

# Aaron A. Reed

Email: [aaron@aaronareed.net](mailto:aaron@aaronareed.net)  
Homepage: [aaronareed.net](http://aaronareed.net)

Twitter: [@aaronareed](https://twitter.com/aaronareed)  
LinkedIn: [aaronareed](https://www.linkedin.com/in/aaronareed)

## Education

**Ph.D. Computer Science**, University of California Santa Cruz (June 2017).

Dissertation: “Changeful Tales: Design-Driven Approaches Toward More Expressive Storygames.” Committee: Dr. Michael Mateas, Dr. Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Dr. Michael Chemers; Dr. Emily Short (advisor)

**M.F.A. Digital Arts & New Media**, University of California Santa Cruz, 2011.

Thesis: “A Sequence of Possibilities: sculptable fictions, quantum authoring, and the search for an ideal story system.” Advisors: Dr. Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Dr. Michael Mateas, Dr. D. Fox Harrell

member of the Expressive Intelligence Studio research group

member of Noah Wardrip-Fruin’s Participatory Fictions project group

**B.A. Film Studies**, University of Utah, 2005.

Honors Society member.

## Major Awards and Commendations

Finalist, Lambda Literary Awards, *Subcutaneous*, 2021.

“Best Story/World Design” Award, *The Ice-Bound Concordance*, IndieCade 2014.

Selection, Best Book Apps of 2013, *18 Cadence*, Kirkus Reviews.

Shortlisted, New Media Writing Prize 2011, Best Student Work, *maybe make some change*.

Selection, “The Electronic Literature Collection Volume One”, *Whom the Telling Changed*, 2006.

## Talks

### Keynotes and Invited Talks

“5 Lessons From 50 Years of Text Games.” Keynote. NarraScope 2022.

Commencement Address. Creative Media & Digital Culture Program, Washington State University Vancouver, 2021.

“Twisty Little Novels, All Different: Reading(s) From Subcutaneous.” Opening Plenary. Electronic Literature Organization. Orlando, 2020.

“Questioning Everything: A Wide-Ranging Design Practice For Interactive Storytelling.” Keynote. International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling. Snowbird UT, 2019.

“Conversational Characters with Spirit AI.” Talk. Google Interactive: Creative Applications of AI. Google campus, Mountain View. 2017.

“Interactive Fiction: A History.” Invited talk, Cal Poly, Spring 2012.

“blueful: a journey.” Talk. (dis)junctions Media Festival, UC Riverside, 2010.

## Conference Presentations and Panels

“From Oregon Trail to AI Dungeon: 50 Years of Text Games!” Talk. BangBangCon 2021.

“Game Design From Outside the Industry” (Panel Moderator), “Games in Conversation with Academia,” and “Games Writing and Prose Writing in Conversation” (Panelist). Flights of Foundry 2021, virtual.

“Cadences, Lacunae, and Subcutaneans: Ten Years of Procedural Novels.” Talk. Roguelike Celebration 2020.

“Kentucky Route Zero and the Futures of Adventure.” Talk. Narrascope 2020, Chicago.

“Conversational A.I. Today and Tomorrow.” Talk. GameDaily Connect. Anaheim, 2019.

“Building Author-First Platforms for Conversational AI.” Talk. Virtual Beings Summit, 2019, San Francisco.

“What Digital Storygames Can Learn From Analog Storygames.” Talk. Narrascope 2019, Boston.

“Transitioning to Game Writing: Why Your Next Story Should Be a Game.” Panelist. WorldCon 76, San Jose.

“The Craft of Interactive Fiction.” Panelist. WorldCon 76, San Jose.

“Building an Open-Ended Conversation System for Expressive Game Characters.” Talk; with Alan Hinchliffe. Game Developer’s Conference 2018, AI Summit, San Francisco.

“Intellectual Engagement and Games as a Cultural Medium.” Panelist. PAX 2017, Seattle.

“Narrative Innovation Showcase.” Panelist. Game Developer Conference 2016, San Francisco.

“Sculptural Narrative: Ice-Bound and the Future of Interactive Stories.” Talk. Indie Game Con, Eugene OR, 2015.

“Towards an Aesthetic of Sculptural Fiction.” Talk. Electronic Literature Organization 2014: Hold The Light, Milwaukee.

“Creating an Emotional Story Space in Inform 7.” Talk. WordPlay, Toronto, 2014.

“Gender and Sexuality in Interactive Fiction.” Panelist. GaymerX, San Francisco, Summer 2013 and 2014.

“Where is the MS Word of Interactive Narrative?” Electronic Literature Organization 2012: Electrifying Literature, Morgantown WV.

“Quantum Authoring for Prom Week.” Electronic Literature Organization 2012: Electrifying Literature, Morgantown WV.

“Creativity and Technology: Fiction.” Panelist. Creativity & Cognition, Georgia Tech, Fall 2011.

“Perceiving Violence.” Panelist. Between the Disciplines conference, UC Santa Cruz, Spring 2011.

“Interactive Drama: Dialogue as Gameplay.” Panelist. PAX East Boston, 2011.

“What is Interactive Fiction?” COSMOS, UC Santa Cruz, 2010.

“Blue Lacuna: A Reading in Prose and Code.” Electronic Literature Organization Archive and Innovate, Brown University, 2010.

“Storytelling in the world of interactive fiction.” Panelist. PAX East Boston, 2010.

Hands-on Inform 7 Tutorial for “Interactive Narratives” class, UC Santa Cruz, 2010

Guest Artist Talk. Prospectives.09, Present/Symposium, Reno, 2009.

Alumni Panel. “Gaming and Digital Distribution.” Slamdance Festival, Park City, 2008.

Artist Talk, AUTOSTART: A festival of digital literature. University of Pennsylvania, 2006.

Artist Talk, Slamdance Guerrilla Gamemakers Festival: Gamemakers Presentations, Park City, 2006.

## Publications

### Books (Academic)

*Adventure Games: Playing the Outsider.* with Anastasia Salter and John Murray. Bloomsbury, 2020. Honorable Mention for the 2020 N. Katherine Hayles Award for Criticism of Electronic Literature.

Creating Interactive Fiction With Inform 7. Foreword by Don Woods. Course Technology PTR, 2010.

### Book Chapters

“*Amnesia* as Text and Game.” In Total Amnesia: The Complete Text and Programming Notes of the World’s Most Famous Lost Computer Game, ed. Sarah Smith. Max Light Books, 2021.

“Telling Stories with Maps and Rules: Using the Interactive Fiction Language ‘Inform 7’ in a Creative Writing Workshop.” In Creative Writing in the Digital Age, ed. Mike Clark, Trent Hergenrader, and Joe Rein. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

“Playing the Worlds of Prom Week.” Ben Samuel, Dylan Lederle-Ensign, Mike Treanor, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Josh McCoy, Aaron Reed and Michael Mateas. In Narrative Theory, Literature, and New Media: Narrative Minds and Virtual Worlds, edited by Mari Hatavara et al. New York: Routledge. 2016.

### Academic, Lead Author

“The Eurekon: A Design Pattern in Expressive Storygames.” Aaron Reed, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Michael Mateas. Seventh Intelligent Narrative Technologies Workshop, Milwaukee, 2014.

“Ice-Bound: Combining Richly-Realized Story with Expressive Gameplay.” Aaron Reed, Jacob Garbe, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Michael Mateas. Foundations of Digital Games, 2014.

“Sharing Authorship With Algorithms: Procedural Generation of Satellite Sentences in Text-based Interactive Stories.” Workshop on Procedural Content Generation, Foundations of Digital Games. Raleigh, 2012.

“Creating ‘maybe make some change.’ ” ACM Conference on Creativity and Cognition. Atlanta, 2011.

“Knock’s Memories: Creating an Emotional Story Space with Inform 7.” Critical Code Studies. USC, 2010.

“Spyfeet: An Exercise RPG.” Aaron A Reed, Ben Samuel, Anne Sullivan, Ricky Grant et al. Foundations of Digital Games, 2011.

“Blue Lacuna: Lessons Learned Writing the World’s Longest Interactive Fiction.” Electronic Literature Organization Archive & Innovate. Brown University, 2010.

## Academic, Co-author

“The Ensemble Engine: Next-Generation Social Physics.” Benjamin Samuel, Aaron Reed, Paul Maddaloni, Michael Mateas and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. Foundations of Digital Games, 2015.

“Author Assistance Visualizations for Ice-Bound: A Combinatorial Narrative.” Jacob Garbe, Aaron Reed, Melanie Dickinson, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Michael Mateas. Foundations of Digital Games, 2014. *Selected as Exemplary Paper*

“Prom Week: Designing past the game/story dilemma.” Joshua McCoy, Mike Treanor, Ben Samuel, Aaron A Reed, Michael Mateas, Noah Wardrip-Fruin. In Foundations of Digital Games 2013.

“Prom Week.” Joshua McCoy, Mike Treanor, Ben Samuel, Aaron A. Reed, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Michael Mateas. Foundations of Digital Games. Raleigh, 2012.

“Playing with Words: From intuition to evaluation of game dialogue interfaces.” Serdar Sali, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Steven Dow, Michael Mateas, Sri Kurniawan, Aaron A. Reed, Ronald Liu. Foundations of Digital Games. Monterey, 2010.

## Journal Articles

“Social Story Worlds with *Comme il Faut*.” Joshua McCoy, Mike Treanor, Ben Samuel, Aaron A. Reed, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Michael Mateas. Transactions on Computational Intelligence and AI in Games Special Issue on Computational Narrative and Games, 2014.

“Re-Visualizing Afghanistan in ‘what if im the bad guy’: Using Palimpsest to Create an AR Documentary.” Aaron A. Reed and Phoenix Toews. *not here not there*, Leonardo Electronic Almanac Vol 19 Issue 1 (special issue on Augmented Reality), 2013.

## Posters and Work In Progress Papers

“‘At the Bar’ and ‘Escape Plan’: Two Conversational Prototypes with the Spirit AI Character Engine.” Playable Experiences Track, AIIDE (Artificial Intelligence in Interactive Digital Entertainment) 2018, Montreal.

“Story Sampling: A New Approach to Evaluating and Authoring Interactive Narrative.” Ben Samuel, Joshua Mccoy, Mike Treanor, Aaron Reed, Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Michael Mateas. Foundations of Digital Games, 2014.

“A Step Towards the Future of Role-Playing Games: The SpyFeet Mobile RPG Project.” With Ben Samuel, Anne Sullivan, Ricky Grant, April Grow, Justin Lazaro, Jennifer Mahal, Sri Kurniawan, Marilyn Walker, Noah Wardrip-Fruin. Artificial Intelligence and Interactive Digital Entertainment Conference. Stanford, 2011.

“SpyFeet: An Exercise RPG.” With Ben Samuel, Anne Sullivan, Ricky Grant, April Grow, Justin Lazaro, Jennifer Mahal, Sri Kurniawan, Marilyn Walker, Noah Wardrip-Fruin. Foundations of Digital Games. Bordeaux, 2011.

## Classes Taught

### As Instructor or Co-Instructor

“Advanced Electronic Literature.” Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) 2015, University of Victoria (with Dene Grigar and Sandy Baldwin).

DANM 132, “Literary Games: The Intersection of Writing and Play.” UC Santa Cruz, Summer 2012 and Summer 2011.

### As Section-Leading Teaching Assistant

CMPS 80K, “Foundations of Digital Games,” UCSC Spring 2012 and Spring 2015 (Professor Noah Wardrip-Fruin) and Winter 2016 (Professor Talan Memmot)

FDM 20P, “Introduction to Production Technique,” UCSC Fall 2010 (Professor Jesse Fankushen)

TA 20, “Intro to Acting,” UCSC Winter 2010 (Professor Greg Fritsch)

FDM 20C, “Introduction to Digital Media,” UCSC Fall 2009 (Professor Lindsay Kelley)

### Other Teaching Assistantships

CMPS 170, “Game Design Studio I,” UCSC Fall 2012 (Professor Heather Logas)

MUSC 80M, “Film Music,” UCSC Spring 2010 (Professor David Cope)

## Major Narrative Projects

Subcutaneous. A horror novel that changes for each new reader, using procedural text to assemble countless variations on a queer coming-of-age story. <http://subcutaneous.textories.com/>

Finalist, LGBTQ2 category, Next Generation Indie Book Awards 2020.

The Ice-bound Concordance (with Jacob Garbe). An iPad app and printed book work together to tell a multilayered interactive story using generative methods and augmented reality. <http://www.ice-bound.com/>

Winner, “Best Story/World Design,” IndieCade 2014.

Finalist, “Excellence in Narrative” and Honorable Mention, “Nuovo Award,” IGF 2015.

Finalist, “Gamer’s Voice Award,” South by Southwest Gaming Expo, 2015.

Exhibited, The Book Lab, swissnex, San Francisco, October 2013.

Exhibited, 6th International Conference for Interactive Digital Storytelling (ICIDS) 2013. Istanbul.

18 Cadence. Reconfigurable fragments of narrative exploring the hundred-year story of a fictional house. <http://18cadence.textories.com/>

Selection, Best Book Apps of 2013, Kirkus Reviews.

Honorable Mention, Independent Games Festival (IGF) Nuovo Award, 2013.

Honorable Mention, Robert Coover Award for a Work of Electronic Literature, Electronic Literature Organization, 2014

Exhibited, “Language and the Interface,” International Conference on Digital Literary Studies, University of Coimbra, Portugal, 2015.

Exhibited, “The Future of Reading? An Exhibition of Digital Literature’, Sheffield, England, 2014.

Exhibited, Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, February 2013.

Published, Rio Grande Review (Online supplement of the Double Fall 2012 - Spring 2013 Issue)

Exhibited, chercher le texte festival, Paris, France, 2013.

Exhibiting Finalist, Screengrab New Media Arts Award 2013.

Exhibited, Kosmopolis Stories Lab, Barcelona, 2019.

Prom Week (lead writer and co-designer). AI-driven social physics game with emergent narratives. <http://promweek.soe.ucsc.edu/>

Finalist, IndieCade 2012.

Nominee, Technical Excellence, IGF (Independent Games Festival) 2012.

Exhibited, AI and Interactive Digital Entertainment (AIIDE), Boston, 2013.

Exhibited, “Inventing the Future of Games” (IFoG), San Jose, California, 2011.

Exhibited, Foundations of Digital Games (FDG), Monterey, California, 2010.

Panel Selection, “Beyond Eliza: Construction Socially Engaging AI panel,” AI Summit of the Game Developer’s Conference, 2012.

what if im the bad guy? and other stories (2011). Collection of four short interactive stories exploring an aesthetic of sculptural fiction, including an augmented reality documentary about soldiers accused of war crimes. <http://aaronareed.net/what-if-im-the-bad-guy/>

Jury Award, *permutations*, 2011 UCSC Digital Arts & New Media MFA Show.

maybe make some change (2011; part of bad guy). The player explores a frozen battlefield moment from conflicting perspectives. <http://change.textories.com/>

Exhibited, Prospectives ’12 International Festival of Digital Art.

Shortlisted, New Media Writing Prize 2011, Best Student Work.

Exhibited, Creativity & Cognition Art Exhibition, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 2011.

Exhibited, 2012 UCLA Game Art Festival.

Blue Lacuna (2009). Novel-length interactive fiction. <http://blue-lacuna.textories.com/>

Finalist, IndieCade 2010; Honorable Mention in World/Story category.

Ranked #6, Interactive Fiction Top 50 of all time, Interactive Fiction Database.

Winner, Best Story, Best Setting, Best Use of Medium, and Best Game of the Year, 2009 XYZZY Awards

Selection, Prospectives.09 Digital Art Conference, Reno, Nevada

blueful (2009). Short story in fragments across social networking sites. <http://blueful.textories.com/>

Winner, 2010 (dis)junctions Media Festival, UC Riverside.

Whom the Telling Changed (2005). Experimental short IF. <http://aaronareed.net/wttc.html>

Nominee, “Best Script Award”, GameShadow Innovation in Games Festival and Awards, 2006

Selection, “The Electronic Literature Collection Volume One”, 2006

Finalist, Slamdance Guerrilla Gamemaker Competition, 2006

Winner, “Best Individual NPC” and “Best Use of Medium,” XYZZY Awards, 2006

Winner, Spring Thing Competition for Interactive Fiction, 2005

## Other Projects

50 Years of Text Games. Series analyzing one text game from each year between 1971 and 2021. <https://if50.substack.com/>

Archives of the Sky. Tabletop roleplaying game without dice or a gamemaster exploring moral choice in a sci-fi setting. Winner, Judge’s Spotlight, 2019 ENnie Awards. <https://archivesofthesky.textories.com/>

Hollywood Visionary. Successful choice-based interactive narrative with 150,000 words of content, released by Choice of Games on Steam, iOS, and other major platforms. ChoiceScript. 2015. <https://www.choiceofgames.com/hollywood-visionary/>

Almost Goodbye. Procedural generation of sentences in a short interactive story. Multiple choice fiction/UnDum. April 2012. Selection, 2013 MLA “Avenues of Access.” <http://almostgoodbye.textories.com/>

Informant. A story sequencing engine for the *Spyfeet* mobile exergame project. Inform 7. 2010-11.

Sand-dancer. With Alexei Othenin-Girard. <http://sand-dancer.textories.com/>. Interactive fiction coming-of-age story exploring how memories are transmuted into life skills. August 2010.

Minimalist Story Generator 1 and 2. <http://aaronareed.net/2010/three.html> and <http://aaronareed.net/2010/ca/>. Experiments in interactive web-based storylets. Javascript/jQuery. Exhibited at “Lunatic Binary,” UC Santa Cruz, Spring 2010.

IF Experiments 1 and 2. <http://aaronareed.net/if/ex1/> and <http://aaronareed.net/if/ex2/>. Exploring unique narrative possibilities in natural language Inform 7 code. Spring 2010 - present.

Gourmet. Slapstick interactive fiction, 2003. Winner, “Best Puzzles,” XYZZY Awards, 2003.

## Organizing/Conference Committees

Organizer, Spring Thing Festival of Interactive Fiction, 2013 to present. <http://www.springthing.net/>

Program Committee, Artificial Intelligence in Interactive Digital Entertainment (AIIDE), 2017.

Program Committee, ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media, 2016.

Program Committee, Intelligent Narrative Technologies 7 at the Electronic Literature Organization 2014 Conference, Milwaukee.

Program Committee, Foundations of Digital Games 2014.

Juror, IndieCade, 2012-2014.

Program Committee, Electronic Literature Organization Archive and Innovate, 2012.

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<http://aaronareed.net>