Critical Thinking and Writing for Immersive Media and Interactive Storytelling

Final Report – Winter 2018 Cinema and Communications WID Project
Prepared by Myriam Rafla and Cheryl Simon – Cinema and Communciations

A. Project Objectives and Workflow

Our W2018 Cinema & Communication WID project has involved the production of an on-line 'story space' for teachers and students who are creating mixed platform, multimodal and multimedia environments. These environments can be characterized as interactive, non-linear installations.

Myriam Rafla worked on the conception and development of an on-line "story-space" to be used by students interested in creating scripts for multimedia media environments. **Cheryl Simon** gathered theoretical, critical and archival materials investigating the creative possibilities of new modalities of media practice, and addressing the ethical, political and social aspects of working with and inhabiting a world of expanded media. Content on the site ranges from theoretical to practical textual materials, and includes teaching modules and assessment activities dedicated to the different components of interactive storytelling.

The project proceeded in four stages: the first three unfolded over the course of the Winter 2018 term, and the fourth, a reporting stage, began at term's end. Both our original project proposal and a mid-term progress report were published on the WID website.

In the **first stage** we inventoried and reviewed available resources (practical, critical and theoretical readings, on-line resources and documentary materials).

T**he second stage** began with departmental discussion inviting feedback to the project and proceeded by integrating previously gathered resources and any missing elements into an on-line prototype for the story space.

The third stage involved testing the 'story space' on students (the completion of a creative project working with disjunctive media or a critical reflection on an existing artifact), the refinement of the prototype and the development of a rubric to evaluate competencies.

In the fourth stage we completed and submitted the present report and published the website.

B. Project Artifacts

A first iteration of *Sited Story: Writing/designing for new and interactive media* has been published on the Wordpress platform at:

https://sitedstories.wordpress.com

Sited Stories is a pedagogical tool to be used by teachers and students alike. An introduction to key concepts in interactive and immersive new media storytelling, the site offers two course modules, each with components that focus on 1) interactive storytelling and 2) new media documentary. The modules are comprehensive, stand-alone units, providing teachers and students with

- key concepts
- guiding research questions
- a glossary of terms
- a bibliography
- creative writing tools
- an assignment scaffolding template designed to help teachers and students develop an original project from conception to delivery.

We feel this is a good beginning, setting a path for further critical reflection and development of ideas and practices, while contributing to new theoretical discourses in our field of study. We hope that *Sited Stories* will engage and encourage educators to think collectively on these topics and themes, and contribute to discussion of them.

In spring 2019, the site was presented to our department and we began introducing the teaching modules. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to guide the development of this project from idea to practical tool, and we invite feedback from our peers and community.   We look forward to following the evolution of *Sited Stories*.