people, that know their gaming. Using mouse and keyboard, you explore missing objects, notebooks, newspapers, mobile phones and more, and can gradually compile a narrative in a complex universe where time and space bends and duplicates. All the Delicate Duplicates pushes the boundaries of gaming and story-telling to the limit.

http://allthedelicateduplicat.es

Steam: http://store.steampowered.com/app/531140/All_the_Delicate_Duplicates.

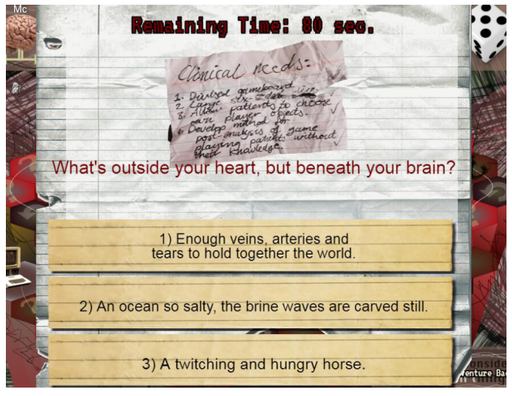
Video: https://vimeo.com/onetoonedevelopment/delicates-walkthrough

Bafflement Fires

Author: Jason Nelson

Web based

"The Bafflement Fires" is an interaction fiction/ poem in the form of a digital recreation of a Freemason board game from the 1950s. This hybrid is part game, part artwork, part poem, part fiction, part interactive creature. While you never seem to win this psychological quiz game, you surely will be baffled by it's strange and surrealistic questioning.

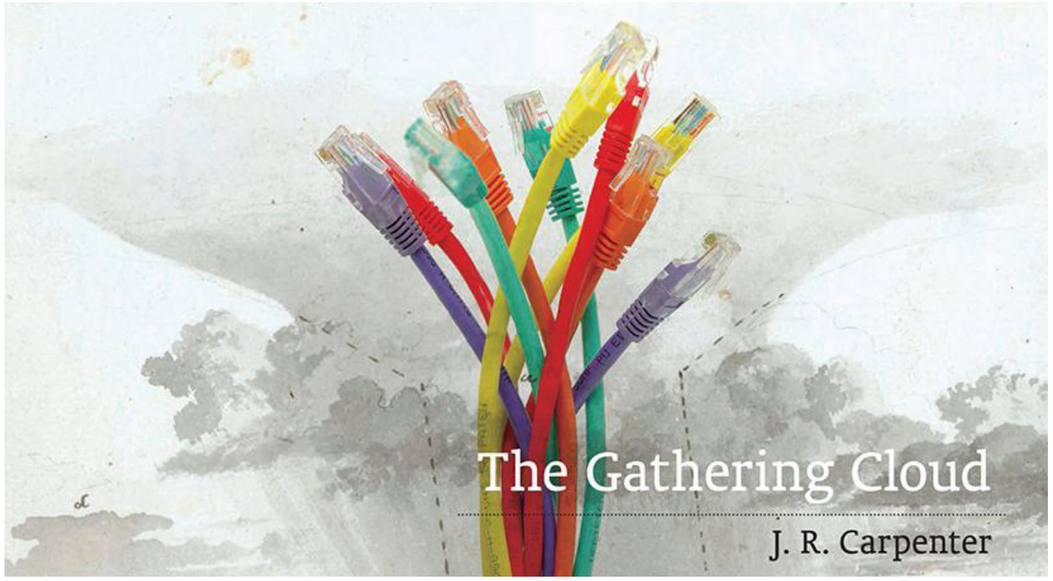


http://www.dpoetry.com/fires/

The Gathering Cloud

Author(s): J. R. Carpenter

Web based



Hypertextual hendecasyllabic verses and imagery from old books on clouds float on your screen as you click through the moving collages of The Gathering Cloud. The work tell us about the environmental impact of so-called ‘cloud’ computing by calling attention to the materiality of the clouds in the sky. Both are commonly perceived to be infinite resources, at once vast and immaterial; both, decidedly, are not. Sharing those cute cat pics online might not be as innocent as you think.

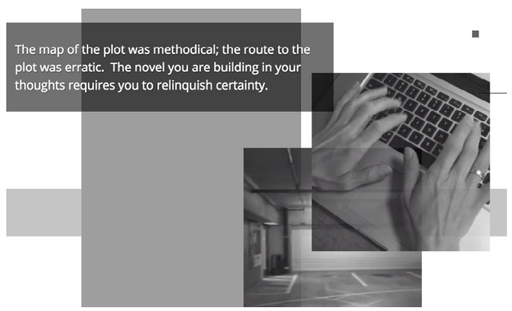
http://luckysoap.com/thegatheringcloud

Novelling

Author(s): Will Luers, Hazel Smith and Roger Dean

Web based

“Novelling” is a recombinant digital novel that beautifully employs text, video and sound. The work’s generative system algorithmically orders and arranges fragments of media in 6-minute cycles. With an existential feeling to it “novelling” unfolds through suggested narrative connections between four characters, but an actual plot eludes the reader. In this evocative



and suggestive novelistic space the reader is left with questions to the basis of literature.

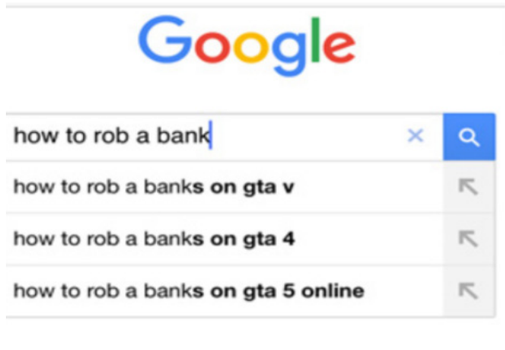
URL to work: http://novelling.newbinarypress.com/

How to Rob a Bank

Author: Alan Bigelow

Web based

The very popular “How To Rob A Bank” is a love story in three parts. The story focuses on the comic misadventures of a young and inexperienced bank robber and his female accomplice. The entire work is revealed through the main characters’ use of their iPhones and the searches, texts, apps, imagery, animations, audio, and functions



that appear on their iPhones.

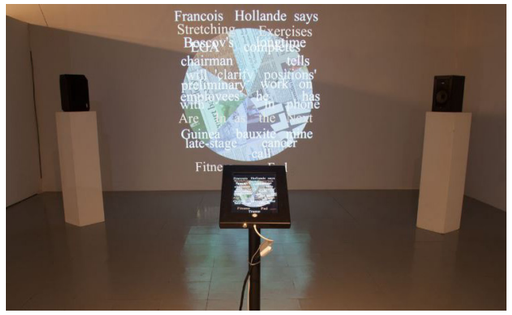
URL to work: http://webyarns.com/howto/howto.html

News Wheel

Author(s): Jody Zellen

Ipad, Iphone

As a comment on the increasing use of political spin and circulation of fake news, this app lets you spin an actual news wheel. You tap the wheel and current headlines pulled from online sources are presented on the screen. The user can now manipulate and create their own headlines, that can then be saved and shared. News Wheel is an interactive, creative and poetic way for the public to view, juxtapose



and interpret world events.

So get started. Spin the news.

http: //newswheel.info

Video: http://newswheel.info/lbcc/newswheel_lbcc.html

Honorable Mentions

DO IT

Author: Serge Bouchardon

App, available for free on:

Google Play: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tx.agir

App Store: https://appsto.re/cn/WDN8fb.i

The Poetry Map

Author: Matt Bryden (concept and poems) with Jon Munson II (programmer)

Web based

http://www.mattbryden.co.uk/Matt_Bryden/PoetryMap/

The Chessbard

Author: Aaron Tucker and Jody Miller

Web based

http://www.chesspoetry.com

Detectiveland

Author: Robin Johnson

Web based

http://versificator.net/detectiveland

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_4sRa3fw1U

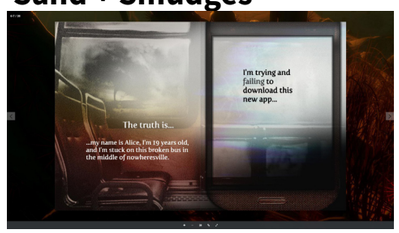
Inanimate Alice: Perpetual Nomads (Part 1) – Sand + Smudges

Author: Mez Breeze et al

Web based

http://perpetualnomads.inanimatealice.info/novella1/

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OCz1gU3kbA&



These Subconscious Drives

Author: Jason Nelson

Web based

http://www.secrettechnology.com/click/

Collocations

Author: Abraham Avnisan

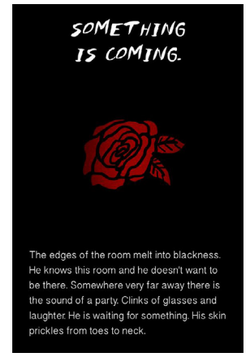
iPad

http://abrahamavnisan.com/collocations/

Jellybone

Author: Kate Pullinger

available on the iPhone (all 10 episodes), on Android (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.oolipo) and you can have a look on the web as well (https://www.oolipo.com/stories/jellybone)

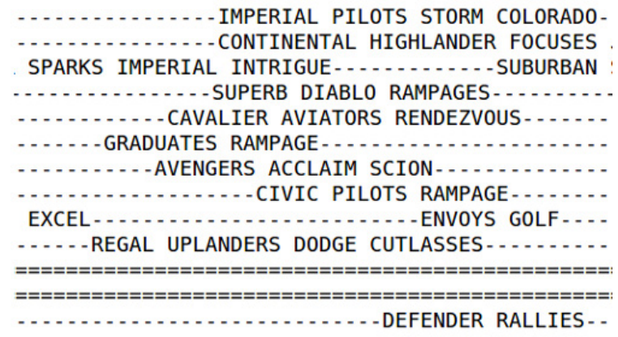


Autopia

Author: Nick Montfort

Web based

http://nickm.com/autopia/



Thanks for Reading!

The people that turned on literature

Tænd litteraturen

Litteraturen er under forandring

Digitale teknologier har stigende betydning i hverdagen. Denne tendens ser vi også i litteraturens verden, hvor nye litterære former udfordrer vores forestillinger om, hvad litteratur er, og hvordan den ser ud. Udviklingen skaber nye udfordringer for bibliotekernes kommunikation og udstilling af de nye litterære genrer.

Slå på litteraturen

Litteraturen søker nye former

Digital teknologi får stadig større betydning i hverdagen vår. Denne bevegelsen ser vi også i litteraturens verden, der nye litterære former og formater utfordrer våre ideer om hva litteratur kan være, og hvordan den ser ut. Utviklingen skaper nye utfordringer for bibliotekenes formidling og utstilling av disse litterære sjangrene.

Start Literatura

Lumea literaturii se schimbă

Importanţa tot mai mare a tehnologiilor digitale în viaţa de zi cu zi s-a extins, de asemenea, şi în lumea literaturii şi a avut ca rezultat forme literare inovatoare, care pun în discuţie ideile noastre despre ce forme poate îmbrăca o operă literară. Această evoluţie creează noi provocări pentru biblioteci, în ceea ce priveşte comunicarea şi expunerea acestor genuri literare.

Turn on Literature

The world of literature is changing

Digital technologies have an ever increasing importance in everyday life. This tendency has also spread to literature and resulted in new literary forms that challenge our ideas of what literature can be and look like. It creates new challenges for libraries regarding communication and exhibition of these literary genres.