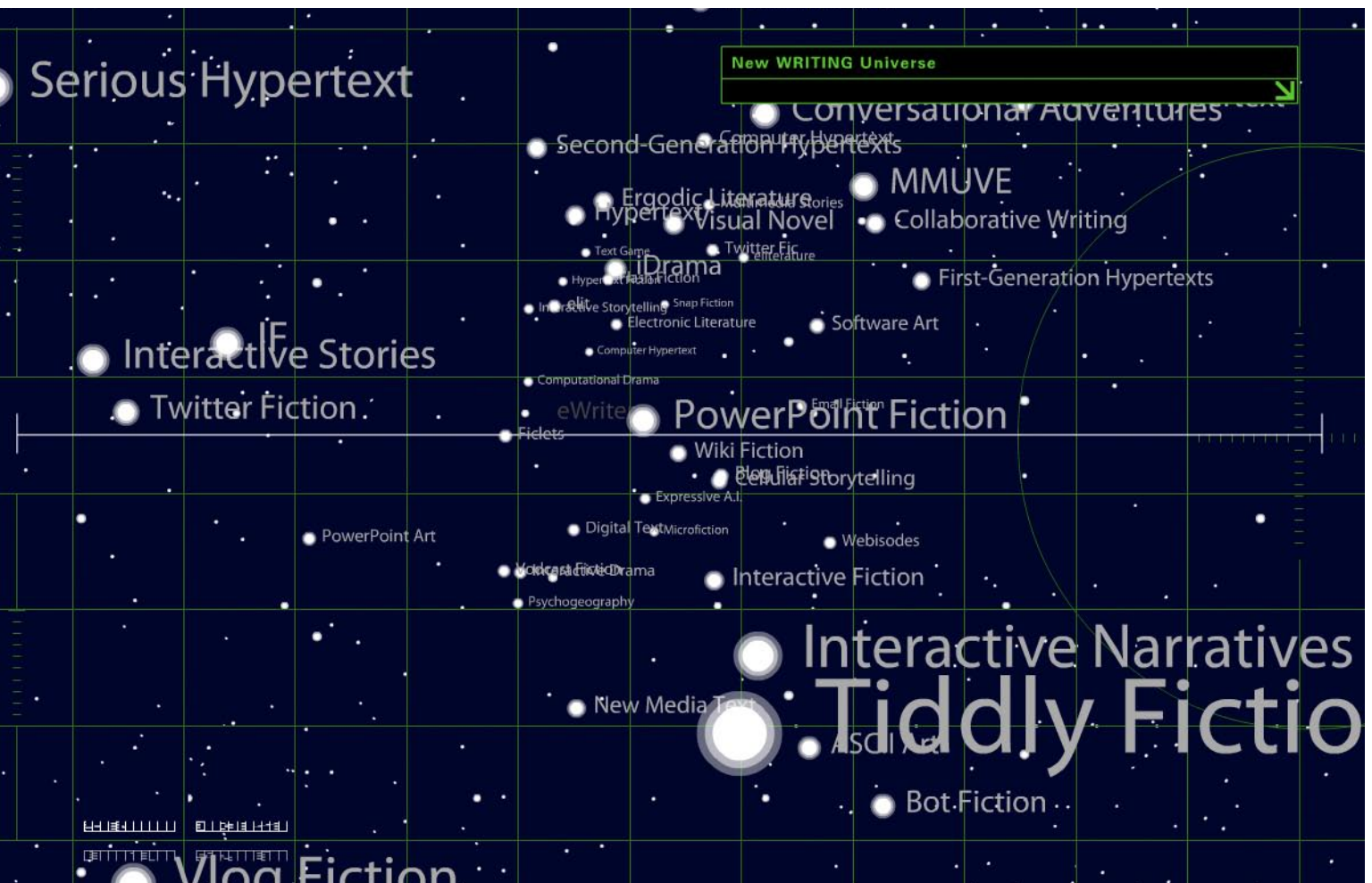




The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure



The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure

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Disclaimer

This guide includes references, comments and projections regarding the topic of the craft and business of new media writing. The recipient acknowledges that these references, comments and projections reflect assumptions by the authors concerning the future, which may or may not prove correct.

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Welcome

Who should use this guide

This guide is a professional development resource for creative writers. Its primary target audience is any writer (young or old, emerging, mid-career or established) in Australia or overseas, who aims to earn income as a professional creative writer and is interested in how the new media industry can enhance their craft skills and income earning potential.

The secondary audience is any artist or practitioner (producer, games developer, publisher, funding body) whose work may be informed by this resource.

The aim in developing this guide is to create a freely available and widely accessible repository of knowledge and information on the theme of professional creative writing in a digital context. While acknowledging that writers often balance their creative writing with other professional writing such as journalism, or entirely separate careers in other fields, this guide is focused on what you do as a professional creative writer.

For the purposes of this guide we identify three broad career paths for professional creative writers and tailor advice accordingly. These are:

- employed – writers within an organisation or company, who do not retain any intellectual property (IP) or ownership of copyright and do not have complete creative control, but do earn a regular salary from creative writing, e.g. games writers
- self-employed – novelists, poets and any kind of author whose work is published by a third party and who earn a royalty from their IP; authors and performance writers who are the writers on other people's projects or who develop their own concepts and take them to a film, theatre or new media production company, or direct to a broadcaster or online publisher to be produced. These writers possibly retain ownership of copyright depending on the contract and usually work on time-limited projects so have to also generate new business for themselves on an ongoing basis (selling the next idea or winning the next contract)
- entrepreneurs – writers who develop an entire business around professional creative writing, often with a business partner or team and usually with some investment from third parties. These writers

definitely maintain ownership of copyright and have a greater ability to exploit it more easily in other areas. They must understand how to run and structure a business and be prepared to attract investors and sell their idea(s).

We also identify three broad types of writing in the new media industry:

- digital content such as computer games and interactive fiction
- digital and traditional media combinations such as cross-platform storytelling
- digital content to increase the reach and market of traditional media (traditional media is the term used to describe print media such as books and magazines, and TV, film and theatre).

The terms digital and new media are used interchangeably in this guide.

How to use this guide

In devising the focus of this publication, we have identified three professional writing **career** types: employed, self-employed and entrepreneurs; and three types of new media industry **writing**: digital, cross-platform and promotional:

Career	Writing
Employed	Digital
Self-Employed	Multi-platform
Entrepreneurs	Promotional

The diagram at the beginning of each chapter will guide you to those that are most relevant to you now and in the future as your needs and interests change.

If the chapter is not particularly relevant to one of the career or writing types it will appear lighter than those that are:

Chapter	Career	Writing
5	Self-Employed	Digital
	Entrepreneurs	Multi-platform
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Introduction

By Therese Fingleton

Chapter	Career	Writing
1	Employed	Digital
	Self-Employed	Multi-platform
	Entrepreneurs	Promotional

Avoid all paradigms, even mine! When someone says this is the way it's done and it has to be this way, question it, because the landscape is changing so much.

Matt Costello, 2008

The world of the Internet, computer games and mobile technology, broadly referred to here as the new media industry, is a rapidly changing environment, difficult to grasp and keep still long enough to examine. It involves professionals from all walks of life who approach it from myriad points of view. In writing a guide especially for writers, and including the experiences of writers already active in this multi-faceted business, this guide will take you on a rich journey that resonates beyond any immediate use-by date by being relevant, presented in context and designed especially for you, the creative writer.

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New media myths, true or false

As is typical in any evolving field of endeavour, myths abound in the new media industry. It is worth remembering that use of the term 'myth' by scholars implies neither the truth nor the falseness of the narrative. What follows here are some common new media industry myths relevant to writers and an examination of what they entail. They are presented to help inform you as you work in this shifting landscape, and remind you that you will need to decide who and what to believe.

The new media industry is killing the old media industry.
 New media writing is killing the craft of creative writing.
 No business models work in new media, OMG it is killing commerce too!

Myth 1: The new media industry is killing the traditional media industry.

They took the credit for your second symphony.
 Rewritten by machine and new technology.

Buggles, 1979 (lyric from Video killed the radio star*)

Here's a story we've heard before. Cinema will kill books and radio, TV will spell the demise of the theatre release, and now Internet and computer games will supposedly obliterate newspapers, magazines and all other media that has come before. If history has taught us to disbelieve the past prophets of media doom, should we believe them this time?

In his 2007 title, *The Book is Dead; Long live the Book*, Australian academic Sherman Young argues that 'book culture is dead; doomed by being tied to the printed object and the economics of scarcity that surround it'. As books are currently the most bought object on the Internet, one could assume that readers will continue to desire the experience of reading a printed book well into the future

[\[http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/01/28/books-most-purchased-item-online\]](http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/01/28/books-most-purchased-item-online). That said, the book industry (authors, publishers and booksellers) is right to see the rise in popularity of new digital formats (e-books, games, virtual worlds) as an indication of a change in consumer behaviour and a possible threat to traditional business models.

The same logic applies to the print media and TV industries, which increasingly must compete with online media for advertising dollars, as well as the theatrical film release market, which is competing with on-demand video on the Internet and cable networks. Traditional media simply cannot

ignore where new media is taking its audiences. While according to Roy Morgan research (2007) Australians still spend more than twice the amount of time watching TV as they spend online, they define one group in the survey as 'heavy Internet users'. These are people who use the Internet 8+ times per week and are aged 14–24 years (1.332 million people – 7.8% of all Australians aged 14 years and over). This group spends more time online than they do watching TV – 22.8 hours online versus 15.5 hours watching TV – and is probably a good indication of what is to come
[\[http://www.roymorgan.com/news/internet-releases/2008/734/\]](http://www.roymorgan.com/news/internet-releases/2008/734/).

To prophesise doom for the traditional media industry at the hands of a new kid on the block may indeed be folly, but what we can be sure of is that the Internet, the mobile content and applications industry and computer games are reshaping the media industry. We can likely expect the emerging media industry to grow up just like its traditional media big brother, dominated by a few large players – Amazon and Google spring to mind – but with many smaller players too, servicing ever more splintering niche audience groups and buoyed by further shifts to e-commerce.

While debates on the demise of the traditional media industry may seem largely the concern of publishers and distributors, as writing will always be in demand, it is advisable for writers to understand the evolutionary process the media industry is currently undergoing. New media distribution and marketing channels are both more global and more niche than traditional media. To ignore the new media evolution, and in particular the Internet on a personal computer or mobile device as a distribution, marketing and creative channel, is to forgo valuable new craft and business opportunities.

For a more detailed introduction to the new media industry see [The New Media Industry](#) chapter.

* The video of the one-hit wonder Video killed the radio star is almost 30 years old, has been viewed by around 800,000 people on YouTube. Perhaps in 2008 The Buggles would have been singing, 'New media revived the old media star'.

Myth 2: New media is killing the craft of creative writing.

Every age seeks out the appropriate medium in which to confront unanswerable questions of human existence. We cannot limit ourselves to Elizabethan or Victorian forms any more than Shakespeare could have written within the conventions of the Aristotelian tragedy or medieval passion play.

Janet Murray, 1997

Janet Murray in her seminal work, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, leaves us in no doubt that the craft of writing is evolving just as surely as technology is advancing. Yet still when those in the business of creative writing gather to discuss the future of writing they often decry the quality of writing in interactive media as just not being up to the standards of traditional media. Blogs, video portals and virtual worlds are commonly cited as examples of self-published works that typically undergo no editorial process and present little guarantee of quality. That new media is not progressing the craft of writing, simply throwing it open to the masses, is another common claim. Is it scare mongering from gatekeepers or is there some truth to the myth that new media is killing the craft of creative writing?

A lack of meaningful content or an overt focus on shooting rampages are commonly cited to prove that immersive, interactive media like social virtual worlds and role playing games, offer less emotionally engaging experiences. But this is only looking at a small section of games and interactive media. Narrative-driven games such as the 2006 Slamdance Guerrilla Gamemaker Competition award winner, *Façade*, are paving the way for more serious engagement with emotions in games. This 'one-act interactive drama' immerses the player in the world of a bickering married couple and, according to its co-creator Andrew Stern, is about 'making players feel a true connection to characters on the screen'. It sounds more like interactive theatre than what we have come to associate with video games.

In the same vein as fan fiction, players of role-playing games often generate their own characters and their engagement with the story is augmented by virtue of the fact that they and their characters are embodied in the work. University of Sydney academic Angela Thomas conducted a seven-year study, *Youth Online*, which chronicles the stories and online interactions of young people from several countries. A common statement from her young study subjects was 'but my favourite part of role-playing is bringing your character to life ... to bring your character to life you talk for them and it kinda lets you relate to the character you made up'.

Indisputably, there are limitless examples of 'bad' writing on blogs and in video portals, but there are also numerous examples of quality writing, some of which is 'discovered' and 'legitimised' by the media industry giants. Phone-sex operator Cody Diablo was blogging about her year as a stripper when a Hollywood producer came across her writing and asked her to write a screenplay. She did and it became the highly successful 2007 film

Juno. Her blog became *Candy Girl: A Year in the Life of an Unlikely Stripper* (Gotham Books, Penguin 2006).

Similarly, the makers of Lonelygirl 15 (available on YouTube and Revver) generated a huge audience for a faux video diary of a young girl, which was finally exposed as being a scripted and acted series. The audience remained highly engaged because of the quality of the drama and the makers were subsequently contracted to create KateModern, a drama set in the same 'universe' as Lonelygirl15 and with some of the same characters. While available through many sites, KateModern was first published and distributed by Bebo [www.bebo.com] a social networking service.

As for claims that new media writing does not advance the craft, one can examine the impact of writing for new platforms on a writer's methodology. Australian author [Isabelle Merlin](#) says 'the experience of writing a blog for the main character in my book, and the interactions between that character and others on the blog, forced me to develop a whole new discipline in my writing. I had to write convincing real-time narrative that augmented the book-reading experience without detracting from it. It had to read convincingly as real-time interactions'. It would appear that writing for new media can expand your craft horizons in the same way as changing genres from novels to radio.

Only by writing for interactivity will a writer appreciate what new media can offer and which elements to appropriate for their purposes and to further their craft. Whether you wish to role-play your characters in virtual worlds in order to develop dialogue sequences or simply create a blog to build and interact with an audience and possibly be 'discovered', most avenues would suggest new media offers more opportunity to evolve the craft of writing than kill it.

Myth 3: No business models work in new media, OMG it is killing commerce too!

Check the program on any new or traditional media industry seminar or conference these days and you're practically guaranteed to find sessions dedicated to emerging business models. Discussions often centre on whether or not any models work for new media creative content, and in particular original independent creative content. Currently most of what is being developed (i.e. that which advertisers are prepared to spend advertising dollars on) is new media content created around existing properties such as sports events and reality TV shows.

Of course, it isn't true to say that no business models work in new media, it's just that they are more diverse and complex than the ones we know from traditional media. In some cases they are a hybrid of old and new models.

Video games for example are native digital content services that employ a mix of traditional and new business models. Video game makers often distribute demos with a few free levels and if you like them you can pay to unlock the others. Online virtual worlds like Second Life invite you to 'play' for free and as you become more active in the world you can purchase digital goods, lease digital land and even start making digital money yourself. But video games also work as traditional media in that there is a massive market for selling games on DVD. The games industry is largely dominated by major corporations but also includes numerous independent companies who are succeeding in this space by using various business models and content types. Successful Australian companies include Krome Studios [<http://www.kromestudios.com/>], the producer of over 37 titles including The Legend of Spyro (series), Hellboy and Ty the Tasmanian Tiger and Auran Games – creator of Dark Reign, one of the most successful real-time strategy games worldwide.

Cross-platform projects are more complex again, usually relying on a web of revenue channels including advertising, sponsorship and subscriptions. Some argue that these multi-pronged models are not yet sufficiently tested and as such can't be considered proven, but again independent writers and producers are making them work. Some notable Australian examples are Hoodlum [<http://www.hoodlum.com.au/>], who develop content as extensions to existing properties (e.g. Find 815, based in the Lost TV show universe) and sometimes use new creative ideas and content; Blue Rocket [<http://www.blue-rocket.com.au/>], an animation and cartoon house who create for film, TV, broadband (Internet) and mobile (Hoota & Snoz, and Bang the Cat); and Global Dilemma, producers of award-winning cross-platform distributed drama Forget the Rules [<http://www.forgettherules.com/>].

See the profiles of [Marissa Cooke](#) – who has worked as a writer on Hoodlum projects, and those of Blue Rocket principal [Dave Gurney](#) and [Jim Shomos](#), writer-producer of Forget the Rules, in the [Business Models](#) chapter.

Writing delivered in traditional media formats that use new media for marketing and distribution is in many ways the big winner in this space. As discussed previously, audiences, be they readers, viewers or players, still have a voracious appetite for traditional media. The Internet has

revolutionised how these objects are bought and sold and in many ways the most reliable business model going is using new media to sell old media. Amazon and the millions of niche media sites using the tried and tested transaction or purchase business model have created 'The Long Tail' effect, generating huge revenues from what were previously dead products, such as publishers' back lists. This concept is examined further in The New Media Industry chapter.

What we can take from this myth is that while there is a great deal of uncertainty and change, business models do exist for new media creative content. As we will see in later chapters (Marketing & distribution, Business models), in many cases business models are less divorced from the creative concept than in traditional media models. For writers this means you need to be more aware of business models than ever before.

Where to next?

Nothing offers a better starting point for writers new to this area than curiosity. What lies over that hill? Is there really a pot of gold? In the uncharted territory of new media, questions abound: not only asking which direction to take, but on board which vessel and by which route? And what will you find at the end of your journey? Common questions posed by writers entering this arena may help you think about your own new media questions:

- With more media and more stories, is there more work for creative writers?
- Can I work as a writer on other people's creative projects?
- Can I finally give up my day job?
- Will my literary writing skills transfer to the world of interactive media?
- Can my existing works find new life as interactive content or games?
- How do I know if my idea will make a good game?
- Am I capable of developing digital native ideas?
- If my audience becomes co-creators, what about the integrity of my work?
- I don't know the first thing about websites or game engines. Who would I collaborate with, how would I find them, how would that work?
- How can I stop people from copying and illegally distributing my work?
- Should I just put my work out there and let it build me an audience?
- If I want to stick to writing for traditional media, does digital technology offer me options to find and reach new audiences?
- Who is my audience and with so much noise how will they find my work?
- How can I generate revenue from my creative content?
- Who funds and invests in interactive media, websites and games?
- Can someone please tell me what is Twitter?

This guide aims to help you to learn how and where to find the answers to these as well as your own set of questions.

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Australia Council for the Arts

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The New Media Industry

By Jennifer Wilson

Chapter	Career	Writing
2	Employed	Digital
	Self-Employed	Multi-platform
	Entrepreneurs	Promotional

Before we go too far, let's take a look at the digital world as a whole, cover some of the history, developments and services most relevant for writers, and take a look at a few Australian companies in this space. This chapter provides an overview of the new media industry landscape and a foundation upon which writers can build as they launch themselves into cyberspace. Regardless of how you want your content to work in the digital space – as a stand-alone product, a game or linked to a product published elsewhere – you need to know the basics of the digital industry as a whole. The information and resources provided here are designed for writers in Australia and internationally and, as in each section of this book, links to articles, podcasts and websites are provided online at [\[http://del.icio.us/WritersGuide/\]](http://del.icio.us/WritersGuide/).

If you've got a great script, great game, great adventure or just a great story that you want to tell, it's relatively straightforward – get some money and build, make or create it. Mind you, if you want to make a living from your writing, that's a different thing altogether.

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Industry overview: what is the industry?

Sit back vs lean forward

Any definition of the digital content industry is doomed from the start by setting boundaries, which limit the market. With digital film, digital TV and digital radio all in common use, the fact that the content is created or delivered digitally is no longer sufficient to define it as 'digital content'. The definition needs to look to the manner in which content is consumed such as via the Internet, mobile phone, game terminal or DVD. Simplistically, content can be divided into linear content (also called 'heritage'), which we sit back and consume, or content that we lean forward and engage with, such as via the Internet or in a game.

In terms of sit back media, we cannot control the linear flow of what is being delivered, so we sit back and passively let someone else (the programmer) decide what to tell us and in what order. TV, movies and books all follow this model – a linear sequence delivered in a specific manner. In contrast, lean forward media allows us to dictate the flow of the narrative, control the direction of the story and drill down or move in different directions through the content. These definitions do not successfully deal with content such as serialised drama sent via SMS or MMS to your mobile phone (which you cannot control or interact with), but the majority of digital content tends to be more of a 'lean forward' experience than a 'sit back' one.

Key digital content is that which is accessed via the Internet, dedicated gaming devices or mobile phones and these are the industries, which we will look at in more depth.

The Internet industry

The Internet, as in computers connecting to each other, has been around since the early 1970s, but its use was mainly for education, government and defence purposes. For an interesting history of the Internet (based on the personalities involved rather than just the facts)

[\[http://www.netvalley.com/intval/07262/main.htm?sdf=1\]](http://www.netvalley.com/intval/07262/main.htm?sdf=1). It was the development and open release of the World Wide Web in 1992 and particularly HTML (Hypertext Markup Language – the format language for web pages) that provided the conditions through which the Internet became an open, mass-market source.

Marshall McLuhan stated in 1964 that ‘a characteristic of every medium is that its content is always another medium’. In the same way that early television was ‘radio with pictures’, so the first Internet sites were effectively online magazines with TV-like video segments – a feature still common for most portal sites. Since then the Internet has expanded to include online commerce sites as extensions of existing businesses (‘clicks and mortar’); brand sites (company information online); online-only retailers (such as Amazon); and directories and guides.

More recently, we’ve seen the creation of ‘Internet native’ services, which don’t always have a real-world equivalent. These include search, webmail, social networking and social media (tagging) sites; user-generated content sites (YouTube, PhotoBucket, blogs, etc.); and even complete alternate worlds (Second Life, Lively, etc).

The Internet has several social roles:

- as a key media source – providing information, entertainment, text, images and video
- to store pictures (Flickr, PhotoBucket), videos (YouTube), life stories (Blogger, WordPress), lists of things we like (del.icio.us, dig, StumbleUpon), even documents (Google Docs) and lists of tasks (Remember the Milk)
- to communicate with those far away (email, Skype, MSN)
- to maintain social connectedness (MySpace, Facebook, Bebo)
- as the biggest and most frequently accessed research tool (Google, Wikipedia, WhitePages).

For many people the Internet is dominated by portal sites, which provide entry into a vast range of content (often referred to as broad and shallow). The number of pages of content created by these sites is massive –

ninemsn has over four million pages and Yahoo!7 has about nine million. Most major online portals that provide digital content, such as BigPond, ninemsn and Yahoo!7, regardless of their initial business model, now consider themselves media companies in the new media industry. For writers, this means that the idea of 'media' is changing and that 'publishers' in the digital space are often companies seeking to control their content as well as produce and license content from other producers. What they seek to 'publish' includes video, information, guides, gossip, fact, documentary and, occasionally, narrative. In addition to the 'broad but not-so-deep' portal sites, there are also deep, rich sites of digital content from existing publishers such as ABC, News Ltd and Fairfax.

Key developments in the global digital content industry

One of the first internet developments relevant to writers was the effective, but surprising domination of the (online) bookselling market by Amazon. Suddenly writers, or at least, books, were big business online – something the bricks and mortar booksellers (Barnes and Noble, Angus and Robertson, Borders, etc.) had failed to see coming. Amazon created a brilliant system, being able to buy books as required (based upon demand) without needing to store books for display purposes. Key to Amazon's success was solving the problems of warehousing and distribution, allowing them to compete against the main street resellers. The traditional retail book stores distribution system was now at a disadvantage as their online rivals only needed to hold stock when required to fulfil existing orders. Additionally, Amazon's move to capitalise on the information provided by users, including book reviews, ratings and recommendations, kept them ahead of their more traditional competitors. Interestingly, the success of Amazon appears to have benefitted the book market as a whole, with all of their traditional bricks and mortar competitors reporting increased sales over the last eight years [<http://www.fonerbooks.com/booksale.htm>].

In 2005, YouTube sparked an Internet video revolution with a site that enabled the easy uploading and sharing of video content, much as Flickr and PhotoBucket had allowed photo sharing. Content on YouTube quickly grew, with both amateurs and professionals realising there was a hunger for entertainment and video content. With no copyright protection in place, many of the major video owners remained suspicious, however the 'open' nature of YouTube resulted in a huge variety of content being uploaded to it (current estimates are around ten hours of video being uploaded every minute – equivalent to more than 11 years of content being added each week!)

[\[http://www.telegraph.co.uk/connected/main.jhtml?xml=/connected/2008/05/27/dlg_oog127.xml\]](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/connected/main.jhtml?xml=/connected/2008/05/27/dlg_oog127.xml).

It's also estimated that only about 25% of the content on YouTube is 'amateur', the rest either professional content uploaded by users (clips of TV shows or movies) or made by professionals to attract a more user-generated content type market. One of these, *Lonelygirl15* [\[http://www.youtube.com/user/lonelygirl15\]](http://www.youtube.com/user/lonelygirl15) created a huge uproar (and an increase in audience) when its professional nature was made public. The creators were then contracted by the social network service Bebo to create *KateModern* – bringing a form of TV (video) to social networking services. *Lonelygirl15* has the (dubious) accolade of also being the first Internet series to introduce product integration (product placement) when the episode 'Truckstop Reunion' featured the characters eating and displaying Hershey's Ice Breakers Sours Gum. Additionally, content created on YouTube has, on occasion, spawned TV shows or started TV careers for vloggers (for example Chris Crocker: [\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Crocker_\(Internet_celebrity\)\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Crocker_(Internet_celebrity))). YouTube was purchased by Google in late 2006 and, as a result of parents with deeper pockets, is now more active in its attempts to reduce copyright infringements for fear of reprisals.

The publishing and book industry is now seeing the value of the Internet not just as a distribution and sales channel for printed books, but also for digital books (e-books) and increasingly for new formats not seen before such as collaborative writing. The blogging revolution has highlighted a huge appetite for online writing, and users will consume text in many formats, and, in many cases, will want to interact, edit or mash up the content in some way. Interest in e-books is growing as people look to consume digital versions of the printed work, the printed word itself going digital as 'consumer initiated publishing' such as print on demand (PoD – printing a physical version of a book upon request) becomes a reality. Books can be ordered online, printed and delivered for roughly the same price as purchase from a bookshop, but for the reseller there are no overheads in carrying (or storing) the physical stock. Whether or not it is due to Amazon or simply our continuing attachment to the physical form, books are the most bought object on the Internet, with 41% of Internet users buying one in the last three months

[\[http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/01/28/books-most-purchased-item-online\]](http://www.webpronews.com/topnews/2008/01/28/books-most-purchased-item-online).

So far, business models other than the selling of books online are few and far between. However, it is apparent that major trade publishers are prepared to invest in publishing new formats such as collaboratively written works published online only, works printed on demand (and therefore always up to date), and single chapters available as teasers. See the interview with Anna Maguire from Random House at the end of this chapter for one publisher's take on this.

Penguin UK has taken two innovative steps in this market: in March 2008 it agreed to offer free PDF downloads of the first chapter of every fiction title it publishes; secondly, it launched a new digital fiction project – We Tell Stories: Six authors. Six stories. Six weeks., [<http://wetellstories.co.uk/>] We Tell Stories, done collaboratively with fêted alternate reality game designers 'Six to Start' [<http://www.sixtostart.com/>], will see six Penguin authors create six stories for an online audience over a six week period. Readers are invited to search for clues within the innovative tales, which will lead them to a seventh story hidden somewhere on the Internet. Penguin UK has challenged some of its top authors, including Man Booker-short listed Mohsin Hamid, bestselling author Nicci French and popular teen fiction author Kevin Brooks to create new forms of story – designed especially for the Internet. See [<http://www.thebookseller.com/news/55291-alternate-reality-game-from-penguin.html>].

While these forays into the digital space are currently delivering more in terms of PR than sustainable business, major publishers in Australia such as Random House, Scholastic and Penguin, as well as independent publishers like Allen & Unwin are all looking for business models to underpin future growth as they address the changing consumption patterns of readers (and go digital). Indeed, Penguin's online release of the first chapter of each fiction title follows a six-month, more limited trial as they tested this market. Sensibly, Penguin UK extends downloads to smart mobile devices (iPhone, Blackberrys and Palms). This online presentation by Elizabeth Weiss of Allen & Unwin elaborates on the current issues faced by publishers:
 [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future/events/digital_publishing_seminar].

The market is created by those who spend money marketing the e-readers. You have to spend money on launching them, getting the price right, the in-store training, demos and customer support. To launch a consumer electronic device is a major thing: you need a

big manufacturer to get involved. Sony's continuous commitment to the market is very welcome by us.

Fionnuala Duggan, Director of Random House Group Digital, UK, 1997

The link of the supply of digital content to a digital device has proven to be the 'killer combination' for both parts of the equation. Apple proved this through providing a good online music store (iTunes) at the same time as they launched the iPod, resulting in their domination of the digital music market, despite being a late entrant. In the same way, it is hoped that Amazon's launch of Kindle and more recently in Australia, Dymock's release of the iLiad, may kick-start the nascent e-book industry. Amazon already has 147,000 e-books available for Kindle, and the iLiad, both a reader and a writer that lets you transfer notes back to your computer, has 95,000 digital books available. The launch of these e-book readers in late 2007 saw a 25% increase in the sales of e-books in the US in the first quarter of 2008 and this trend is expected to continue [http://www.openebook.org/doc_library/industrystats.htm]. As Apple has added new content (Pixar short films, audio books and more recently, iPhone applications) to iTunes, the addition of e-books to the iTunes store will likely herald a 'coming of age' for these formats.

Key players in the Australian Internet industry

This list is not designed to be exhaustive, but all of the companies below are Australian, very active and dominant in the Australian Internet industry. Indeed, the Internet Advertising Board (IAB) was founded by Fairfax Digital, News Interactive, ninemsn, Yahoo!7, Sensis and Google. Each of these companies has large numbers of staff focused on 'writing' specifically for the digital content industry. While most use journalists, some companies have creative writers (designed to attract new audiences), some have small games development teams and many commission digital content (notably ABC2) to help deliver audience.

Ninemsn: Largest Internet portal in Australia. Joint venture between Microsoft Networks (providing tools such as MSN Messenger, Hotmail and Spaces) and PBL Media (Channel 9, ACP Magazines). Provides original online content as well as brand support (magazines, TV program) content.

BigPond: Telstra owned company. Started out as an Internet service provider (connectivity) and is still the largest in Australia, now re-branded as a media company. Provides video, news, entertainment, music and downloadable services. Aims to provide convergent services across both online (Internet) and mobile phones.

Sensis: Another Telstra owned company. It mainly focuses on search and directories and includes Sensis (search), WhereIs (maps and local information), WhitePages, YellowPages, Trading Post and CitySearch. Sensis also has an advertising arm that provides the online sales for BigPond, Telstra and some non-Telstra customers.

Yahoo!7: Joint venture between Yahoo! and Channel 7 (includes Pacific Publications magazines) – similar to ninemsn.

Fairfax Digital: The digital division of Fairfax Media. Apart from digital versions of newspapers (*Sydney Morning Herald*, *Age*, *Financial Review*) offers digital guides (Drive, Domain), transactions (Stayz, RSVP) and has recently moved to digital-only news sites (Brisbane and Perth) and demographic-focused sites (Vine, Essential Baby).

News Ltd: Similar to Fairfax, responsible for the digital versions of news mastheads (*Daily Telegraph*, *Herald Sun*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Brisbane Courier*, etc.), news classifieds (online classifieds – cars, real estate, etc). Very active in the mobile space mainly across their own titles and services.

ABC: ABC TV content, news – extensive local services. Also additional children's focused services outside of programs, including user-generated content services (Rollermache). Currently have a new Internet TV player product (iView) and in their digital channel (ABC2) commissions new media content.

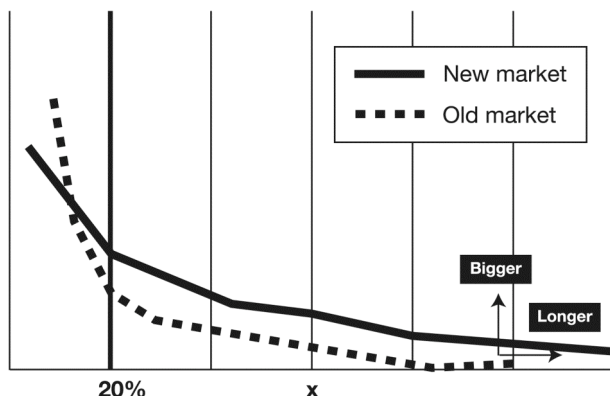
Making the Internet your own

Search, The Long Tail, Tagging, Discovery and Filtering

As the Internet has grown, some important concepts have developed that relate to how audiences discover and consume content. In looking to find and engage an audience, an understanding of these is important as the structure of the content offered needs to incorporate these concepts. The section on [Marketing & distribution](#) explains in greater detail how some of these concepts work to secure audience and distribution for content. These concepts are:

Search: While most sites on the Internet assume users will come in via their home page (or front door), in reality, search allows the whole Internet to be indexed, with users landing on any page within a site as a result of a link from a search request. This makes Search Engine Optimisation (SEO – making the site easily found, but also adding relevant words to assist in the resultant page rank) critical. Additionally, it is important to think about the experience users might get when they first find you via a page other than the home page. For more information on SEO see [\[http://bigmarketing.wordpress.com/2006/09/26/seo-for-dummies-demystifying-optimization/\]](http://bigmarketing.wordpress.com/2006/09/26/seo-for-dummies-demystifying-optimization/).

The Long Tail: This term was first coined by Chris Anderson in an article in *Wired* magazine in 2004 to describe the niche strategy of particularly online businesses, such as Amazon or Netflix, that sell a large number of unique items in relatively small quantities. Simply put, The Long Tail is based on the idea that while the most popular products will have a ready market, there is a niche market for almost any product. In the case of Amazon, a significant portion of sales are obscure books not available in brick-and-mortar stores. The Long Tail is a potential market and the distribution and sales channel opportunities created by the Internet can enable businesses (or producers) to find and then tap that market.



The tail is bigger and longer in new markets (such as online bookstores)

Tagging: When we read a book and like specific sentences or pages, we sometimes mark them or put a tag in the book so we can find them easily. Tagging sites such as Del.icio.us, Digg, StumbleUpon and Technorati allow us to do the same with websites, the big difference being these can be made public and shared. Most tagging sites aggregate the tagged articles, providing a quick way of seeing what people are stirred up about. Making it easy to tag your site, your content or your story can help you be discovered by people who might not otherwise find you.

Discovery and Filtering: Basically, we all know that search engines can be ineffective in finding what you really want. Seven million Google results may be impressive, but people rarely go past the first ten or so. As a result, we are increasingly reliant on peer groups (friends, social networks, etc.) to do the filtering for us by recommending what or where we should go. Similarly, we also use these groups for discovering new things we might not otherwise find. Generating ways to encourage these peer communities to talk about your site or recommend you is a good way of being discovered amidst all the noise on the Internet. More discussion on discovery and filtering can be found in the chapter on Marketing and distribution.

The Internet has a variety of uses for writers, depending on their focus. It is also important to remember that the Internet has the ability to be interactive and does not necessarily have to be used on a PC:

For those creating original digital content the Internet is the prime creation and consumption tool. Even if your content is targeted at mobile phones it may be the mobile Internet you are developing for. Even if this is not the case, your market will be Internet connected and you will need a presence (so you can be 'discovered').

For those seeking to take content from another medium (TV, radio, print, etc.) to the digital space, it is likely that your original content is already 'digital' and a website can give you a virtually instant 'home' for your content. Where your story is an extension of another medium the Internet provides a rich means for interacting and engaging with your audience – and even fulfilling their demand for a copy of your original work

For those looking to use the Internet to promote their work there are hundreds of different communities online and the Internet is a good way for them to find you – by being where they are.

The Internet for writers

The Internet offers great tools for writers, digital or otherwise, including things like bkkeeper [<http://www.bkkeep.com/>] which tracks your reading and bookmarks at the same time, and, more importantly, BookAlert [<http://www.mcqn.com/booklert/>] which will keep track of your book's Amazon rankings and send you regular emails or even Twitter messages of your current rank (you set the frequency) – so you can watch your rank soar as your book becomes a bestseller.

It is important to remember that users are selective, but will pay for what they want. One of the key Internet sites for writers is the print on demand site: [www.lulu.com]. Lulu provides the self-publishing elements required to let you upload content and images, format, save, set your price and sell the finished product. They print and ship each book as it is ordered and return to you 80% of the revenue received. The site can provide you with an ISBN for your book, hosts blogs and forums and is a rich and vibrant community that talks books and writing.

The games industry

Well before the Internet, there were games. These ‘arcade games’ existed in places like TimeZone and IntenCity, and featured racing cars, shoot-‘em-ups and, when digital started to happen, tabletop games like *Pong*, *Pacman* and *Space Invaders*. These games (the arcades) are still around, but gaming has emerged from the costly ‘big box’, to dedicated gaming units (Xbox 360, Nintendo Wii, PlayStation), handheld dedicated units (PlayStation Portable2, Nintendo DS and Game Boy), the personal computer (from stand-alone games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, *SimCity* and *Myst*; through Internet-connected games like Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG) such as *Eve Online*, *World of Warcraft* and *Habbo Hotel*) and the mobile phone – which, similar to the computer, are morphing from stand-alone games to connected games and even some slimmed-down version of MMORPGs.

Games are the fastest growing segment of the entertainment industry (around a 24% increase each year – roughly doubling in the last four years). Despite common assumptions, more adults play games (25%) than teenagers (11%), but certainly the amount of time spent is higher in the younger age brackets, possibly due to time available. Globally, the games industry is estimated to be worth roughly A\$24 billion with the Australian component generating approximately A\$110 million per annum and directly employing over 1,500 people

[\[http://www.gdaa.com.au/docs/GDAA_Industry_Profile_Report_221106.pdf\]](http://www.gdaa.com.au/docs/GDAA_Industry_Profile_Report_221106.pdf).

While the global games industry is dominated by major companies such as Sony, Electronic Arts and Vivendi Universal, the Australian games industry has a well-earned reputation for quality and its representative industry body is the Game Developers’ Association of Australia [\[http://www.gdaa.com.au\]](http://www.gdaa.com.au). Highly regarded Australian games include *Dark Reign* from Auran, *Jurassic Park* from Blue Tongue and *Sin City* – based on the comic and subsequent movie of the same name. More titles can be found at:

[\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Video_games_developed_in_Australia\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Video_games_developed_in_Australia).

Even when a game is developed as an extension to other content forms (*Matrix*, *Harry Potter* and *Jurassic Park*, for example), there remains a high percentage of original creativity in constructing the game-lead, narrative, environment and story extensions. That said, games have one of the highest original content creation levels – where original ideas are developed into games not linked to other digital media forms. In some cases, games are the original concept that are then migrated to a new mediums – *Super*

Mario Bros, *Lara Croft*, *Doom* and the 11 Pokémon films are testament to the quality of the narrative, characterisation and storyline in the games.

The amount of original narrative content in games is higher than for any other sector of the industry, but the lead time for very rich games is long – from about nine months for a good quality game up to about four years for a richly detailed game such as *Halo*. The most compelling games such as *Grand Theft Auto* are both plot and character driven, offering an extensive level of interaction at different layers and with different characters. Simple plot-based games can be developed at a relatively low cost, but the higher the quality, the more expensive. *Final Fantasy 7* is estimated to have cost US\$40 million to make, before promotion and advertising – thus requiring a strong business case to justify such a spend.

Games devices (formats)

The industry is compounded by different types of game machines and the corresponding formats that are required to make the games work. On the whole, each dedicated game machine such as Nintendo, Wii, PlayStation or Xbox require different formats and different navigation options for the player. As a result, games are easier and quicker to develop for the online (PC) market, which while broader, has less dedicated game players. The exceptions here are MMORPGs, which require an Internet connection and therefore began life on PCs. As dedicated game devices such as Wii, PlayStation and Xbox become wi-fi, we are likely to see MMORPGs move into this arena too.

More recently, there has been an increase in mobile phones as non-dedicated game playing devices. Nokia sought to create a converged game device/mobile phone through their N-Gage device, which was a mobile phone with dedicated keys for game playing much like a GameBoy. The hybrid product was not a huge success largely due to the keys not being extensive enough for dedicated gaming but equally not so suitable for use as a mobile phone. N-Gage has now migrated to become the game engine application for Nokia Smart Phones, with approximately 25 titles available.



Nokia N-Gage game unit/phone converged device

The games industry's main business model to date has been through sales of the game (transactions). However, games are exploring new business models such as free games with payment for additional levels (freemium or the 'free then fee' model); games with payment for specific skills or assets (*Habbo Hotel*, *Adventure Quest* and *Entropia Universe*); subscriptions for access (common for MMORPGs including *World of Warcraft*, *Eve Online* and *Runescape*); and in-game advertising. In-game advertising can be static (hard-coded into the game) or dynamic (updated over the Internet) and is a growing business model, expected to exceed \$1 billion by 2010.

The mobile industry

Mobile formats

The mobile content industry remains the youngest of the key digital content environments, moving beyond simply a communication device only in the last five years. Mobile digital content has mimicked that on the Internet and we are likely to see the development of different services and content for the mobile phone as the market matures. Developments are likely to take into account the locative nature of the mobile phone, the personal nature of the relationship we have with it, and native communication elements.

In terms of mobile, the book industry is lagging, although there are some interesting developments – notably in Japan where it was reported in 2007 that half the top selling books were *written* on mobile phones. One book sold over 1.2 million hard copies and perhaps even more than that in the form of mobile downloads [<http://www.techcrunch.com/2007/12/02/in-japan-half-the-top-selling-books-are-written-on-mobile-phones/>]. Reading on mobile phones is also popular, with many books, called ‘keitai’ or ‘mobile phone’, written specifically for this consumption method. *Deep Love* is the best selling keitai book in Japan. In relatively typical fashion, its scandalised story deploys teenage prostitution using erotic and violent situations that contribute to its captivating plot. Success in the mobile phone version has made it a natural for turning into a film, a television series and also a manga comic given the highly visual short, sharp, shot’ .nature of the story.

In Europe, over 20,000 titles are available as mobile books through [www.mobilebooks.org]. There are also mobile phone book readers, some in the form of applications for smart phones and many as books available for consumption via WAP (wireless application protocol – the HTML- equivalent for early version mobile phones). Australia is not far behind: in 2003, HarperCollins Australia released a MobileReader, an application downloaded to your mobile phone to which they would then send chapters of books. More recently, this reader has been updated to allow you to ‘Browse Inside’ where a digital experience replicates that of browsing the pages of a book prior to purchasing – even on your mobile phone. The site includes a link to Dymocks to purchase the book.

Games on mobile phones remain the most commonly purchased content. Many are now in the form of full character-driven games such as *Doom RPG* and *Assassin’s Creed* which are slimmed down from their online/PC/games unit version to fit the mobile handset. The failure of the N-Gage has resulted in ‘dedicated device’ games not moving to mobile with

the same force, however the PC versions of these are migrating successfully to highly Internet-capable handsets. As an example, *Crash Bandicoot* and *Super Mario Bros* have been released on the iPhone.

The iPhone is also being used for collaborative fiction development in a variety of forms, similar to 'We Tell Stories', including one through the Twitter (short message service) mobile interface called 'twittories' [<http://twittories.wikispaces.com/>] where each 'author' adds a single Twitter message (up to 140 characters long) and once the story has 140 lines – it ends. While the initiatives in Japan are unlikely to play out in Australia in the same manner, we do have other writers of fiction on mobile and 'portable media' festivals which include mobile films and mobile stories.

Mobile delivery

The Australian mobile industry is dominated by mobile carriers, who are the major providers of content – each to their own consumer base within what is referred to as a 'walled garden' (content selected and supplied by the carrier with the consumer encouraged, or in some cases restricted, to using only this content and not seeing content more broadly for themselves).

Recently, there has been a shift in the mobile content and services market to what is referred to as 'off-deck' services. This is the development, by a mobile content company, of services, which can be accessed by any mobile phone on any network using the equivalent of a mobile URL. However, the fact that billing on the mobile phone is predominately (and most acceptably) done by the carrier, means that off-deck services need to consider alternative business models.

Where content or services within a carrier's 'deck' are provided by an external company (rather than the carrier themselves), revenue is collected by the carriers then split between the carrier and the content provider. The forms of charging include a one-off service charge (e.g. buying a video or article); 'package' charging (a single fee for a number of transactions); or subscription charges (for access over a period of time). When providing services off-deck, outside the carrier's own portal, it is not normally possible to use the carrier to collect money on your behalf and the industry is now looking at alternatives such as advertising (popular), one-off charging through premium rate SMS or the possibility of subscription through an alternative payment such as PayPal or credit card.

When delivering rich content to consumers off-deck, two key considerations are: the data charges paid by the consumer for accessing your content and

how you will generate revenue. There is a move in data charges levied by carriers, with mobile data plans now in the gigabyte range at reasonable costs – a trend that needs to continue to ensure the data charge element of mobile content becomes as irrelevant as data costs in wired Internet. Business models that might help generate revenue are investigated in more detail in other chapters. It is important to bear in mind that whomever you use to handle money on your behalf (PayPal, credit card or mobile carrier through some form of premium charging), you will pay them a percentage of your revenue, from about 3% at the low end (credit cards, PayPal) to as much as 50% (mobile carriers).

Market analysis: what is the market made up of?

The changing nature of the market

Key to the development of the new media industry has been the growing technical competence of consumers, often resulting in older citizens being left behind as a consequence of being less technically comfortable with the Internet and new media. Not surprisingly, it was 'geeks' who first engaged with digital content, both on the Internet and subsequently, mobile phones. This quickly spread to the technically savvy, on to the well (technically) connected and then the broader market.

Market segmentation (demographics)

The majority of digital content is consumed by people aged between 15 and 45, with different types of content dominating different age groups. Text- and video-based news and information content are strongest in the older (30+) group, with entertainment coming a close second; while entertainment content is far and away the most sought after content in the younger (15–30) bracket.

Key to the market is a well connected, tech savvy demographic – often referred to as 'Generation C'. This highly connected, community dominated, celebrity aware, content savvy generation (the 'C' referring to any or all of those descriptors) is influenced by peer networks (community). And their advanced word-of-mouth sharing techniques, mainly through social network services or instant messaging systems, move at a rapid rate. Appealing to this group is a key to success in the engaged youth demographic. (See references, notably *Communities Dominate Brands*.)

Consumers themselves are also content creators. Alan Toffler in *The Third Wave* (1981) first referred to this group as 'prosumers' a combination of the words 'producer' and 'consumer'. The three roles can be differentiated as follows:

Consumers: those who read, seek out and consume content (also called 'lurkers')

Prosumers: those who, in addition to reading, participate through rating, adding comments to the blog, forwarding blogs and reviewing blogs written by others

Producers: those who actively create original content, initiate sites, make videos, blog and post, seeking to have their productions consumed and interacted with by the above two groups. They are the real creators of user-generated content.

The assumed ratio is often quoted as 90:9:1, but more recently as participation levels have increased the ratio is approaching 80:15:5. Interesting, in some countries (notably China), a better summary of this ratio would be 40:40:20 – with the majority of Internet users actively contributing in some manner. Some statistics point to over 60% of Chinese Internet users having started a blog at some point (almost half on mobile phones).

Empowered consumers

The changing nature of technology and devices, along with a move from sit back to lean forward media is also impacting television viewing habits. Devices such as Foxtel IQ™ and TiVo™ as well as numerous brands of digital video recorders (DVR) are letting us record television and play it back as and when we want – frequently skipping the ads. Australians are now more inclined to watch television on the Internet (58%) than ever before, assisted by services such as YouTube, Joost [<http://www.joost.com>] and the male-targeted Heavy [<http://www.heavy.com>].

TV is also moving to the mobile phone – with three forms being provided: standard TV streamed to the mobile phone under a method referred to as DVB-H (Digital Video Broadcast – Handheld. Standard digital broadcast TV is referred to as DVB-T, where ‘T’ stands for ‘Terrestrial’.); looped TV channels delivered over the standard (3G) phone network (e.g. Foxtel by Mobile, and Mobile TV on Three) and video on demand services (including Mobile BigPond TV and Vodafone’s TV on Demand). Interestingly, a UK report found that of those who watched TV on their mobile (26% of the survey group), 32% changed their TV viewing habits as a result, with 4% substituting standard TV with that on their mobile (IBM ‘End of Advertising’ Report August 2007).

While current TV viewing habits of Australians reflect a society still enthral to traditional ‘when we serve it’ as opposed to ‘when you want it’ broadcasting, this is changing both through the increased availability and attraction of DVR devices. A recent report on Australian television viewing habits has identified we now spend more time online than we do watching television – 13.7 hours per week online as opposed to 13.3 hours watching television (Nielsen Online March, 2008.

[http://www.netratings.com/pr/pr_080318_AU.pdf]. Further research identified a group referred to as ‘heavy’ Internet users (8+ times per week) mainly aged 14–24 years (1.332 million people or 7.8% of all Australians aged 14 years and over), who spend more time online than they do watching TV – 22.8 hours online versus 15.5 hours watching TV See [<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/internet-releases/2008/734/>].

Australia in the global context

The digital economy

The size of the global digital economy is best determined by the amount of access people have to it. At the end of June 2008, the number of users worldwide was placed at 1.458 billion – or just under 22% of the global population (6.676 billion). While Greenland tops the league in percentage terms (92.3%), in terms of sheer numbers China on 253 million people beats the US on 220 million. Australian estimates of Internet users are over 16.3m or about 79.4% of the population – a very credible and notable community , despite our small size [<http://www.internetworldstats.com/>].

Our stable economy, thriving business environment and English language all combine to position Australia as a good place to do business. While global conditions such as the relative strength of the Australian dollar may impact this standing, we are building up a good reputation as a place for North Americans and Europeans to do business, particularly in the film and games industries. In terms of the Internet, Australia is an important market for all key Internet players, and many services are tested and trialled here before being rolled out in other jurisdictions. The MSN joint venture with Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, which formed ninemsn is one of the most successful MSN sites globally. TiVo, a US company who have expanded to the UK, has entered an agreement with 7 to make Australia their next market.

Australia's importance differs depending on the digital industry. While, the world-wide Internet sphere may be dominated by the US, in terms of mobile phones, Asia (notably Japan and Korea) and Western Europe dominate, with Australia/New Zealand being a much more advanced market than the US (with the exception of iPhone development). While Asia is often held up as a model for mobile technologies, cultural differences and significantly lower home Internet penetration make this market quite dissimilar to that in the rest of the developed world. The success of keitai or Japanese mobile phone books is unlikely to be replicated outside of this region due to those differences.

Some Australian companies have become major mobile players including Jumbuck – the largest provider of chat services to mobile carriers globally (and provider of a Habbo Hotel styled mobile phone environment); Mig33 – a huge player in the SMS equivalent of Voice of IP (VoIP) services, where unlimited SMS messages can be cheaply sent at a monthly fixed price using a data plan rather than paying on a SMS-by-SMS basis; and

BluePulse who provide a content- and information-based community service and have recently moved to the US to further their expansion. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Australian games industry is well regarded for the quality of our games.

Learning more: study and professional development

Building on your idea

Some courses that will help you develop your craft skills are listed in the [Craft](#) chapter and those that will help you develop your business skills are listed in the business sections of the [DIY](#) chapters. This section will look at how you can find out more about the digital industry in Australia.

The digital content industry is represented, at an industry level, by the Australian Interactive and Multimedia Industry Association (AIMIA) [\[http://www.aimia.com.au/\]](http://www.aimia.com.au/). AIMIA have a Mobile Industry Group to promote mobile content and services and an intern program to foster skills in the mobile space. AIMIA also runs several relevant events, including a recent conference on 'The Business of Digital Content' which looked at the market and business issues of small companies right through to major online publishers. AIMIA regularly runs short sessions to look at development in the digital space, as well as full length conferences often focussed on the business of digital content and is an excellent resource with chapters in most states.

The Games Developers Association of Australia [\[http://www.gdaa.com.au/\]](http://www.gdaa.com.au/) is the industry body for games developers and can assist with information on the industry, how to get started and career pathways. The website also has a range of video interviews with practitioners.

Initiatives focussing on the business of online and digital content are conducted by the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) who have a specific unit – the Centre for Screen Business (CSB) – to promote the development of business knowledge and skills in the screen content industries. CSB runs both short and diploma courses looking at business models, business planning and general commercial issues. While the centre has a strong focus on screen (film, TV, online and mobile), their work on the business of digital content is relevant across disciplines [\[http://csb.aftrs.edu.au/\]](http://csb.aftrs.edu.au/).

The Mobile Enterprise Growth Alliance (MEGA) is a workshop lab within which to develop ideas for mobile content and applications under the direct supervision of Australia's leading industry experts before they are pitched to a panel of investors. Supported by private enterprise, education and government, and run in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales,

MEGA provided a series of workshops that covered market analysis, making the business case, feasibility testing, business plans and finally pitching. While MEGA has concluded for 2008, it is likely to run again in 2009 and the website continues to provide excellent resources, with some of Australia's premier mobile business people presenting and mentoring groups.

From a business perspective, it is always worth considering mentoring.

Organisations such as Digital Crossroads:

[\[http://www.digitalcrossroads.com.au/entrepreneur_mentoring.php\]](http://www.digitalcrossroads.com.au/entrepreneur_mentoring.php) provide mentoring for young (or new) entrepreneurs, while many of the mainstream advisory firms (KPMG, Cap Gemini and Accenture amongst them) have 'Innovation' divisions which look to support and mentor new businesses. These companies will help with business planning, feasibility, investment advice and personal advising to help develop business skills. In addition to mentors, many of the production schools across Australia that help further craft (production) skills also offer courses in business and commercialisation of products.

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Australian Government report on the digital games industry
[\[http://www.culture.gov.au/articles/digitalgames/index.htm\]](http://www.culture.gov.au/articles/digitalgames/index.htm).

Digital Economy:
[\[http://www.pff.org/issues-pubs/books/factbook_2006.pdf\]](http://www.pff.org/issues-pubs/books/factbook_2006.pdf).

Future of the Book:
[\[http://www.futureofthebook.org.uk/ifbook%20ACE%20report_final.pdf\]](http://www.futureofthebook.org.uk/ifbook%20ACE%20report_final.pdf).

Games industry:
[\[http://www.gdaa.com.au/docs/GDAA_Industry_Profile_Report_221106.pdf\]](http://www.gdaa.com.au/docs/GDAA_Industry_Profile_Report_221106.pdf).

Interview with Fionnuala Duggan:
[\[http://www.thebookseller.com/in-depth/feature/49429-will-2008-be-the-year-of-the-e-book.html\]](http://www.thebookseller.com/in-depth/feature/49429-will-2008-be-the-year-of-the-e-book.html).

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Report on the spending on games:
[\[http://www.kotaku.com.au/games/2008/06/how_much_do_we_spend_on_games_between_the_ages_of_1848-2.html\]](http://www.kotaku.com.au/games/2008/06/how_much_do_we_spend_on_games_between_the_ages_of_1848-2.html).

Further reading

Books on mobile in Japan:
[\[http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2007/01/72329\]](http://www.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2007/01/72329).

Communities Dominate Brands. A great blog on all things GenC related with a specific focus on mobile:
[\[http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/\]](http://communities-dominate.blogs.com/).

Jaffe Juice from Joseph Jaffe, author of *Join the Conversation*:
[\[http://www.jaffejuice.com/\]](http://www.jaffejuice.com/).

Mark Neely's blog on the more business side of the digital world:
[\[http://www.infolution.com.au/\]](http://www.infolution.com.au/)

Miranda Forwood, games and mobile:

Australia Council for the Arts
Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia
Council of the Arts.
[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide)

[\[http://www.women.qld.gov.au/work-and-life/smart-state-awards/documents/miranda-forwood.pdf\]](http://www.women.qld.gov.au/work-and-life/smart-state-awards/documents/miranda-forwood.pdf).

MoCoNews – sister site to Paid Content with information specifically about the mobile industry.

Paid Content is an excellent online resource about developments in the realm of paid content:

[\[http://www.paidcontent.org/\]](http://www.paidcontent.org/)

More on:

MMORPGs:

[\[http://www.gameogre.com/\]](http://www.gameogre.com/)

Pong:

[\[http://www.pong-story.com/\]](http://www.pong-story.com/)

Space invaders:

[\[http://www.spaceinvaders.de/\]](http://www.spaceinvaders.de/)

Kindle:

[\[http://www.amazon.com/Kindle-Amazon-Wireless-Reading-Device/dp/B000FI73MA\]](http://www.amazon.com/Kindle-Amazon-Wireless-Reading-Device/dp/B000FI73MA).

There are other mobile-specific blogs, social media blogs, games blogs and Internet blogs – but the above are useful starting points.

Further Material

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/The_new_media_industry/the_new_media_industry_references\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/The_new_media_industry/the_new_media_industry_references)

Industry insight interview (Random House Australia)

Anna Maguire is Head of Production and Interactive at Random House Australia (RHA). RHA works closely with their UK parent company Random House Group (RHG) in experimenting and exploring various areas in the digital world. In Australia the Interactive team are responsible for launching new digital marketing initiatives online, managing email communications for marketing, and launching e-book programs and other digital content formats.

What challenges do writers currently face if they want to embrace new technologies and engage with the ‘empowered consumer’?

Distribution will be the main challenge. Consumers now have access to so much information from a variety of sources and the challenge is sorting out ‘relevance’ to their particular interests and desires. We’re all suffering information overload so sorting through is now taking too much time. Consumers will engage with trusted brands that deliver what they want, and ignore or delete what isn’t meeting their needs.

Anyone can now ‘self publish’ their own digital content – but it will be quality that rises to the top. Traditional publishing has, and will continue in the digital age, to offer that quality filter and distribute only what meets their quality guidelines. Editing of content along with marketing, distribution and being alert to piracy are some of the services that a publisher like RHA offers that will be difficult for digital writers to access on their own.

What steps is/has RHA taken to move ‘reading’ into this new environment?

We’re excited about the new digital environment and the chance for us to engage with consumers we may not encounter in a traditional book store. Some of the ways we are experimenting include:

- launching an e-book program to include both backlist titles as well as our new releases. Shortly key titles and authors will be available simultaneously in print and digital form
- working with RHG in the use of ‘View Inside’ widgets – allowing consumers access to around 10% of selected titles, and then the ability to purchase them. Widgets will also allow people to place these samples of titles on their own websites.

- uploading our wonderful book trailers to YouTube to reach new markets [<http://au.youtube.com/randomhouseaustralia>].
- enabling book marking of our book campaign mini sites on a variety of social networking sites
- experimenting with mobile marketing, downloads of phone screensavers and even Australia's first book 'theme music' mobile ring tone for our bestselling series *Ranger's Apprentice*! (While the *Ranger's Apprentice* campaign is now over, at [<http://www.rangersapprentice.com.au/index.asp>], as well as on [<http://www.brisingr.com.au>], you can see some other interactive elements we've experimented with.)
- creating wallpapers, blog icon/avatars, crosswords, quizzes and a forum for fans from all over the world to talk about our titles
- supporting various online reading groups and providing chapter extracts, discussion questions, special offers.

RHG have 'web published' one of their popular titles online to experiment with a new model of offering the content but engaging with consumers through user-generated content, and creating revenue from banner ads on high traffic sites [<http://www.goodguides.co.uk/>].

We've made large investments in staff and infrastructure in order to store our book assets digitally, and be able to provide content in a variety of formats on a variety of networks for consumers – we know that we need to engage where people are. Some would say 'Fish where the fish are' – and more and more the 'fish' are online! We also network with professionals in the digital arena and RHG have created a new role of 'Digital Thinker' who will continue to lead us to new frontiers. Other exciting developments that we are working on will be launched over the coming months ... Stay tuned!

What business models do you think might work here?

This is a tough one for us as it is possible that for a period of time our investment will be larger than the return. We see possibilities for a variety of business models, but don't have knowledge of what will work for us as yet.

Models may include:

- ebooks, mobile reading and listening
- print-on-demand, widgets, viewing pages and chapters
- online rental and subscription models
- adding user-generated content and blogs
- advertising supported titles
- pick-and-mix chapters

- online/offline hybrids
- multimedia libraries

We haven't yet delved into all these options; we just see that this is the potential future.

What business models do you think might work for writers writing for the digital environment?

As yet we haven't delved into digital-only books although any publisher can see this may happen in the future. Our focus is on supporting, distributing, promoting and earning royalties for our existing authors. Our encouragement to digital authors would be to invest in good editing to create a quality product.

And what about writers who are writing games or is this less relevant for RH?

Correct. This won't be a focus for us in the short term, although we encourage and promote games and engage our readers with our books, for instance see [http://www.rangersapprentice.com.au/only_games.asp].

Can you comment on what RHA is looking at in this space?

We will be launching our e-book program with Dymocks and celebrate the fact that e-book readers like the iLiad are now available in Australia. There is a new e-book reader compatible with the iPhone and we support any initiatives that will bring books and reading to a new and wider audience! That can only be good for both publishers and for consumers.

RHA is watching the international market and expectations are that we will see a steady increase in digital consumption of content over the next few years. We accept that our investment is likely to be larger than our profit for a number of years, but we believe that readers will want to consume content in a number of ways and formats and we intend to support that.

Craft – Part 1: New Writing

By Christy Dena

Chapter

3

Career

Employed

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Writing

Digital

Multi-platform

Promotional

These next two chapters explore new writing practices and how a writer can develop new skills.

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The new writing universe

In the beginning, the world of computer games was a dark universe, where jagged green shapes glowed noughts and crosses, tennis balls and rockets. There wasn't much call for writers in these kinds of games. Parallel to the zap and ding of arcade games and home consoles, however, was the emergence of the electronic text adventure. In these games, foes were battled with a cryptic mind, not a joyous twitch. 'An adventure game' Graham Nelson explains, 'is a crossword at war with a narrative'. A lot has happened since these emergences in the 1960s and 1970s. Computer games have grown to become an industry comparable to, if not larger than, the feature film industry. Every creative sector knows about computer games, computers and the Internet; less known, however, are the rich and varied creative formats and genres within and beyond computer games.

The New Writing Universe poster

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_interactive\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_interactive) aims to provide a generous glimpse into the diversity of expressive forms available to writers. The chart displays a range of roles a writer may identify themselves as: novelist, playwright, poet, graphic novelist, screenwriter, e-writer/interactive writer, game writer or cross-platform writer. While roles such as novelist and poet may seem familiar, the formats and media used to express these types of writing are not. A novelist can deliver their story in chapters on an online diary (blog fiction); a poet can communicate with computer code instead of the alphabet (code poetry); a graphic novelist can design panels and dialogue that change with a mouse click (interactive comics); a playwright can utilise the Internet to connect theatre audiences, remote audiences and performers (networked performance); a screenwriter can write short- and micro-length drama to be experienced on the Internet (webisode) or mobile device (mobile drama).

At some point, the writer becomes an interactive storyteller. Such writers don't simply distribute their written story via new technology, they write a story specifically for that new technology. They learn the affordances of a new format and alter their story and storytelling accordingly. For example, the Internet is dynamic multimedia, real-time, 24-hour and international; a blog is a revealing, shared conversation; an email is personal and short; an SMS is even shorter and reaches a person wherever they are.

Game writers, while still interactive storytellers, work in an art form in which narrative is usually carefully balanced with, or subtly supporting, game elements. They write alongside designers and programmers in a range of

genres for computers, consoles and portable devices. And then there are cross-platform writers. These writers don't write for digital or traditional media, instead they gather them together and write stories that stretch across websites, print, videos and games.

A quick note here on the term 'cross-platform writer'. Many terms are used to describe this type of writing, including transmedia storytelling, multi-platform writing, cross-media entertainment and so on. The use of 'cross-platform writing' in this guide is intended to denote writing expressed across different media platforms. It does not intended to be associated with the use of multi-platform in other contexts, which as digital gaming when there are multiple platforms within the game (such as Donkey Kong), digital games that are available on different game platforms (consoles, PC, online, mobile), or multi-platform distribution of content (which involves writing for one platform only).

This chapter will explore the changes and opportunities in such an emerging writing universe. It will examine how the craft of writing differs, what the writer's roles are, what quality writing looks like and how one goes about developing the writing craft for these formats?

New practices

Writing for new media requires that writers understand elements such as interactivity, micro lengths and digital media affordances.

Interactivity

The term interactivity means different things to different people. A giant buzzing machine with levers and steam could be called interactive, and so could a light switch. Likewise, in the context of storytelling, a complex game system managed by an artificial intelligence engine could be called interactive, and so could a website with pages the user clicks through. Therefore, when a reader or audience is active in any way, they can be seen to be ‘interacting’. There are certain factors, however, that one can use as a launching point for discussing interactivity. The following overview of factors indicating interactivity is based on those highlighted by practitioners and scholars alike. Specifically, the four factors listed here are a slightly modified version of Espen Aarseth’s ‘user functions and perspectives’ (1997) and Marie-Laure Ryan’s ‘strategic forms of interactivity’ (2001):

User Position

- Internal: when the user has a presence inside the fiction
- External: when the user is outside the fiction

User Function

- Exploratory: when the user can move around, choosing paths
- Configurative: when the user can make decisions, affecting the fiction

Many ‘interactive’ projects involve a user selecting pre-written paths, with no representation within the fiction (external exploratory). This type of interactivity allows a user to explore the possibility space of a fiction, but have no impact on it and no role in it. Their actions are limited to unlocking pre-written parts. In these types of projects the writer has to anticipate what the user would like to do, and write a range of paths to represent those wishes. Writers also look at rhetorical techniques to motivate a person to want to navigate, select paths and continue selecting paths. An example of an interactive comic is Australian Simon Norton’s 2001 *Testimony: A Story Machine* [<http://www.abc.net.au/arts/strange/animations/testimony.htm>]. Inspired by the collage writing techniques of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *Testimony* involves the user clicking on comic panels that automatically select images, text and sometimes sound from an extensive library. The user provokes these random juxtapositions which reveal a rhizomatic murder mystery. Another example is Australian e-lit writer Jason Nelson’s

The Poetry Cube

[http://www.secrettechnology.com/poem_cube/poem_cube.html]. In this work (co-designed with programmer Rory Hering), the user can select different lines of a poem with a spatially-navigated interface. For insights into the electronic writing experience, see [Jason Nelson's](#) profile.

An internal-exploratory project is observable when a user is inside the fiction, can choose paths through a narrative but not affect the narrative. As mentioned previously, such writing involves creating compelling stories that people want to be active with. In such a project, the user can be inside the fiction through such devices as a player-character or an avatar. This changes the way the story is designed, because in many cases the player is the protagonist. The writer therefore has to think about the player's emotions and motivations alongside the fictional (non-playing) characters. Australian production company Hoodlum [<http://www.hoodlum.com.au/>] create such active storytelling experiences as online dramas to extend television shows such as ABC's *Lost* and BBC's *Spooks*. One of the techniques they use to keep audiences coming back and interacting with the online content is to create game missions (or tasks) that a player needs to achieve in order to unlock unique narrative information.

At the other extreme of these four pairings (internal configurative) the user is inside the fiction and able to impact it. The player can also influence the fiction in a number of ways, depending on the design and technology employed. An example is Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern's interactive drama *Façade* [<http://www.interactivestory.net/>]. Through the use of a natural-language engine, *Façade* allows the player-character to converse with the game's characters (a couple) through normal (text) speech. Depending on the short phrases and questions the player poses, they may end up getting kicked out of the flat, or even provoke the couple to split up. In such formats, the writer not only has to anticipate a wide range of possible player inputs, but also create responses that suit a range of inputs. All of these forms of interactivity demand, obviously, longer scripts.

Length & Affordances

Since you're writing not one, but many possible paths, as well as the player's response in most cases, the length of scripts for interactive projects is substantially longer. For the player, interactive projects often take longer to play or explore. A computer game, for instance, usually takes between eight to forty hours to complete. There are anomalies on either side of the range too, with some formats delivering extremely short content. Indeed, micro or nano fictions are increasingly popular in contexts where

partial attention is the norm (the Internet, portable devices) or with limited length capabilities. This is in most part due to the 'affordances' of the mediums.

In writing terms, affordances refer to the qualities of a technology that inform or constrain what you write. A mobile phone, for instance, can send and receive text messages (SMS). The length of these messages is 160 (sometimes 150) characters. There have been many experiments with SMS fictions over the past few years including an exhibition at Electrofringe called 'One Sixty Characters'. The Hunter Writers Centre in Australia ran 'OneFifty', a competition to encourage young emerging writers [<http://www.onefifty.com.au/>] and *Onesixty* is the 'world's first SMS text message literary magazine' [<http://www.centrifugalforces.co.uk/onesixty01/pages/main.html>].

An even smaller word limit is a post on the online social network Twitter. Despite the 140 character limit, numerous writers are attempting to create micro stories or nano serialisations. Examples include A E Baxter's *Twitter Fiction* [<http://twitterfic.googlepages.com/>] and Jay Bushman's *The Good Captain*, an adaptation of Melville's *Moby Dick* [<http://www.loose-fish.com/>]. New Media Scotland has also been running a Twitterist-in-Residence program [<http://twitter.com/mediascot>] in which internationally-renowned Australian code-poet Mez Breeze (Mary-Anne Breeze) [<http://www.mediascot.org/twitterwurkset>], Finnish writer Hannu Rajaniemi [<http://www.mediascot.org/unusedtomorrows>] and Dan Monks have been guest microbloggers.

There are many other unusual formats developed around technological constraints. See the *New Writing Universe* poster [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_pdf] for more examples. For links to repositories of electronic literature, social media fiction, independent games and so on see: [http://delicious.com/Writersguide/newwriting_repository].

Game writing

For those entering the area of computer games as experienced but non-interactive writers, it is normal to think about how existing methods can simply be added to the new format. A screenwriter for instance, may see the use of ‘cut-scenes’ (linear video sequences presented at moments during a game) as the only place where narrative is present. Game designers could also make this assumption. However, such linear sequences are not the only way narrative can play a role in a game, and in many cases have become a less effective method. Let’s begin by looking at the various roles and tasks a writer can have in a digital game.

Game writing roles and tasks

Editorial story design director

Games’ company Ubisoft created this position to ‘ensure high quality writing across the company’s titles’. As the editorial story design director Alexis Nolent explains:

As the editorial story design director for Ubisoft, [...] my job is to help the writers do the best possible job, and also to help them understand the game design side of it. I oversee all of our top quality games regarding the storyline, storytelling, and cinematics. As part of my job, I travel to our various studios around the world to meet with Ubisoft’s writers as they create our games. I help hire the right writers for each project and I work with them on the different phases of the writing process as the games develop. [...] I look for writers with an expertise in building story and characters. They might not be game experts, but they would have to be interested in that new medium for what it could achieve, and to explore new fields and new ways to convey emotions to the player.

(Nolent in Jacobs 2004, 24)

Lead game designer

The lead game designer is responsible for overseeing all creative content, including story. Chris Avellone describes his role as lead designer on *KOTOR II*:

As lead designer on Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords, I was responsible for keeping the vision for the game, the game mechanics and the ‘fun’ of the game, the overall story (and any specific elements about the game designed to propel the overall story, such as companions, key locations, etc.), and then breaking down the remaining elements into digestible chunks for the other designers – in terms of area briefs and area overviews (‘this planet is

X, the following things need to happen on it, etc., etc.'). – breaking up the mechanics and play-balancing ('I need you to oversee the feat and class advancement systems, as long as they accomplish the following goals', etc.), and then managing all the parts so programmers, artists, and the producer are getting everything they need to keep moving.

(Colavco, 2005)

Game writer

A game writer can be involved in some or all of the following tasks:

- **Narrative design:** Narrative design refers to the high-level design of the story, as integrated with gameplay. The high-level design often involves seeing relationships between core elements of a game, and so visual rather than textual descriptions are often employed. Stephen E Dinehart has a blog dedicated to exploring this area at The Narrative Design Exploratorium [<http://www.narrativedesign.org/>].
- **Dialogue writing:** Since game writers script a range of possible conversations, there is a lot of dialogue in games. Dialogue needs to be written for the player-character (as most games offer a small selection of phrases for the player to input), non-player characters (NPCs) and voice-overs. The player's dialogue choices vary, some according to moods and attitudes, which provide the player an opportunity to influence the plot progression.
- **In-game artefacts:** Just like epistolary fictions, important narrative information can be conveyed through artefacts within the game, such as letters, newspapers, books and even simulated emails.
- **Cut scenes and scripted events:** Cut scenes are the pre-created video sequences that cut into gameplay. Although cut scenes are often used to convey critical plot information, the player has to stop and watch a video which has the potential to frustrate gameplay. Playable cut scenes are another approach, allowing players to move while the video plays. Scripted events are events (such as a non-player-character doing some action) programmed to occur at a certain point in time and location.
- **Interface text and tutorials:** Game writers can also be responsible for wording all interface text and tutorials that are included in the game.
- **Translation editor:** Many games are created and then localised for a new territory. Such translations can be done by people skilled in translation in general, but is best when taken care of by translators who are also game writers. The podcast Writing for Pay features some interviews with game translation editors [<http://writingforpay.org/category/game-design/>].

- **Game production material:** The writer can also be responsible for the 'Game Bible'. Such game design documentation includes not only the story, but all elements of the design for all departments to refer to. (Links to examples of game documentation are in the [next chapter](#))
- **Game support material:** Games are usually packaged with a game manual. These resources usually contain the game story background, character descriptions, synopsis, game description and game tutorials are offered.
- **Copywriting:** Game writers can also be utilised to write the game's promotional material such as teasers, the box and website.
- **Technical writing:** Game writers are also needed to document technical information regarding the technologies used. Such writers need to have good technical knowledge as they are responsible for documenting installation instructions, application programming interface (API) documentation and so on.

For an insight into the tasks of a game writer, see [Joe Velikovsky's](#) profile.

Beyond words

Of course, not all narrative information is expressed with words (dialogue or on-screen text). As all quality screenwriters are aware, narrative can be expressed with non-verbal modes such as setting, character appearance, music and lighting. Indeed, Richard Rouse and Marty Stoltz (2007) have presented at the Game Developers Conference a few times about what they call 'cinematic games'. The design approach they champion is to convey story information in games through existing cinematic conventions such as juxtaposition, exaggerated camera angles, visualised thoughts and 'picture within a picture' tropes. In her book, *Better Game Characters by Design*, Katherine Isbister (2006) discusses the various ways game characters can convey information with non-verbal cues such as the distance between characters and various aspects of body language such as coordination and gestures.

Another element beyond such visual, aural and spatial information is gameplay. Alex Noliand, Editorial Story Design Director at Ubisoft explains the characteristics of game writing and gameplay, and how they work together:

The mix is what will make the game great, interesting, entertaining, and moving. Game design can be defined as establishing the rules for the game, what will make the game experience unique and addictive, while game writing is what will make it believable and

worthwhile, from an emotional and quality standpoint. When we get there, the two of them must appear to be impossible to differentiate. One has to enrich the other. One has to help the other convey everything that it has to offer to the gamer.

(Noliant in Jacobs 2004, 21–22)

Richard Dansky goes further to warn that the ‘core elements of traditional writing – lengthy exposition, internal monologue, switching character perspectives – can be utterly deadly to gameplay if not handled carefully’ (Dansky 2007). But Dansky offers a litmus test to determine if gameplay has been handled well:

What is important, then, is continually asking: ‘how does this support the game?’ Does it reward the player, advance the action, provide depth without slowing the pace or otherwise move the player forward? If the answer is yes, then the gameplay has been kept in the writing. If the answer is no, if the reason something is in the script is to show off how incredibly cool it is, then the gameplay has been lost, and the writing extraneous.

(Dansky 2007, 10)

Another technique to assist writers to think in terms of gameplay is offered by Flint Dille and John Zuur Platten (2007). They recommend writers consider a ‘play it, display it, say it’ priority model:

For example, if your hero must blow up a door, write a version in which this can be accomplished in gameplay, a version in which the hero detonates the door in a narrative, and version in which the hero recounts blowing up the door to someone else. Think about the implications of each. Which is more satisfying for the player? Which is the most cost effective for the production? Is there a way to split the difference?

(Dille & Platten 2007, 16)

Cross-platform writing

All writers would be familiar with the range of plot techniques that can be employed to weave a story. They can for instance introduce subplots, explore sub-characters, juxtapose two narrative threads, braid narrative threads together in unforeseen ways, or even spread key information across episodes. What some writers don't realise is that these same techniques can be applied in a cross-platform context. That is, a story can begin in one medium (say a book) and continue in another (a website); a subplot, sub-character or even an alternate universe can be explored in another medium. For these writers, there is a role for both traditional media such as books and radio, as well as digital media. Indeed, magic happens when the two are employed synergistically. While many principles of storytelling still apply, this peculiar mix of mediums brings its own opportunities and challenges.

Cross-platform writing roles and tasks

While many of the roles and tasks of a game writer correlate with cross-platform writing, there are some distinctions. Interactivity in digital games is controlled by sophisticated computer programs. In cross-platform works, interactivity is usually managed by people manually. A cross-platform writer has to observe their players in real time: keep an eye on player expectations and actions in forums and blogs and then adjust the plot accordingly. Sometimes the writer has to 'perform' in-character, improvising dialogue at online live events through text-based technologies, blogs, forums, emails and SMS. Indeed, many writers of 'alternate reality games', comment on the tension and thrill of writing story elements on the fly, performing characters live through email, SMS and other two-way media, and having the audience respond passionately and immediately. Writer Sean Stewart has described how he approaches interactivity in alternate reality games:

Power without control: Give players power over the narrative in carefully defined situations.

Voodoo: Allow players to contribute the 'raw material' out of which you fashion story components.

Jazz: Build the game with enough blank spaces written into it, and a commitment of time and resources to let yourself take directions from what the players do.

Stewart, (no date)

Another difference from digital game writing is cross-platform interaction design. Unlike gameplay and interactivity in general, actions in cross-

platform experiences involve movement to different media devices and locations. A reader puts their book down, walks to the computer and becomes a user; or an audience member becomes a player in a street game. In [The New Media Industry](#) chapter, the notion of 'lean back' and 'lean forward' described the differences between passive and interactive entertainment. In the cross-platform context, the activity moves beyond lean forward to 'lift up'. Many of the same principles for designing for interaction apply, but oftentimes the writer needs to generate compelling calls to action to facilitate such movement the first time and in subsequent times. Other challenges a cross-platform narrative designer consider are the media mix experience and maintaining coherence.

The media mix experience

Cross-platform writers need to choreograph the experience of their story across different media platforms. They choose which part of the story will be experienced in which medium and in what order, and the pacing of each release. For instance, it would be appropriate to narrate backstory with a fixed medium like a video or book, but a website is more appropriate for the real-time interaction between the characters and readers. Beyond sequential release, some cross-platform writers aim to engage a person with more than one medium at a time. Various called 'simultaneous media use' and 'concurrent media use', these types of experiences require writers to consider the combined effect of each medium. Laura Esquivel's 1993 novel *The Law of Love* (Three Rivers Press), for instance, includes a CD-Rom with aria music. At certain points in the novel the characters reminisce about their past. The novel shifts from text to graphic art panels, and has a prompt to play the accompanying CD, so the reader can see and hear what the characters see and hear.

Fragmented audiences and coherence

At this stage, most cross-platform stories are created with different audiences in mind for different media. Some people, for instance, may want to watch the TV show and not play the digital game, or read the book and not go to the website. An issue arises here when a writer chooses to provide unique narrative information in each of these media. Will the story make sense to the TV watchers if important information has been delivered elsewhere? Therefore, techniques are needed to ensure the story makes sense, irrespective of what component is experienced. Coherence strategies include:

- recapitulations (recaps)
- elaborating on a story event rather than continuing it
- exploring a subplot or sub-character

- restricting or controlling access to the content
- creating artefacts that have no role in the plot (e.g. a website for a fictional corporation).

Each of these techniques enable audiences to experience different content without any loss of critical narrative information.

For more about the challenges of writing for cross-platform writing projects, see the [Marissa Cooke](#) and the [Isabelle Merlin](#) profiles.

Quality interaction experiences

This section will discuss some of the approaches that facilitate quality interactive experiences, whether they are for electronic literature, digital games or cross-platform writing.

Early and equal

As with all collaborative crafts, the principle of ‘early and equal’ facilitates a far superior creative outcome. For instance, a well-integrated game occurs when writers and game designers begin working together at the concept stage, share the task of communicating story and gameplay elements, and cross-fertilise their skills. Although the budget does not always permit it, having full-time writers working with a team will only benefit the product. Writers can ensure the fiction is expressed consistently and with depth by participating in various aspects and stages of the production: keeping an eye on design decisions (environments, characters), working with the actors (voice-over), staying on during the bug-fixes, and so on. Craft doesn’t happen at one stage of the production process, it happens at all stages.

The art of choice

As was discussed in the earlier section about [interactivity](#), writers of interactive projects don’t create a single narrative path for a player to experience, but write many paths or environments that facilitate a range of possibilities. Often, a characteristic of interactivity heralded by writers, designers and players alike, is *choice*. Freedom of choice influences the design and experience of interactive works and creators of quality interaction experiences usually consider the following factors:

- Significance of choices – the dramatic significance of each choice
- Range of choices – how many choices
- Frequency of choices – pacing of choices
- Impact of choices – response to choices

On the first factor of significance, interactive storytelling designer Chris Crawford advises that ‘the storybuilder’s most important task is creating and harmonising a large set of dramatically significant, closely balanced choices for the player’ (Crawford, 2005). This means that no single choice is obviously the only or ideal choice, because if it was, there really wouldn’t be a choice. Range of choice then, according to Brenda Laurel, a human-computer interaction designer and researcher, refers to how many choices are available (1993). Are there too many or too few choices? But as Chris Crawford has explained, ‘the absolute number of choices isn’t important; it’s the number of choices offered, compared to the number of possibilities

the user can imagine'. The frequency of choice also impacts the experience: how often is a person asked to interact? Are the intervals consistent or varied? Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, what is the impact of the person's choices. Do their actions make any difference to the story world? Would events have occurred irrespective of their actions? If not, then the option to choose is gratuitous and can be experienced as work rather than pleasure.

The art of immersion

Immersion, otherwise known as transportation and sometimes flow, usually refers to the state of person who is not thinking about anything else but the fiction they're experiencing. Elements that jolt a person out of their state of immersion include incongruities, poor expository writing and clunky design. Besides avoiding such pitfalls, writers and designers can also work together to make elements usually considered exterior to the fiction, part of the fiction. This approach is echoed in many design philosophies, such as S Charles Lee's motto of 'The Show Starts on the Sidewalk' for the design of movie houses.

In games, this approach can manifest in the creation of themed tutorials. The *Halo* game, for instance, has integrated the tutorial into gameplay: the game begins with the player-character being awoken from a cryo-tube and then having to relearn how to move and shoot. In cross-platform projects, the actual media used is often given an in-story rationale: a book, for instance, is an artefact from the fictional world, not a delivery channel. Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman's *Cathy's Book: If Found Call 650-266-8233* (Running Press Kids 2006), for example, is presented as a lost book, with scrap paper, photos, phone numbers and websites that all support this illusion.

Concluding remarks

As this chapter, and the New Writing Universe poster [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_pdf], has hopefully shown: a rich and varied range of writing formats are available for writers to explore. Each presents challenges and constraints that can potentially birth great new stories and just how you can develop these skills will be explored in the next chapter on [Craft: Professional Development](#).

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Further Material

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/craft_part_one/craft_part_one_references\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/craft_part_one/craft_part_one_references)

Craft - Part 2: Professional Development

By Christy Dena

Chapter

4

Career

Employed

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Writing

Digital

Multi-platform

Promotional

This section outlines some of the ways a writer, both experienced and curious about new writing formats, can develop their skills. Extensive links to articles, podcasts and websites have been provided online at <http://del.icio.us/WritersGuide/>, but are cued accordingly in each section.

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Get involved with organisations

There are both local and international organisations you can get involved with by joining email discussion groups. Participation in groups exposes you to a network that shares valuable experiences and advice. The International Game Developers Association Game Writers Special Interest Group [<http://www.igda.org/writing/>] includes all types of game writing (but mainly digital games). For game journalism, there is the International Game Journalists Association [<http://www.igja.org/>]. In Australia there are no specific new media writing organisations, but there are many existing writing organisations that welcome digital media writers – such as the Australian Writers Guild [<http://www.awg.com.au>] and the Australian Society of Authors [<http://www.asauthors.org/>] – as well as general new media and game organisations that welcome writers. All relevant Australian and international organisations, as well as listservs (discussion lists), have been listed online.

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/organisations_australia]

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/organisations_international]

[<http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/listservs>]

Study ‘how-to’ guides

Over the last decade or so, a growing amount of ‘how to’ resources have been created to explain interactivity and game writing. This section shares a healthy selection of books, online reports and articles, as well as podcasts (audio or video recordings available online).

Books

The following books address interactivity in a large range of creative formats:

Carolyn Handler Miller’s *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment* (Focal Press, 2008) [2nd edn]

Brunhild Bushoff’s (ed.) *Developing Interactive Narrative Content* (High Text- Verlag, 2005)

Andrew Glassner’s *Interactive Storytelling: Techniques for 21st Century Fiction* (AK Peters, 2004)

Chris Crawford’s *Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling* (New Riders Games, 2005)

Janet H. Murray’s *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (MIT Press, 1998)

The following books specialise in game writing, explaining how game writing differs from other formats and providing techniques, interviews and example documentation:

Wendy Despain’s (ed.) *Professional-Techniques-Video-Game-Writing* (AK Peters, 2008)

Flint Dille and John Zuur Platten’s *The Ultimate Guide to Video Game Writing and Design* (Lone Eagle, 2008)

Chris Bateman’s (ed.) *Game Writing: Narratives Skills for Videogames* (Charles River Media, 2007)

Rafael Chandler’s *Game Writing Handbook* (Charles River Media, 2007)

Deborah Todd’s *Game Design: From Blue Sky to Green Light* (AK Peters, 2007)

Steve Ince’s *Writing for Video Games* (A&C Black, 2006)

Christy Marx’s *Writing for Animation, Comics, and Games* (Focal Press, 2006)

Australia Council for the Arts

Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia Council of the Arts.

[<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide>]

Marianne Krawczyk and Jeannie Novak's *Game Development Essentials: Game Story & Character Development* by (Delmar Cengage Learning, 2006)

Katherine Isbister's *Better Game Characters by Design: A Psychological Approach* (The Morgan Kaufmann Series in Interactive 3D Technology, 2006)

Lee Sheldon's *Character Development and Storytelling for Games* (Course Technology PTR, 2004)

David Freeman's *Creating Emotion in Games* (New Riders, 2004)

These books and many others that assist with game design and interactivity in general, are online.

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_books\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_books)

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/interactivewriting_books\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/interactivewriting_books)

[\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/cross-platformwriting_books\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/cross-platformwriting_books)

Online guides, reports and articles

Numerous reports and guides have been created to assist writers entering new media. Online links include The Writers' Guild of Great Britain's The Writing Game, the Institute for the Future of the Books' read:write and De Montfort University's Digital Living report.

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_guides\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_guides)

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/ewriting_reports\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/ewriting_reports)

The following links provide a rich selection of articles (over 70) that discuss writing techniques for electronic literature, games and cross-platform projects. Topics include characterisation, writing for interactivity, role-playing, dialogue systems, narrative design and the careful balance of narrative and gameplay.

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/ewriting_articles\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/ewriting_articles)

[\[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_articles\]](http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_articles)

[\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/cross-platformwriting_articles\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/cross-platformwriting_articles)

Podcasts

There are a growing amount of audio and video interviews and lectures about and by new media writers. These resources can provide practical tips and paradigmatic insights. Where possible, direct links to writer audio and video podcasts have been listed, which include interviews and sessions

Australia Council for the Arts

Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia Council of the Arts.

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide)

from the Australian Literature Board's Story of the Future series of seminars and residencies.

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/ewriting_podcasts]

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_podcasts]

[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/cross-platformwriting_podcasts]

Study concept documents and scripts

Study concept documents, game bibles and scripts to learn more about how interactive stories are written. A lot of interactive writing is not produced in Word documents, but in Excel documents and flow charts, and many different design documents are used to communicate key information across large teams. Here are some places that you can find examples of documents and scripts:

- International Game Developers Association Game Writers Special Interest Group ‘Game Script and Document Library’:
[<http://www.igda.org/writing/library/>]
- GameDev.net provides a listing of sample game documents and guides to writing them:
[<http://www.gamedev.net/reference/list.asp?categoryid=23#121>].
- *International Hobbo*, the only consultancy specialising in game design and narrative, has links to samples of their game scripts and concepts: [<http://onlyagame.typepad.com/ihobo/samples.html>].
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s TV show Good Game runs a game design competition called ‘game’. The design document for last winning game is online:
[http://www.abc.net.au/tv/goodgame/game/OW_DesignDoc.doc].
- Sample flowcharts and Excel documents from alternate reality games are online here: [<http://www.christydena.com/online-essays/arg-design-charts/>].
- Sample game design documents and scripts are also provided in many of the game writing books listed online:
[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/gamewriting_books].

Study awarding-winning projects

Awards are wickedly alluring things. Their mere existence can both acknowledge and ignore excellence. So, bearing in mind some projects are not recognised, and some perhaps shouldn't have been, awards can be a valuable guide to unknown territories of practice. Studying awarded projects by playing, watching or reading them, as well as exploring any of their 'making-of' assets, can illuminate the current state, great heights and potential avenues of creative practice. These awards also indicate recognition of the craft of interactive writing. The following is a selection of awards in digital gaming, including independent digital gaming, electronic literature and cross-platform formats.

Digital games awards

Since 2007, the Australian Writers Guild has had an 'Interactive Media' category in their annual AWGIE Awards. The 2008 Interactive Media Award went to Caleb Lewis for *Iceman the Story of Ötzi – Who Iced Ötzi?* and the 2007 award to Stu Connolly for *Chiko Accidental Alien*. The Writers Guild of Great Britain has recently added a 'Best Videogame Script' category, awarded in 2007 to Dan Houser and Jacob Krarup for *Canis Canem Edit*. Likewise, the Writers Guild of America has introduced a 'Videogame Writing' category. In 2008 it was awarded to Dave Ellis and Adam Crogan, the writers of *Dead Head Fred*. The award was, incidentally, created under the direction of the New Media Caucus, which is the Writers Guild's chief membership body working to bring writers of new media into the Guild.

The British Academy of Film and Television Arts have been awarding games and interactivity since 1998. In 2003 they created a separate Video Games Awards from their Interactive Entertainment Awards, and since 2007 have been recognising 'Story and Character' (it was previously 'character'). The 2007 winners were Cory Barlog, David Jaffe and Marianne Krawczyk for *God of War 2* (PS2). The Game Developers Choice Awards has had an 'Excellence in Writing' category for many years. The winners for the last few years are *BioShock* in 2008, *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* in 2007, *Psychonauts* in 2006, *Half-Life 2* in 2005, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* in 2004, and *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell* 2003. The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences has been awarding an 'Outstanding Achievement in Story and Character Development' award since 1999 with winners: *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* in 2007, *Call of Duty 2: Big Red One* in 2006, *Fable* in 2005, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* in 2004, *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem* in 2003, *ICO* in 2002; *Baldur's*

Gate II in 2001, *Age of Empires II: Age of Kings* in 2000, and *Pokemon* in 1999.

Although not an award, at the 2008 Game Developer's Conference Richard Rouse ran a panel about 'Stories Best Played'. In this panel four writer-designers (Steve Meretzky, Marc Laidlaw, Ken Rolson and Richard Rouse) discussed two of their favourite storytelling games. Their choices, reasons and videos are online.

[<http://www.paranoidproductions.com/storiesbestplayed/index.html>].

For an insight into the game writing experience, see the writer profile with [Joe Velikovsky](#).

Independent digital games awards

The Independent Games Festival holds awards every year, and although they don't have a specific writing award, there are some notable winners with strong narrative elements. Indeed, a finalist in the 2004 IGF Awards was the interactive story by Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern: *Façade* [<http://www.interactivestory.net/>]. This interactive story also went on to become the Grand Jury Prize Winner at the 2006 Slamdance Indie Games Festival.

Independent digital games awards

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Electronic literature awards

In 2001, the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) gave a Fiction Award to Caitlin Fisher for her *These Waves of Girls* and a Poetry Award to John Cayley for his *windsound*. The full list of nominees is at [<http://eliterature.org/Awards2001/>]. Although the awards appear to have discontinued, the ELO has brought out two curated collections: the *Electronic Literature Collection*, which is available on CD-Rom and online at

[<http://collection.eliterature.org/>], and their online *e-lit* showcase at [<http://eliterature.org/showcase-index/>].

For an insight into the electronic writing experience, see the writer profile with [Jason Nelson](#).

Interactive fictions (text adventure games or text-based interactive fictions) have their own awards [<http://www.wurb.com/if/award>], including the notable XYZZY Awards. Winners of the 'Best Writing' XYZZY Award are Admiral Jota's *Lost Pig* in 2007, Andrew Plotkin's *Delightful Wallpaper* in 2006, Jason Devlin's *Vespers* in 2005, Chris Klimas's *Blue Chairs* in 2004, Adam Cadre's *Narcolepsy* in 2003, Yoon Ha Lee's *The Moonlit Tower* in 2002, Robb Sherwin's *Fallacy of Dawn* in 2001, Emily Short's *Metamorphoses* in 2000, Dan Schmidt's *For A Change* in 1999, Adam Cadre's *Photopia* in 1998 and Ivan Cockrum's *Sunset Over Savannah* in 1997. See also [<http://www.ifcomp.org/comp07/>] for more awards.

Cross-platform awards

Currently, there don't appear to be any writing-specific awards for cross-platform projects, but awards are given to interactive, cross-platform and enhanced projects. Just look for categories such as 'Best Cross-Platform Project', 'Excellence in Cross-Platform', 'Best Convergent Program', 'Best Interactive TV Service', 'Best Interactive Program', 'Outstanding Creative Achievement in Interactive Television', 'Best Interactive Program' and so on in Australian and international awards. Awards bestowed on 'alternate reality games' are listed online at [<http://www.argology.org/awarded-args/>].

For an insight into the cross-platform writing experience, see the profiles with [Marissa Cooke](#) and [Isabelle Merlin](#).

Courses, seminars and conferences

The following is therefore a snapshot of writer-specific events happening internationally and locally. Further links to new media and cross-platform in general are online as indicated.

Conferences

While there are many games, TV, film, literature, theatre and marketing conferences, few are devoted to new writing. The Austin Game Developers Conference has a 'Writing for Games' track

[<http://www.austingdc.net/writing/index.htm>] and the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO) holds conferences and symposiums dedicated to writing [<http://eliterature.org/>].

Australian Writers Centres

The ACT Writers Centre runs workshops on writing e-books, blogs and for the web [<http://www.actwriters.org.au/>]. The Queensland Writers Centre ran masterclasses in writing for games in 2006 and 2007. Upcoming seminars/workshops on writing for freelance markets include blogs and online publications and possibly cross-platform writing. They also support projects such as Creative Commons Australia's *Remix My Lit*

[<http://www.remixmylit.com/>], and an alternate reality gaming project and locative media project being developed with Arts Queensland for regional communities [<http://www.qwc.asn.au>]. The South Australia Writers' Centre has been running sessions on the online environment and digital communities [<http://www.sawc.org.au/>]. A full list of all the Australian Writers Centres is online at

[<http://www.asauthors.org/scripts/cqiiip.exe/WService=ASP0016/ccms.r?PagelD=10041>].

Other Australian training organisations and groups

Some media centres and organisations in Australia are planning exciting programs for variations of new media writing. Here is a sampling of some projects known at the time of publication:

- Brisbane Chapter of the International Game Developers Association (QLD) hold regular seminars and workshops with game experts, including game writers: [<http://www.igda.org/brisbane/>].
- Film and Television Institute (WA) have identified new media and cross-platform storytelling as a key component of their strategic plan and will be incorporated into the professional development program of short courses, seminars and workshops. In their

Keyframe program at the Animation Centre one of the projects 'Rosy Zeppelin' is based around the idea of creating pod-lit – a mixture of blogging, animated film, discussion and traditional prose storytelling for a University Literature market. [<http://www.fti.asn.au/>].

- Media Resource Center (SA) run seminars in their Gameslab, have a scripting hothouse and run screen seminars about new media for seniors: [<http://www.mrc.org.au/>].
- ACT Film Makers Network has plans to incorporate new media writing in their courses: [<http://www.actfilmnet.org.au/>].

For a comprehensive listing of training opportunities, work experience and networking initiatives, see the Australian Film Commission's *Getting Started in Film, TV and Interactive Digital Media* guide:

[http://www.afc.gov.au/faqs/gettingstarted/faq_1.aspx].

Tertiary institutions

New media writing, whether for electronic literature, game or cross-platform writing, can be studied in a tertiary setting. Such subjects or lectures may be offered in English, Creative Writing, New Media, Animation, Multimedia and Computer Science courses, among others. Since at present we are not aware of any courses dedicated entirely to new media or cross-platform writing, we have listed links to the courses that may include seminars on the topic:

In Australia:

- the Game Developers Association of Australia offers a listing of institutions offering games courses: [<http://www.gdaa.com.au/careers/courses.html>]
- the Australian Association of Writing Programs: [<http://www.aawp.org.au/>]
- the Australian Government's Culture and Recreation Portal has a comprehensive listing of training courses in writing and publishing: [<http://tinyurl.com/5h5wa5>]

Internationally:

- the IGDA Game Education SIG has a listing of games courses offered worldwide: [<http://igda.org/wiki/Category:Courses>]
- Dr Edgar Huang lists new media courses in the United States: [<http://www.iupui.edu/~j21099/nmschools.html>]
- The Association of Writers and Writing Programs lists programs, writer centers and conferences: [<http://www.awpwriter.org/>]

For up-to-date information about new media writing courses, workshops and labs being run in Australia, subscribe to the Story of the Future mailing list [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/subscribe].

Send your news, events or opportunities to:
[storyofthefuture@australiacouncil.gov.au]

Create a project

Either with or without a team, a writer can learn new skills and develop a portfolio by creating projects. Many electronic literature and cross-platform projects utilise existing free software such as blogs, emails and social networking sites. But there are specially designed interactive writing programs as well, such as Eastgate System's *StorySpace* [<http://www.eastgate.com/storyspace/>] and the Institute for the Future of the Book's *Sophie* [<http://www.sophieproject.org/>]. Interactive storytelling programs under development include Chris Crawford's *Storytron* [<http://www.storytron.com/>], PJ's Attic's (Corvus Elrod) *Honeycomb Engine* [<http://www.pjsattic.com/projects/honeycomb-engine/>] and Nicolas Szilas's *IDtension* [<http://www.idtension.com/>]. Links to sites that aggregate free social software and new media writing tools are provided online.

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/writing_tools].

For digital games, writers are often recommended BioWare's *Aurora Neverwinter Nights Toolset*. Unlike the plethora of game creation software out there, this toolset includes a conversation editor and enables the writer to develop an understanding of how the fictional world can be expressed through objects, settings and missions [<http://nwn.bioware.com/builders/>]. Another project idea recommended to writers keen to develop their skills and a portfolio is to create a new level to a game that already exists.

Get hands-on advice

There are many labs, residential programs, seminars, workshops and programs in Australia and internationally that provide mentors to assist you (and usually your team) to develop a project from concept to implementation. The following section is divided into two categories: short/long-term mentoring and event-based mentoring, the latter of which includes mentoring that is included as part of a residential or lab.

Short/long-term mentoring

Some programs provide a mentor to either an individual writer or a team for a certain period of time. Australian mentorships related to new media writing include:

- The Australia Council, Literature Board's *Story of the Future* funded mentoring for the development of digital media projects in 2008. [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future/]
- The Booranga Writers' Centre ran a *Youth Online Writing Workshop* (YOWW) in 2006–07, mentoring youths to develop new media writing through the six-month online writing program. At this stage the centre is looking into running some activities in 2009. [<http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/arts/humss/booranga/>]
- Media Resource Centre (SA) have mentors attached to each of their initiatives and have a new three-month filmmaker in residence project with online outcomes. [<http://www.mrc.org.au/>]

Event-based mentoring

Another avenue for developing your project, and your skills, is to create or join a team and embark on a new media writing laboratory or residential. Although there are not many writing-specific laboratories, there are many general new media labs that welcome (indeed require) writers to be a part of a team. In Australia, writing-specific labs including the QPIX Screenwriter's Laboratories have been running since 2000. Their labs help develop projects and skills in many formats, including mobile content [<http://www.qpix.org.au/>]. For three years, the Australia Council *Story of the Future* initiative has been running residential labs in conjunction with AFTRS' LAMP [http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future]. Internationally, Sagasnet in Germany focuses specifically on 'furthering narrative interactive content' [<http://www.sagasnet.de/>]. Links to these and general new media labs in Australian and internationally are listed online. [http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/labs_australia] [http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/labs_international]

Applying for jobs

Once you've developed the necessary skills and portfolio, the next step (for those who don't want to start their own company) is to apply for a job.

Since games are the biggest industry, many guides have been written that give advice on how to break into game writing. The following are 'breaking in' guides for game writers:

- Break into Video Game writing:
[http://www.bardinelli.com/blog/?page_id=8]
- Writing for the Gaming industry (getting a job): [<http://www.writing-world.com/freelance/games.shtml>]
- IGDA Game Writing's 'How Do You Become a Game Writer?': [<http://www.igda.org/writing/HowDoYouBecomeAGameWriter.htm>]
- Ernest Adams's book Break into the Game Industry:
[http://www.designersnotebook.com/Books/Break_Into_The_Game_Industry/break_into_the_game_industry.htm]

General Australian and international 'break into games' guides include:

- GDAA Games Careers guide:
[<http://www.gdaa.com.au/gamescareers.html>]
- IGDA Breaking into Games guide:
[<http://www.igda.org/breakingin/home.htm>]
- Game Developer Magazine's 'Career Guide':
[<http://www.gdmag.com/archive/gdcg08.htm>]

Australian and international job boards:

- Sumea jobs: [<http://www.sumea.com.au/sjobs.asp>]
- Gamasutra job postings: [<http://jobs.gamasutra.com/>]
- UK Games Recruit: [<http://www.gamesrecruit.co.uk/Index.aspx>]
- Geographic listing of game developers worldwide:
[<http://www.gamedevmap.com/>]

It may also be useful to have a look at the writer job description BioWare have put online. This description outlines what they expect from a writer, what a writer needs to provide to be considered for a job, and includes a dialogue sample document.

[http://www.bioware.com/bioware_info/jobs/positions/austin_writer.html].

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Further Material

[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/craft_part_two/craft_part_two_references]

Professional profile – Jason Nelson



[\[http://www.secrettechnology.com\]](http://www.secrettechnology.com)

Tell us about yourself.

Born from the computerless land of farmers and spring thunderstorms, Jason somehow stumbled into creating awkward and wondrous digital poems and interactive stories of odd lives. Currently he teaches Net Art and Electronic Literature at Griffith University in the Gold Coast's contradictory lands. Aside from coaxing his students into breaking, playing and morphing their creativity with all manner of technologies, he exhibits widely in galleries and journals, with work featured around globe in New York, Mexico, Taiwan, Spain, Singapore and Brazil, at FILE, ACM, LEA, ISEA, ACM, ELO and dozens of other acronyms. But in the web based realm where his work resides, Jason is most proud of the millions of visitors his artwork/digital writing attracts each year.

How did you get started in electronic literature?

I wish there was some defining moment I could point towards. As if words, odd poetic creatures, came to me as I lay on the train tracks, inviting me to rise and create machine texts, to build non-linear/kinetic tales before the train presses me permanent against the rails. Instead it was a strange confluence, a gradual connection between the possibilities of new media technologies and the frustrating limits of the linear page. The playful construction of text on images, sudden navigations for half-written prose, games born from poetry and poetics grown from code.

Many of my fellow electronic literature writers also tell this accidental arrival story, of how they began creating digital writing before they even knew of

Australia Council for the Arts

Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia Council of the Arts.

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide)

the genre. This is one of the brilliant, and dare I say, freeing, elements of e-lit, the notion that there are no concrete rules, no clearly defined roads and no predetermined vehicles to travel them.

Tell us about the range of electronic literature and poetry you create?

With over 30 creations in the past five years, some might call me prolific. Because e-lit is multi-dimensional, multi-media and multi-linear, the creative process can begin with sound, an interface, or a quick succession of head blows from an angry and lost pilot. And because technology changes rapidly, with new codes and possibilities arriving nearly monthly, isometric games, for example, might suddenly be poetic interfaces, where a few months ago they were technically angry and impossibly intensive.

As a result, my works are alarmingly diverse for a writer, certainly in this genre-sticky world. I've created a few art/poetry games (game, game, game and again game, Alarmingly These Are Not Lovesick Zombies) using a basic platformer interface or monster shooter and hand-drawn graphics reconfigured into marked-up text and poetic videos on jump and click. Other works (Uncontrollable Semantics or Between Treacherous Objects) rely on screen morphology with mouse-controlled text spinning to sounds and a maze-like grid of sections masquerading as typical stanzas.

What is different about writing for interactive media?

Everything is a text, a language. Words are just an easily accessible, translatable version of language. So as a writer of interactive media, one must see everything as a possible poetic/prose/fiction component. Interface, animation, sound, interactivity, words, generation, video, time and space all become as important as verbs and narrative structure. You are director, scriptwriter, technologist, artist, and discover and obscurer of curious creatures.

Why aren't there more electronic literature writers?

Unfortunately the constraints of learning software or programming, as well as the reliance on electricity and processing, is a hurdle too high for those whose legs are pen bound. And yet grand non-linear narratives, circular poems whose lines pound back and redirect, can be created with chalk and concrete, sticks in the mud. Even the simple task of placing and removing cut up text from a hat can be the birth of an electronic literature masterpiece. Additionally, there is the fact that when something becomes

interactive, the author must give away control to the reader, let the user wander and create their own worlds from your textual landscape.

What skills suit such writing?

If there was a job description for electronic literature writers, it might read as follows:

Bored and computer-tied public searching for writers to inspire, confuse and entertain them. Writers must be willing to experiment, to be perfectionists and awkwardly lost. Technical skills or at least the willingness to work with technically proficient others is a must. Additional skills of thinking spatially, seeing poetry as geometry and reading the narrative of images together with a non-linear understanding of world are encouraged. Applicants must also be willing to delete works soon after they are created and be able to moderate epic battles between gypsies, hobos and the occasional Bill Gates.

How do you stay current (professional development, networking)?

Last year I did. This year I haven't. Next year? You must be willing to leap – to create with a technology until it becomes so dated and unusable that only computer museums can show your work. Then you leap, hurtling yourself, arms and vertebrae battered, into the current, the newest software bits. And yet it is this jumping that is the bane of e-lit. Utilising/playing with the newest of new media doesn't mean what you create is worth a damn. The wow effect of whirlygigs and fancy gizmos is quickly lost as those techniques become as cliché as Photoshop filters.

As for networking, I am becoming increasingly convinced that electronic literature, when it works best, circumvents the traditional middle ground of publisher and institution, festival and critic. Over the past year my work has had over eight million hits, with thousands of posts in blogs, forums, magazines, newspapers and aggregator sites from dozens of countries. Not only did I learn how to navigate net conduits, to share my work outside the art gallery and academic realms, but I also began fostering relationships with faceless usernames and email addresses, fans if you will, who spread my work. Having car enthusiasts who've maybe never fully read a novel or bought a book of poetry, discuss my strange experimental digital poems on their websites is a powerfully telling sign. The trick now will be to convince funding bodies and arts boards that the potential impact of electronic literature is immense.

Your work is featured in the Electronic Literature Organizations' Collection, you have works on your own website and have conducted live 'readings' of your interactive works. Tell us how you get your work out there?

Despite the possibility of millions of users/readers, e-lit is still relatively unknown. Part of this problem comes from simple classification as new media is a broad term, and largely still mired in the static wires of blogs or video art. And in the literature field there are still those that feel anything beyond words is not writing. Most often my works end up in galleries or gaming sites, or in collections of experimental art, as there are few venues specifically targeting electronic literature. Therefore I must be flexible in how, where and when I share my work as it crosses into many other artistic genres.

One of the amazing and yet strangely disconnected aspects of net distribution is how you can easily and immediately share your work with the rest of the world. This has resulted in winning awards in Europe, North and South America and Asia, but rarely am I ever able to attend the ceremonies. When writers give talks at festivals they get that immediate gratification of applause and audience expression, drinks and questions afterwards. With net distribution you might reach 50,000 people in a day, but aside from emails, your only connection is watching your server statistics rise and the blogosphere.

Professional profile – Isabelle Merlin



[\[http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http://isabelle.merlin.googlepages.com\]](http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http://isabelle.merlin.googlepages.com)

How did you get started working as a writer of cross-platform writing and marketing?

I started because the particular project I was working on, the novel *Three Wishes*, has a strong Internet element which is actually part of the story. The narrator and main character, Rose, starts a blog for an English assignment and rather than just say in the novel that she has a blog and include extracts from a pretend blog (which has been done before), I decided to create a real blog entirely in Rose's persona, which readers could turn to when they're reading the book. You get a more expanded sense of Rose as a person through reading her blog and looking at the photos she puts up. You also get a sense of her friends, because they comment on her posts (I created email addresses for them, web identities, so it would be just like real comments). In the book you only get a glimpse into her friends because Rose leaves Australia in the first couple of chapters to go to France – but the blog really expands them. As well, there's a mysterious commenter who pops up, called Koschei, who is a very important strand in the story. Eventually you learn Koschei has a blog too – a very sinister one. It's also a real one.

I wrote the blogs in realtime so that they fitted in exactly with the events in the book. I don't reveal major plot things in the blogs, only hints. But there are also links to places Rose visits like the hotel she stays at in Paris and a big glamorous department store she goes to, which expand the setting as well. The blogs have been very successful in expanding the story with the stat counter I have installed showing a large number of hits. So clearly readers are interacting with the story/Internet element very well. The blog

addresses incidentally are [<http://fairychild3wishes.blogspot.com>] and [<http://koscheithedread.blogspot.com>].

Each Isabelle Merlin novel will have that cross-media aspect: Pop Princess, which comes out in February, is linked to the Bebo band page of Sepajamax, the band depicted in the book. The song Underworld, which Lucie the narrator and main character writes, is actually uploaded onto the page (I wrote the words; the music and recording were done by a group of young musicians I know). The band page and song will be linked to the book and flagged in the book itself. The address is [www.bebo.com/sepajamax].

The third Isabelle Merlin Dream book, which I've just finished, has a dream interpretation website, called The Case of Dreaming Holmes, which once again, I created. It also links in tightly to the book. The address is [<http://dreamingholmes.googlepages.com>].

In the future I'm also planning to link in books with YouTube, Picasa web albums and more. I use the web to market the books: I have a YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/isabellemerlin] on to which I've uploaded a trailer for Three Wishes (which I'll also do for Pop Princess). As well, I have a website on GooglePages, with author information, books, links, etc. at: [<http://isabelle.merlin.googlepages.com>], a Bebo page and a Facebook page. The Bebo page in particular has meant some good interaction with young readers [www.bebo.com/isabellemerlin].

All this is really possible these days because the Web is so easy to use – everything has been simplified and refined, so anyone with a bit of imagination and a minimum of knowledge (or at least the willingness to learn) can easily put something together.

What is different about writing for stories across multiple-media platforms?

What's different about it is that you can really expand that 'suspension of disbelief' thing – the book appears to live beyond the pages, it has a presence in the Web world too, and not just as a marketed thing. The characters feel even more real, because of that presence on the Web. I had experience already with blogs myself – I've been a reader and also an occasional writer of blogs for a few years, so the whole format was familiar to me. But writing Rose's blog like this was spooky and made me feel as though at any moment I might get an email from her or one of her friends!

Whenever I write, I enter into the world of the story I'm creating – I feel as though it's really happening – but this really sharpened and deepened the experience for me. And certainly the way readers are responding suggests they feel the same.

What skills suit such writing?

I think it's more a matter of qualities, rather than skills: obviously you need some computer/Internet skills but they don't have to be that great. What you need is firstly a willingness to take risks and a sense of adventure; secondly a certain agility of mind; thirdly to never lose sight of traditional narrative skills in your enthusiasm for the new media; and lastly to think carefully about the way in which you use cross-media; it shouldn't just be a gimmick but a real integral part of the project. You need to be flexible, not be put off by the extra work involved and be prepared to argue your case! And most importantly of all, you need imagination in order to push beyond the boundaries of what has always been done.

How have your publisher(s) responded to your cross-platform writing and marketing efforts?

Extremely well and very supportively. They got the idea straight away. They loved the blog idea and they've also loved my trailer (which they actually used as part of their own marketing strategy, playing it at conferences and so on as well as making it available to booksellers). In my experience, publishers are open to ideas like this –especially if it doesn't actually involve money being sunk into it!

As a small part of online marketing, I've sent out a few emails to online journals (especially those specialising in young people's literature) in the persona of Rose, from her own email address! It worked well and people were really tickled by the notion of a character spruiking the book!

How do you stay current (professional development, networking)?

I read a lot of stuff online, I keep up with what Google is doing, for instance, I read some Web newsletters and I look at a lot of different things online. I use a good many Web tools but also basic movie-making ones, as well.

What is a valuable thing you discovered whilst working on a cross-platform project that you didn't know before?

Well, I think I discovered that working in cross-media formats can really work! I was instinctively sure it would but it was great to have that backed up by real solid experience and facts.

What would you say to a writer who is considering the use of new media and/or cross-platform formats?

Go for it! You are only limited by your imagination and sense of adventure. New media isn't the enemy of creativity as so many people seem to fear it is, but its an ally and even a close friend.

Professional profile – Joe Velikovsky



[\[http://www.joeteevee.com\]](http://www.joeteevee.com)

What do you do as a games writer?

Day to day, I read (and/or write) the Game Design Document updates, play a lot of games (as research), create a lot of Word, Excel and Visio documents and sometimes Google Sketchup models. (I'm kind of a rare case in that I also game design and produce ... sometimes, all three at once.)

My most recent console game credits include *LOONEY TUNES: ACME ARSENAL* on PS2, Wii and 360, and also *JUMPER* (based on the Fox movie) on Xbox360. The mission, story outlines, narrative walkthrus, etc. are done in Word, the dialogue and screenplays are usually in Final Draft and later as Excel sheets, and the mission flowcharts, in Visio. You also play through the game levels as they evolve, and see what's working, and work a lot with the sound guys, to ensure the dialogue sound files all go in the right spots then you get to write the Game Manual when it's all done and dusted.

How do your skills as a film and TV writer and game writer inform each other, if at all?

They inform each other loads in my case, as I'm working a lot on alternate reality games now (film/TV/Internet cross-platform games/narratives) but I've also tended to work mainly on AAA (big budget and high production values) console games, with filmic narratives. As I'm a feature script and TV writer, I'm interested in non-linear narrative movies like *Pulp Fiction*, *Fight Club*, *Memento*, *Rashomon*, *Sliding Doors*, *Run Lola Run*, *Vantage Point*,

etc., and there are many lessons from all those films (about point of view, and parallel and alternate plots) that cross over, into game narratives.

Writing your Game Story in 'Modular Chapters' is often the key – so that, if you lose a level/chapter during the development cycle, or, like in a 'sandbox' game such as *GTA*, you want to let the player 'choose the order of chapters', it doesn't 'break' the story. Game writing and design are intertwined and are often more about engineering. One cool thing about games, is you often get to write various versions of the same plot, like a) good guys win, b) bad guys win, and/or c) good guy achieves his goal, but potentially in four different ways. , etc (though, each player may only ever see 1 or 2 of them)... All that writing lets you, as a storyteller, hone your dialogue chops and kind of 'have your cake and eat it too'. Narrative games often need a lot of structural plotting and dialogue, which are both strengths of mine, as a writer. I use a lot of Story Template tools, like those in my Screenwriting Textbook at [<http://www.joeteevee.com/features.html>]. As for film/TV/Web/ phone stuff – as I say – I'm working on alternate reality games which 'straddle' most media platforms anyway so, with the film and TV writing versus games writing it's all narrative, just in another format.

How do you develop a game concept document?

For console games, first I usually come up with a 'unique gameplay hook' (like say, maybe a psionic spy who can see peoples' auras or, whatever). Then I write a three-page Game Concept around that hook, which has paragraph headings like: genre, platform/s, gameplay, missions, story, characters, settings, items, weapons, vehicles, collectibles, theme, look and feel, sound and music, and target audience. The producer, lead programmer, lead artist and sound designer all meet and we talk about what's possible – and what needs changing. You end up with a 200-page Game Design Document that changes daily, based on prototyping and the engine's technology.

On paper, the gameplay mechanics might sound cool together but when they are actually combined, a third, emergent behaviour could 'leap out' that changes everything. This is part of the fun, riding that wave. Like Brian Eno said, 'Let the system tell you where it wants to go ...'. Despite the best-laid plans of mice and game designers – whatever is actually the most fun to play, once it's prototyped, always 'wins out'. Story (and everything else) is always secondary to the gameplay 'hook'.

I think Nikola Tesla would have made a really hectic game designer as he could apparently mentally visualise a machine with over 1000 moving parts, hypothetically 'run' it for 1000 hours and then take it apart and see which parts were worn and needed replacing. For the rest of us, you have to firstly, loosely design it on paper, then build it, play-test it and then just suck it and see if it all works. The game design and the writing both have to stay flexible all the way through the process (which can be about two years sometimes), to work in with all of that.

What makes a film or TV script suitable for translation to a game?

Spectacular locations, a mystery involving exploration and puzzle-solving, and 'travel-narratives' often help, but the main thing is a 'unique gameplay mechanic', which often comes back to the physics of the narrative world itself. In the movie *Pitch Black*, the way in which enemy creatures can only move in the shadows, makes for an interesting gameplay mechanic. In *Jumper*, it was the teleporting which made the combat more interesting (and great locations like the Roman Coliseum, the South Pole, etc). In *Harry Potter*, the magic spells and supernatural aspects (and even the visual effects) that all made for good adaptation to games. In *Looney Tunes* cartoons, (much like *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*), there's loads of madcap cartoony violence and slapstick – as well as all the ACME weapons, the classic characters and the one-liners. So, some franchises are clearly more adaptable than others.

One big thing that Professor Henry Jenkins at MIT has pointed out, is how games are often less about character per se (mainly as player freedom usually 'annihilates' character) and often much more about 'immersive spaces' and/or 'travel narratives' (like most of Jules Verne's work). Film on the other hand is more about character change and character journeys and novels are usually more about internal journeys and mental philosophies. Of course those are generalisations, as these days you have everything from *BioShock* to *Boom Blox*, and *WoW* to *The Sims*.

How do you stay current (professional development, networking)?

I read *Gamasutra* and *Sumea* news, hang out with/talk to my other game developer buddies, buy game magazines with demo game disks (if I don't have time to play the whole game) and read blogs like Jason Hill's 'Screenplay' at *The Age* online. I try and read all the latest books on game and screenwriting – stuff by Dara Marks, Skip Press, Henry Jenkins, Ernest

W Adams, Christy Dena's stuff on ARGs, and so on. Metacritic.com is also useful.

What advice would you give to someone keen on working in game writing?

Today, if I was looking to break in, I'd maybe do a short interactive/game writing course (AFTRS and loads of unis and colleges have game courses now), or else, read Dille and Platten's Ultimate Guide to Videogame Writing and Design as well as [<http://www.designersnotebook.com>] then get on [<http://www.sumea.com.au/>] and [<http://www.gamasutra.com>] and send off my CV and some writing samples to game developers. Writing samples might include a short (20-page) game design document (to show you understand how the game narrative works within the game design), a sample game screenplay (or part thereof), and maybe even some short films.

Other writing samples (like short stories) can help, but it's mainly screenwriting – so dialogue and working to a brief is crucial. It is also important to be familiar with the classic 'narrative' games – things like *Deus Ex*, the *Sam & Max* games, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Half-Life*, *Bioshock* and things like *Hotel Dusk* on DS. In game job interviews you often get asked, what your favourite game is, and why – so it's good to have examples ready to quote. But if you're a mad-keen gamer you know all those already.

Professional profile – Marissa Cooke



<http://marissacooke.wordpress.com/>

How did you get started working as a writer of cross-platform and interactive writing?

I began on an interactive TV show called *Fat Cow Motel* – I was a scriptwriter in the traditional sense but I also produced the interactive (cross-platform) content and was the lead interactive writer. *Fat Cow Motel* was a pioneering project – a world first interactive drama ARG (alternate reality game). Produced by Hoodlum Active for Austar and ABCTV it used interactive platforms (predominantly online, mobile, plus iTV on the Austar platform) to extend the fictional world of *Fat Cow* established in the linear TV series, it engaged audiences in solving a weekly mystery before the resolution was revealed at the beginning of the following week's TV episode. The interactive content and user experience was immersive, involving deep engagement with the fictional assets of the TV series – the characters, locations within the town itself, as well as narrative events. So yes, that's when I 'crossed over' to digital media platforms as a writer and content creator.

What is different about writing for stories across multiple media platforms?

One obvious difference is the role of the audience and the necessity to 'build in' interactive opportunities and incentives in to the story itself – a 'complete' story leaves no room for audience participation. Essentially, cross-platform stories need to be 'incomplete' in some way in order to invite meaningful participation, even if this is simply having the ability to communicate directly with one or more of the characters via mobile, without

necessarily changing the story outcome. Participation could also be encouraged by inviting your audience to respond to your story or a particular aspect of your story in some way, e.g. by uploading a video or still image, making a blog entry, chatting with other audience members or sending an SMS to elicit a further response from you and your story material. You also need to drive and incentivize audiences to 'jump' between platforms in the most intuitive ways possible so that there is minimum barrier for participation.

Multiple distribution channels are naturally another key difference – you can tell the same story point, for example, using a range of different mediums, taking different points of view and using different levels of audience interactivity to achieve different results. This decision-making process is one of the key challenges but also creative joys of digital storytelling. I guess it's kind of the equivalent of a shot choice or a point of view shift in other storytelling forms, but with an additional dimension that enables audience interaction and response.

The distinct traits of the digital mediums being used are also a key difference. For example, using mobile devices to distribute story elements will inform the content and writing approach because it is a mobile, portable medium; content can be scheduled for particular times; it has a small screen; is a personal one-to-one communications device; and can enable an intuitive, direct response from the audience member via SMS, MMS, etc. Effective writing for multiple platforms requires that you consider the characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and audience-use characteristics of each platform so you can really leverage the interactive potential for that particular medium, rather than cutting and pasting story in a generic, non-customised way across multiple distribution platforms – which is not very effective at all.

What skills suit such writing?

I think it's very useful to be a visual, structural thinker and strategic in your approach in terms of what you are trying to achieve or elicit from your audience at each point throughout the narrative or story form. It also helps to be able to think contextually about your writing, in terms of the environment, platform or audience community in which your story is being distributed to. To write effectively for cross-platform and interactive media, being able to approach your storytelling from multiple points of view is also an invaluable asset. For example, you might offer one character's particular point of view via mobile or interactive/messaging, while distributing another

character's differing point of view, perhaps of the very same events/subject matter, via a YouTube video, Facebook presence or Twitter feed. Crucially, you must also be able to assume the point of view of your audience at all times – Where are they? What are they doing? What response will the material evoke in them and how might they feel compelled to respond to it? Leverage those audience insights in your writing.

'Experience' and 'audience' are two areas that figure prominently in your approach. Could you elaborate on why these are important and how they affect what you write?

Because of the nature of digital and cross-platform storytelling, it is or has the potential to be very experiential as opposed to simply mono- or bi-sensory. Beyond simply creating story content for your audience to watch or read, you're really writing interactive experiences. For your audience, reading or watching content is only one facet of the whole experiential range which may also encompass creating content, rating, tagging, posting, blogging, instant messaging, voting, photo-sharing, video-messaging, skypeing, MMSing, downloading, playing, listening, touching or connecting with a community across a wide range of online and offline environments. With that in mind, creating infrastructure, ecosystems, functionality and tools in addition to content is extremely important. You need to consider the opportunity, incentive and facility for the audience to interact, respond to, immerse themselves in and even contribute to your story – to elevate the engagement from watching or reading to experiencing.

How do your skills as a scriptwriter, copywriter, developer and strategist inform each other?

The strategic work really informs and enriches the other skills. Being strategic as a writer, content producer, game designer and so on is beneficial because it makes my writing, storytelling and interaction design more effective, targeted and appropriate to the audience and the platform(s) I'm distributing it to. Script writing/fiction writing skills are also useful in informing my approach to concept development, interaction and game design because of the instinct for characterisation that it provides. I find these instincts really useful in applying to environments, functionality and interaction design. Imbuing the assets that you're creating with their own 'character', by making them idiosyncratic, unique, personalised and distinctive in the same way that you would when creating individual characters in a story, can make all the difference between a mediocre and generic experience and a compelling and meaningful one.

How do you stay current (professional development, networking)?

It's actually a tricky balance to achieve between working and keeping up with new trends, but yes, I stay up to date via networking events and conferences, interaction with colleagues, as well as online research and newsletter subscriptions – there's almost nothing Google can't answer! Probably the most effective and inspiring way of staying up to date is by checking out other examples of great, innovative and award-winning work in the public domain.

What is a valuable thing you discovered whilst working on cross-platform projects that you didn't know before?

Probably the creative scope involved in creating, planning and writing for multiple, interactive platforms. It's truly, madly, deeply imaginative – so rich and complex in terms of the depth and dynamic potential of the mediums. I've found the creative challenge extraordinarily stimulating and satisfying beyond my expectations.

Copyright in new media

By Therese Fingleton and Jennifer Wilson

Chapter

5

Career

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Employed

Writing

Digital

Multi-platform

Promotional

This chapter provides a brief overview of current discussions around copyright in new media and explores some new options for licensing and collecting income on copyrighted material. It is no substitute for legal or business advice.

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As outlined in the Welcome section, this guide identifies three high-level career paths for professional creative writers: employed writers who generally do not retain any Intellectual Property (IP) or ownership of copyright; self-employed writers who usually retain their IP, sell the rights to a publisher or distributor who will then manage the sale of the writer's work and pay them royalties, or retain some control over their copyright; and entrepreneurs who maintain full ownership of their IP and control over how to exploit their copyright. Each one has specific implications for IP ownership and copyright use and exploitation, but the cornerstones of the copyright system, which have been around for hundreds of years still apply. It is essential for all writers, whether they are working in new media or not, to understand that there are many ways to slice and dice the copyright pie; by territory, format, publishing platform, language etc and that they must seek professional legal advice to help them develop the best strategy for their work.

Intellectual Property covers the material expression of an intellectual thought or creative work and provides a forum to enforce the protection of an original idea. Copyright is a legal concept enacted by governments giving the creator exclusive rights for a limited time (generally between 50 and 100 years after their death) before it enters the public domain. Copyright is the means for managing the use and exploitation of IP. It is generally the 'right to copy' but also includes stipulations on who may adapt it and who may financially benefit from it and other related rights. It is an intellectual property form like a trademark or patent.

There is no system of registration for copyright protection in Australia. Copyright protection does not depend upon registration, publication, a copyright notice, or any other procedure—the protection is free and automatic. Unless material is published the copyright will run ad infinitum, however once material is published the term of copyright runs from the date of publication until a certain number of years after the creator's death. This term varies depending on the material, e.g. books, photographs etc. You do not need to publish your work, put a copyright notice on it, or do anything else before your work is covered by copyright – the protection is free and automatic, from the time a work is first written down or recorded in some way. For example, as soon as a poem is written, or a song is recorded, it is protected. An author's ownership of copyright can be indicated by a copyright notice, the symbol © (or the word 'copyright') and the name of the copyright owner, and the year of first publication.

[\[http://www.copyright.org.au/pdf/acc/infosheets_pdf/G010.pdf/view\]](http://www.copyright.org.au/pdf/acc/infosheets_pdf/G010.pdf/view)

Territoriality is a newer concept and involves the carving up of rights by territories, such as North America, UK and Europe. A publisher or distributor will typically own the rights to content in one or more territory and can ensure that only they collect revenue from those territories.

What's different?

Rights

Depending on the type of content, one of the main changes likely is that writers of traditional media will want to negotiate royalty fees for their work to be published in digital format and distributed via digital channels. In the case of book authors, new terms will need to be negotiated on when the copyright reverts back to them, which up to now is usually when the book is deemed out of print. These issues are being negotiated between publishers, agents and authors (represented in Australia by bodies such as the Australian Society of Authors and Australian Writer's Guild).

A notable example of changes in rights and recognition is the Writer's Guild of America's strike, which ran for almost five months in 2007–08, 'being among other things based on writers' demands for a large increase in pay for movies and television shows released on DVD, and for a bigger share of revenue for such work delivered over the Internet'. The strike was resolved with a general increase of writing fees and a raft of provisions specifically related to 'Writing for Made-for New media'.

Copyright enforcement

Traditional media formats (such as books) create their own enforcement environment. It can be time consuming and expensive to make copies and almost always involves a loss of quality. If the content is in digital form copying tends to be cheap, fast and maintains the same level of quality. The music industry has seen this first hand with the explosion of file sharing via peer-to-peer networks.

In the digital age territoriality is more difficult to enforce, as the Internet is not bound by the same geography as bookstores and movie theatres. However enforcement of copyright on the Internet is not impossible. If a user downloads material from a territory where they are not entitled to download the material, they are not immune from legal challenge, just because they were able to download it. Publishing companies now can and do serve subpoenas on Internet service provider (ISP) to obtain all relevant information of the offending user.

There are also implications for marketing and promotion of new book titles for example, which increasingly include online components, which audiences in different territories may have immediate access to, prior to the publication being available in that territory. So a book may be launched with

an alternate reality game in the US before the book is realised in Australia, making it difficult to manage and measure promotion and release strategies.

User-generated content

The copyright of content published online is usually covered within standard agreements, such as the terms and conditions of a site. Writers need to be aware that if they contribute content on a platform where content is co-created, commonly they will not retain any copyright nor will they receive payment for the use of their work, unless of course this is the explicit aim of the site. Writers who invite user-generated content from their audience should also ensure they outline copyright implications for users.

Copyright infringement in new media

The most commonly used solution to problems enforcing copyright protection in the new media industry is Digital Rights Management (DRM). DRM is a series of rules and processes designed to limit access or usage of digital media or devices. It involves a range of techniques that use information about rights to manage and distribute copyright material and is based on the principle of controlling how content (including music, text, software and games) is shared, distributed, played, altered or copied.

The music, film and publishing industries have made many attempts to implement DRM and in some cases with limited success.

Digital Rights Management and music

The Net interprets censorship as damage and routes around it.

John Gilmore TIME International, 1993

Regardless of how quickly new methods arise for protecting the DRM of a piece of content, it seems that someone somewhere will place it on a server to be streamed to others without DRM. In the case of music and to the great frustration of that industry and many of its artists, sharing music illegally has become common, despite lawsuits that have resulted in heavy penalties for offenders. . The issue is no longer confined to the music industry. Currently, there are many services that will stream yet-to-be released music, first run movies (often the day before release) and TV shows that are still in pilot. These services try to keep at an arms length from the content being streamed in order to deny responsibility, yet they are increasingly easy to use and as the speed of the Internet increases, delays are negligible.

There are also some examples of how major music companies have sought the enforcement of their rights, which have not been well received. For example, in an attempt to stop the proliferation of pirated music, in 2005 Sony placed a DRM protection module (rootkit) on more than 50 of the CDs it released. When the CD was inserted into a computer to download the tracks, the software loaded a module into the computer operating system. Unfortunately, this module could be exploited by other more malicious programs and effectively created a 'worm hole' through which the computer could be attacked. The module was widely and vocally criticised as being 'malware' and Sony ended up recalling all CDs, reissuing them and ceasing the use of a rootkit to protect its content.

Does DRM work?

There is a widespread view that DRM does not work, whether in music or other forms of content. Eric Garland, CEO of Big Champagne, an online measuring service, pointed out in September 2007 that while iTunes may have downloaded an impressive three billion items of content in the four years from 2003–07, this hardly compares with the one billion items downloaded each month from peer-to-peer file sharing services (or 48 million items of content in the same time). There are also views that DRM can act as a red rag to a bull – encouraging people to steal content, which negatively impacts on sales:

The more DRM you put on the file, the more it's likely to be pirated, because it's almost like a challenge. At the same time, you are also at risk of having much worse sales in what is a very tiny, nascent bit of the market, because DRM makes the files clunky and annoying to download.

Sara Lloyd, Pan Macmillan, Head of Digital Publishing, 2007

As a result, increasingly companies are removing DRM from products. The view gaining traction is that if the purchase is simple and quick and the price is right, then it will be easier to buy products than to steal them. There is a natural conflict between protecting a work and therefore controlling and limiting its release; and generating audience by spreading the work as widely as possible. This conflict is not easily resolved through DRM and authors, musicians, filmmakers and other content creators are increasingly choosing to build audience and reputation as a way of protection of their copyrights, rather than the more difficult to maintain route of strict protection.

Keeping the ads

Online delivery of television is also moving to this model. While TV shows are increasingly the target of streaming, again moves are being made to simplify legal access at the right price of 'free to the consumer' (retaining ad support which is the funding model for the initial broadcast).

Channel Nine and ninemsn recently released free downloadable episodes of the current series of both *Canal Road* and *Sea Patrol* – without DRM. It was hoped that episodes would be watched and then sent to friends and communities, virally promoting the series.

In this case, the 'rootkit' element is a small application from a company called Hiro. Before being able to view the episode, it must be 'decoded' by a Hiro client application that is downloaded to the computer. The Hiro

application updates dynamic advertising embedded in the video, thus allowing the video to be watched on demand for free, but still giving the ability to fast forward or skip through any of the video, except the ads. It essentially brings the TV-based ad model to an on-demand audience. Whether this will work or not is yet to be determined – that all the real content except the advertising can be skipped may suit the advertiser, but is less likely to suit to the viewer.

Other models

Creative Commons Australia

Creative Commons (CC) is a charitable institute that provides free tools that allow authors, scientists, artists and educators to easily mark their creative work with the freedoms they want it to carry. CC enables writers to place their copyright material in the public domain with certain restrictions, perhaps changing copyright terms from 'all rights reserved' to 'some rights reserved'. An author can maintain ownership, but allow others to change, share, distribute, alter, add to or simply legally use. Increasingly CC is gaining traction as a way of recognising the rights of the creator while allowing varying levels of permissions to reuse and remix content.

The most crucial thing for any artist to remember when considering using Creative Commons is that they understand fully the implications of the options they choose. An artist must be certain that in choosing a CC license they are not restricting their options to make their living from their work. They must strike a balance between protecting their work and getting it out there. The chapters on [Marketing and Distribution](#) and [Business models](#) include further discussion on when it is appropriate to choose certain copyright options. Writers should always seek legal advice before making any decisions on which copyright option is best for their work.

CC is a system that tends to have keen advocates as well as vehement opposition, with few taking the middle ground. In reality, like any other system of protecting and exploiting copyright it usually comes down to fitness for purpose. Australia is very active in using CC licenses with many companies seeing this as a way to allow broader distribution of their content. Engage Media [<http://www.engagemedia.org/>] provides a website for videos about social justice and environmental issues in Australia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and encourages all their users to apply CC licenses to the content they upload to the site.

Creative Commons is also being used as a foundation on which to experiment with new craft forms, such as remixing literature. Remix My Lit [<http://www.remixmylit.com/>] encourages remixing of literary content, with writers using other writers, collaborative writing and mash-up writing.

Refer to the interview with [Creative Commons Australia](#) at the end of this chapter for more information.

Concluding remarks

You have two choices, you try and stop it and then you're plugging holes in the boat all the way, or you embrace it and the way to embrace as many content makers and owners have found over the years is to think about pricing, and think about the market. Pitch it at the market and make it more appealing, not only in a price sense, but also in the practicalities of doing it for the consumer so they don't have to worry about infringing. That's the test of copyright.

(Peter Banki, 2007)

Any digital content business needs to recognise that sustainability is a crucial factor. Sustainability includes the right to control the work through acknowledgement of the authorship (IP). While funding from arts or government agencies may assist a product or service to get off the ground, keeping it flying means knowing where the money is going to come from, and having an idea of how much is needed (and what it will be spent on).

Even if a service is launched as a 'free' service, it is important to know what steps are needed to start generating revenue and when these need to be implemented. In considering sustainability, the sustainability of the practitioner is of primary and critical importance and must be supported by adopting the copyright protection option that best suits the business model.

There are many other models and ways of making copyright work in this new environment. In fact they are too numerous to mention here and are changing all the time. So the best advice for any writer with IP they wish to protect, share, distribute and monetise is to keep up to date with what's happening in the media and seek appropriate advice.

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[\[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_Sony_BMG_CD_copy_protection_scandal\]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_Sony_BMG_CD_copy_protection_scandal) and [\[http://blogs.technet.com/markrussinovich/archive/2005/10/31/sony-rootkits-and-digital-rights-management-gone-too-far.aspx\]](http://blogs.technet.com/markrussinovich/archive/2005/10/31/sony-rootkits-and-digital-rights-management-gone-too-far.aspx).

The Federal Attorney-General's Department publishes *Copyright Law in Australia: A short guide* at:

[\[http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/WWW/securitylawHome.nsf/Page/Publications_Intellectual_Property_A_Short_Guide_to_Copyright\]](http://www.ag.gov.au/agd/WWW/securitylawHome.nsf/Page/Publications_Intellectual_Property_A_Short_Guide_to_Copyright).

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Further material

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/copyright_in_new_media_industry/copyright_in_new_media_industry_references\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/copyright_in_new_media_industry/copyright_in_new_media_industry_references)

For comprehensive information about copyright, contact the Australian Copyright Council:

[\[http://www.copyright.org.au/\]](http://www.copyright.org.au/).

See this info sheet 'Copyright in Australia Information Sources' for a list of resources: [\[http://www.copyright.org.au/pdf/acc/infosheets_pdf/G004.pdf/view\]](http://www.copyright.org.au/pdf/acc/infosheets_pdf/G004.pdf/view)

Further resources on this topic are included in [DIY Part 1: Concept to collaboration](#).

Industry insight interview (Creative Commons)

An interview with Elliott Bledsoe, Project Officer, Creative Commons Australia, [<http://creativecommons.org.au>], and Amy Barker, Project Manager, Remix My Lit, [www.remixmylit.com].

What is Creative Commons (CC)?

Elliott: Creative Commons offers a new way of thinking about and managing your copyright. At the core of the CC project is a suite of standardised licences, freely available to creators, that foster sharing and collaboration. It is a user-friendly and easy way for people to make their content more freely available without needing to hire a lawyer. CC builds upon the 'all rights reserved' of traditional copyright to create a voluntary 'some rights reserved' system.

What does CC offer writers?

Amy: For a writer, CC provides free tools that allow you to decide how you would like to release your copyright into the world in terms of distribution and possible collaboration. It encourages writers to think more about what they want their writing to do and to license the writing appropriately. It gives them a whole spectrum of options, instead of having no choice but all rights reserved.

Why would you want to put your writing out under CC?

Elliott: One thing a publisher will consider when deciding if they'll sign you is whether or not you're sellable, whether people want to read your stuff. That's often hard to prove if you've been holding on tightly to everything you've ever written. If lots of people are already enjoying your work online then that should give a publisher confidence that your work is popular. By putting your work out there you're raising your profile and developing a fan base.

Is CC only an option for self-published work or are publishers seeing it as a viable option?

Elliott: CC is an option for anyone. I guess for a self-publisher it's just a lot easier to 'get approval' to publish under a CC licence since you're seeking approval from yourself. That's why a lot of uptake in publishing has been by self-publishers.

Like everything, it takes time for big players to get their heads around a new idea and even longer for them to be comfy with it. The scientific and academic publishing sector has been leading the way in this, but that is starting to change. Aduki Independent Press [www.aduki.net.au] from Melbourne recently released Tristan Clark's *Stick This In Your Memory Hole* under a non-commercial CC licence that allowed remixing. Cory Doctorow's CC licensed young adult's book *Little Brother* published by Tor Books, was recently on the New York Times bestsellers list for six weeks. I think this is the start of much more movement by publishers in this area.

Amy: CC is certainly an option for publishers. *Remix My Lit* (RML) is currently deep in discussions with a major Australian publisher about releasing a published anthology of works commissioned and remixed for our project under a CC license. It just takes boldness of vision.

Can you provide an example of a fiction writer who is using CC?

Elliott: Children's fiction author Fritz Bogott [<http://novel-a-month.com>] started a project in June last year to publish a novel a month. The entire project, including each book, was released under a CC licence that allows remixing for non-commercial purposes.

Amy: RML author Lee Battersby's CC licensed short story *Alychymical Romance* was recently nominated in the prestigious Aurealis Awards [<http://www.aurealisawards.com>]. As far as we know, this is the first CC licensed work ever nominated in these awards and it is available in its entirety for others to remix.

Elliott: Following Cory's lead, science fiction writers seem to have flocked to CC. Equally, many writers on US speculative fiction site Strange Horizons [<http://www.strangehorizons.com>] release their stories under CC.

Can you have a hybrid model using both traditional copyright and CC?

Elliott: Of course. The whole idea behind CC is to get people thinking about how to manage their rights rather than relying solely on the 'all rights reserved' default. You could definitely retain all the commercial rights to a printed book and release an electronic PDF version for users to download. This is what global justice magazine *New Internationalist* [<http://www.newint.com.au>] do, making articles available on their website under CC but reserving all their rights in the published magazine.

When is it not suitable for a writer to use CC?

Elliott: There can be a number of situations where using CC is not desirable or not possible. For example, if you've entered an agreement with a publisher and assigned part or all of your copyright under that agreement then you can no longer release that same work under a CC licence.

Amy: It may not be suitable for a writer to release works, particularly longer works such as a novel, under a CC licence if they are planning to then submit these works to traditional publishers for consideration. In this case it may be more prudent to release only the first chapter of the book under a CC license, like a band releasing a single or a movie studio releasing a preview.

Any other advice?

Elliott: Be strategic and be smart about how you license your work. You don't have to give everything away. Think about what you're OK with letting other people do stuff with, now and in the future. If you want to make money on a story then consider one of the licences with the non-commercial element. If the integrity of your writing is crucial to you as an author then any licence that includes the 'no derivative works' element will restrict remixing.

You might also want to consider releasing old works, or works that haven't found a market through traditional publishers. You never know what new audiences you might find, or who might find you.

Amy: Copyright doesn't have to be boring or something only lawyers or your agent knows anything about. CC makes it simple and straightforward so take matters into your own hands. The CC team are always there to provide advice.

If you're interested in exploring more examples of what people are doing with Creative Commons licensing around the world, browse the CC Case Studies Wiki: [<http://wiki.creativecommons.org/casestudies>].

Marketing and distribution – Part 1

By Christy Dena

Chapter	Career	Writing
6	Self-Employed	Multi-platform
	Entrepreneurs	Promotional
	Employed	Digital

the era of one-size-fits-all is ending, and in its place is something new, a market of multitudes

(Chris Anderson, 2006)

The ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to marketing and distribution doesn’t work anymore, if it ever did. Digital media, and in particular the Internet, has facilitated pivotal changes to the marketing and distribution of creative writing. A product now takes on a multitude of forms, needs to be distributed through a multitude of channels and promoted with a multitude of strategies. I think you get the idea. The next two chapters will explore these changes through the paradigm of what is known as the ‘marketing mix’: the four Ps. The four Ps are product, price, place and promotion. The techniques discussed here are primarily for writers to implement themselves, rather than strategies for publishers or production houses. Examples are from a range of formats – because so are the readers of this Guide, and because strategies can be imported from anywhere.

Australia Council for the Arts

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Product: intangibility, cross-platform and personality

In 1936, Walter Benjamin published his landmark essay '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*'. In it, he discussed how industrialisation changed the production and experience of art. With mechanical reproduction, there was no longer a single work of art – Leonardo Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* can hang on more walls than the Musée du Louvre. Now, with digital technologies, other shifts in the way art is produced and experienced have happened. In terms of a 'product', there are three key changes to note.

The first involves the intangible nature of digital technologies.

Conventionally, a product is viewed as a tangible object that can be purchased, held and owned. This is no longer so. A book may be a digital file (a PDF for example or an e-book). An online interactive game may be completely available through the Internet, with no DVDs in sight. All of these are difficult to price (see discussion below), but due to their flexibility and reach, they often have the same if not more value than a tangible format. Further to this, there may be no downloadable digital file: the product may be a street game or online drama and therefore not a tangible object or digital file but an 'experience'.

The second area of change is observed in the relationships between these various forms. A story can exist in many digital files, formats, websites and adaptations. The increase of repurposing of content and adaptations has, quite literally, ripped content from its form. People do not necessarily marry a story or message to a single medium anymore; and at the same time they are acutely aware of the affordances and unique characteristics of each medium. A story is presumed to exist and be available in a number of media channels and art forms. Each media is a point of entry into that world. People perceive worlds, the fiction you've created, not books or DVDs they are delivered in.

The third and final change noted here is the value of the creator. The ease of producing websites, blogs and podcasts means writers can nurture their own community of fans. Increasingly, writers (and publishers) are leveraging these long-term efforts with marketing. The [next chapter](#) on promotion delves into techniques writers can use to nurture their own fans.

Place: new distribution channels and strategies

There are now many places your product can be distributed across the Internet and networked devices.

Digital distribution channels

One technology that is growing in popularity for the distribution of video, audio and gaming content, is portable media devices. The first season of Global Dilemma's *Forget the Rules* series was delivered on three media channels: mobile (3), television (Channel V) and online. When distributing through more than one media channel, creators have to consider which distribution technology they are designing for. Which screen they have in mind is one such consideration. Close-ups are more appropriate for small screens than wide shots and pans, which makes intimate monologues or small-cast scripts ideal. See the [Jim Shomos' *Forget the Rules*](#) case study for insights into how the writers dealt with such constraints.

Another exotic technology used for distribution is Bluetooth. Bluetooth is a short distance wireless technology that most people have on their mobile phone. What this means is a person can potentially download content anywhere. In 2006, the UK's Channel 4 took advantage of this possibility and provided their short documentaries for downloading from posters in the London Underground [<http://blogs.channel4.com/fourdocs/>]. The technology has been utilised for many marketing campaigns in Australia, including the recent campaign for Channel 10's *Big Brother* by the Marketforce agency, which sends messages to people at bus stops telling them they're being watched (Liss 2008).

The most significant new technology is of course the Internet. And, as intimated in the section on product, a story can take on many forms. A book, for instance, can be distributed through online sales direct from a publisher, sites like Amazon, print-on-demand services or through a writer's own site. There are many print-on-demand services available for books that take care of the printing, financial management and distribution. For those who want to control all aspects of their Internet presence, there are many free or paid programs and services to take care of every aspect of inventory and payments. There is also an Australian company, *GoodBarry* [<http://www.GoodBarry.com>] that offers hosting, website management (including templates), email marketing, ecommerce, customer record management and analytics in a single integrated package. A single online website is not the only place people can find out about and purchase your product too. You can create 'widgets' that people can embed on their own

sites on your behalf and your book could also be distributed as an e-book, online interactive book, PDF, embeddable pdf and so on.

This view of the Internet as a monetised distribution channel is not the whole story. The Internet is global and so a website on the Internet can be viewed by people all over the world. To publish on the Internet, therefore, is to publish to the world. The Internet is, if you like, another (vast) territory. It is also a vast collection of communities. Online communities are formed by shared interests, not location. Any concerted online effort, therefore, needs to be mindful that people beyond their immediate geographical location may be quite keen to know about, engage with and purchase your writing.

So how can a writer communicate to global (and local) audiences and communities?

Record and upload

If your content is video or audio (whether it be the story or readings of it), make these available online – through free audio and video hosting services so you're not paying for any downloads or streaming. These services also provide the facility to embed the audio or video player on your own website (so audiences can listen or watch it right there rather than download it). If you permit it, you can also allow other people to embed the player on their own website. The 'place' of your writing, then, becomes the book, DVD, your website and any number of your fans' websites.

Live streaming

Live events can also be shared with global audiences in realtime. A live event can be the screening of a film, playing of a networked game, theatre performance, street game, reading of a book, interactive performance of an electronic fiction and so on. There are many free, live video streaming services for this, such as Ustream.tv and Mogulus.com. Live streaming can bring people together to share an event, such as the screening of M dot Strange's feature film *We are the Strange* at the Ars Virtua gallery in the online world *Second Life*. In *Second Life*, each visitor is represented with an avatar; and so a movie is watched in a room with people from all over the globe chatting together. This is a social, remote viewing experience. Commentary on multiplayer games can also be streamed for spectators across the globe. Such shoutcasting sites include Gamestah [<http://www.gamestah.com>] and Games TV [<http://www.gamestv.org>]. The Met have also been experimenting with making opera accessible to people all over the globe. They started *The Met: Live in HD* program in which operas

were simulcast to locations in the US and worldwide. They have also provided HD recordings for cinema screenings.

Guerilla Distribution

You can also empower people to distribute your products. The author JC Hutchins actively engages his fans to promote his podiobooks (audio books). One campaign was 'Operation Burn Baby Burn', in which he enlisted his fans to burn CDs of *7th Son, Book One: Descent* and give them to people (Hutchins 2006). For films, guerrilla drive-ins or screenings have become increasingly popular. A person can arrange a screening at their home or a local hall, and promote the event using specially-created sites like Brave New Theatres [<http://www.bravenewtheaters.com/>].

With all of these examples, the story is released in more than one media platform (which it should be). The next consideration then is the media release strategy.

Media Release Strategies

Sequential

The conventional approach is to release one media platform at a time. This approach is mainly governed by the notion of 'windows' and 'territories'. The period of time and the place a product is available is constrained by arrangements made with various distributors. What is rarely considered though, are the experiential aspects of the media. What media platform would make an ideal entry point to the story or stories? Perhaps a fixed medium would be better before then moving to an interactive one, or vice versa?

Simultaneous

A somewhat unconventional yet increasingly alluring approach is simultaneous release. It has been practiced by filmmakers such as the Wachowski Brothers and championed by Todd Wagner and Mark Cuban for a few years. Wagner and Cuban describe the approach as a 'day-and-date' model: where films are released in theatrical, television and home video platforms on the same day and date. This, they explain, gives consumers a choice of how, when and where they wish to see a film. A simultaneous release can work to produce a kind of echo effect, where each media and promotional strategy can compliment the other. Importantly, there is only one marketing spend. A version of this approach is the 'three for a fee' model introduced below.

Price: media pricing strategies

Many pricing strategies are used to promote a product or service. This section will highlight strategies that price according to the media and utilise the appeal of offering content for free. The Internet enables the distribution of digital assets and products, often in ways that have little to negligible further costs. For example, books can be offered in PDF form, and audio or video can be made available online either for download, on-demand watching online or live streaming. Some creators experiment with offering digital versions for free in conjunction with, or alternating with offering their content for a fee. The following is a simplistic but nevertheless representative overview of the pricing strategies that are used.

Free then fee

Making the digital content available for free before it is released for payment is used (among other reasons) to build awareness and gain new fans. If something is free for a limited period of time, the impetus is there for people to urgently share the opportunity with others. Oftentimes the writer will say they're offering their product for free in the hope that if people like it they'll purchase the tangible product (book or DVD for example). Either the full product or part of it (chapter or episode for example) can be offered for free. Three reasons why people buy the tangible product even though they have the digital version for free is they want the affordances of the tangible product (easy to read a book in bed), the feeling of ownership, and to support the creator.

In 2007, the music band Radiohead launched an unusual offer: before their album *In Rainbows* was available to purchase, fans could download it for any price they nominated. The 'pay what you like' offer was sincere, as people could elect to pay nothing. ComScore conducted a study of the online sales of the album and found that two out of five downloaders were willing pay on average of US\$6 (comScore 2007). In total though, 62% downloaded the album for free. While it has been noted that successful bands like Radiohead have the room to experiment with such payment models, the campaign is an example of what is possible, and what audiences are getting used to.

Free and fee

Some writers make their digital and tangible formats for free and for a fee at the same time. Cory Doctorow, for instance, offers his books in many digital formats (e-book, PDF, virtual book, audio book and so on) at the same time

as they are for sale in print form. This, Doctorow claims, has made him ‘a bunch of money’:

Most people who download the book don't end up buying it, but they wouldn't have bought it in any event, so I haven't lost any sales, I've just won an audience. A tiny minority of downloaders treat the free e-book as a substitute for the printed book – those are the lost sales. But a much larger minority treat the e-book as an enticement to buy the printed book. They're gained sales. As long as gained sales outnumber lost sales, I'm ahead of the game. After all, distributing nearly a million copies of my book has cost me nothing.

(Doctorow 2006)

Beyond independents, there have been experiments by publishers and production companies. HarperCollins, for example, provided Neil Gaiman's novel *American Gods* online to browse for free. Gaiman quotes the HarperCollins report on the results:

The Browse Inside Full Access promotion of *American Gods* drove 85 thousand visitors to our site to view 3.8 Million pages of the book (an average of 46 pages per person). On average, visitors spent over 15 minutes reading the book.

The Indies [...] are the only sales channel where we have confidence that incremental sales were driven by this promotion. In the Bookscan data reported for Independents we see a marked increase in weekly sales across all of Neil's books, not just *American Gods* during the time of the contest and promotion. Following the promotion, sales returned to pre-promotion levels.

(Gaiman 2008)

Likewise, authors who have not had as accommodating publishers have taken matters into their own hands. Paulo Coelho has found that he sells more books when they are also available for free, and so actively offers his books for free through BitTorrent and other services:

What Coelho quickly discovered was that the more his book was available for free, the more sales of the actual book increased. As an example, he cites the Russian translation of his book, where it went from only 1,000 sales to well over 100,000 in a period of two years, and has only continued to grow since then. It's yet another good example of someone embracing how giving away content for free can help them earn more money.

(Masnick 2008)

Another success story is the graphic novel *North Wind*. It was offered for free online viewing (as opposed to download) at the same time as being available for sale in retail outlets. The results surprised many:

Yesterday, CBR News reported on publisher BOOM! Studios' bold move of offering each issue of the five issue series *North Wind* for purchase in comic shops and for free online via MySpace Comic Books. The marketing experiment angered some retailers, feeling that offering a product for free at the same time as its retail release would necessarily eat into potential sales. It appears their fears may have been for naught. This morning, CBR News has learned that *North Wind* has completely sold out at Diamond Comics Distributors, with a second printing being considered by BOOM! Studios, even with the first issue still available online for free. It seems the increased awareness brought about by offering the comic online for free has driven greater interest in the title, leading to the sell out at the publisher level.

(CBR News Team 2008)

One possible reason for the success of this approach is that online reading isn't as satisfying as print reading. The offer of a free version attracts fans and newcomers, facilitates goodwill, and whets the appetite of the readers and audiences. These testimonials are not signs that this approach guarantees success, but they do show that successes can happen with experimentation and trust in the market.

Fee then free

Another option is to make digital content available for free after it is first released for a fee. This approach is less common, but could gather late comers who are aware of the product but perhaps need a bit more information to consider buying. It is also a step towards the 'three for a fee' approach.

Three for a fee

The concept of 'three for a fee' is cross-media bundling: digital, experiential and tangible formats are bundled together for a single fee. What bundling does is acknowledge that a person often likes to vary the format in which they access content. A person can read the book in bed for instance, but then continue reading on an e-book whilst on holiday, or listen to or read it on their iPod whilst on the train. A DVD could potentially be bundled with access to a digital stream or download and even a cinema screening. Obviously most of these products are already available, but people have to buy them separately: they are not conveniently bundled, or offered at a reduced cost as a reward for buying all of the formats. Whether the bundle

is available as a complete package at the point of sale, or staggered over time (immediate download and postal delivery for instance) are other factors to consider. Chris Anderson, author of *The Long Tail*, describes this approach in his plans for his forthcoming book *Free! Why \$0.00 Is the Future of Business*:

Every physical copy of the book is going to come with a little code which will allow you to download the audio book for free. I'm doing this in part because anytime someone tells me that they bought two copies of my book, one the hardcover and one the audio book, I feel terrible...because they're my best customer and I just charged them twice. My best customers are the ones who should be getting my best deal, not the worst deal. [...] If someone is willing to buy my book, I want to give them every format I can to give the ultimate flexibility to the reader, to consume the book as he or she sees fit. [...] If you want to buy the audio book by itself you can, but if you buy the book you get the audio book for free. I'm assuming I'm cannibalising almost nothing. It's a tiny amount of people who will buy both, and instead by giving the audio book for free I can allow people who do buy the book to have a better experience.

(Anderson, 2007)

Cross-media bundling can involve offering all the distribution media for free, the low-cost media for free (such as audio books, PDFs, some e-books, virtual books), none for free (just conveniently bundled together at the point of sale), or at a reduced cost for the bundle. For non-fiction, audio books aren't a great expense as it usually just entails the author reading, but for fiction, the author may want to go further and produce audio with sound effects and actors.

The [next chapter](#) delves into the final 'P': promotion.

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Further Material

[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/marketing_and_distribution/marketing_and_distribution_references]

Marketing and distribution: promotion – Part 2

By Christy Dena

Chapter	Career	Writing
7	Self-Employed	Multi-platform
	Entrepreneurs	Promotional
	Employed	Digital

Arts promotion has changed in light of digital technology as well as generational and cultural changes. This section highlights some of the key areas that writers need to know about: online presence, social media marketing, virtual launches and tours, citizen marketing, and experiential marketing (including branded entertainment).

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Online presence

As discussed in the [New Media Industry](#) chapter, the Internet is a significant distribution, marketing and creative channel. To ignore this situation is to forgo valuable opportunities: to be on the Internet means people can stumble upon you, find you if they go looking for you, easily pass on information about you to others, tell you what they think of your fictions, share the development of your projects and buy your products. The Internet is the easiest, and for many, the primary way people follow up information about something.

There are many ways you can have a presence on the Internet. Increasingly, publishers and production houses are creating micro-sites dedicated to a product, author or both. A creator can also utilise any of the free hosting opportunities out there. Blog software (diary-like websites) companies like Blogger and WordPress and more recently, Google offer free hosting. For insights into the online strategies and lessons of two Australian authors who run their own websites, see [Max Barry](#) and [Paul Mitchell's](#) profiles.

Just having a website is not enough. If you build it, they won't just come. People need to know where you are, easily find you, or be notified of your existence. If people already know about you, it is because you've utilised every offline opportunity you have to promote your website or online presence (on business cards, book or DVD covers, radio interviews and print advertisements). If people want to find you, they will search using a search engine. When people enter a search term into a search engine like Google, it returns a listing of sites; the website listed first is dictated by two things: an algorithm or payment. 'Search engine marketing' (SEM) refers to paying for a preferential presence in search engine results. In most cases one only pays when someone clicks on an advertisement, and even then the amount you pay is mutable. The algorithm, on the other hand, can be manipulated or leveraged using 'search engine optimisation' (SEO). For instance, a site is assessed according to, among other things, how many sites, with what status, are linked to it and how often. This is one reason why it's good practice to take the time to link to other sites. The following strategies also help with SEO and general promotion of a product.

Social (media) marketing

Content isn't king. Context isn't king. Contact is king.

Douglas Rushkoff (2008)

Before delving into social media marketing, this section will start a bit wider afield with social media.

Social media is an umbrella term that defines the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio.

(wikipedia 2008)

Certain technologies have been specially designed to enable these activities: instant messaging programs, forums, blogs, wikis, bookmarking, social networks, online virtual worlds, networked multiplayer games and so on. All of these can be utilised for marketing in some way. Although certainly not the only areas, the following are two aspects to social media marketing.

Advertising through and with social media

When some people talk about social media marketing, they refer to advertising through or with social media. One of the logics behind this approach is the concept of 'audience fragmentation': or the idea that 'consumers' (audience, readers or players) are using a variety of media beyond traditional media channels such as television, newspapers, magazines or radio. A campaign that only utilises these traditional channels will not reach as many people, cannot be as targeted, and is limited by the kind of message or experience that can be developed. But now, one can deliver advertisements with banner ads, sponsorship, news feed marketing and profiling in social networking sites and beyond.

Banner ads

Banner ads are those advertisements one can see along the top or side of a webpage. They appear to operate similarly to print advertisements, except for (at least) two points of difference: firstly a person can act immediately on a call to action (by clicking on the advertisement and going straight to the website), and secondly targeting. Social network technology enables the ability to utilise personal information a user enters, and strategically deliver content to those users. The personal information is gathered (through anonymous automated processes) from a user's personal profile. From this, marketers can target people according to their location, age, gender, marital

status, political views, education level and interests. So, there isn't one advertisement that everyone sees, but advertisements that the people targeted see.

Sponsorship

Like non-digital offerings, a person, company, product or service can sponsor digital content. This can include sponsoring a forum, blog or listserv (electronic mailing list) for a week or month, or even offering your DVD, book or game as a prize for an event or competition.

News feed marketing

When people log onto a social network, they can see a summary of the latest activity of people they are connected to. An advertisement can be placed amongst this news feed, once again targeted to the most suitable users. Although these advertisements look like other news items, the aim is not to deceive users, but to acclimatise to the context and be where people spend most of their time. (Smith 2007)

Profile

The above approaches still render the advertiser outside of the social network culture. One way to integrate is to jump in and be a part of the community. Creating a profile is free and can be used for a product (game, book, film, show), production company, individual on the production team (the writer, director, actor, producer, designer), or an individual or company that is part of the fiction (character, fictional company and so on). Which of these, or any combination of these you choose, is dependent on the people involved, the product and which audiences are targeted. A profile for a product (note: Facebook has special 'pages' for companies and products that are distinct from personal profiles), enables people to join and receive updates. Since the profile is product-specific, one may get to the point when they need to create another profile for the next project. While the writer can notify everyone of the change, not everyone will necessarily make the move. If one creates a profile for a production company, then all projects can be promoted; but even then it is important to maintain a personal side to the site, making the identity of the staff and the person who posts consistent.

An individual can create their own profile, and therefore promote whatever project they're working on. This type of profile, however, is more personal and requires a more active engagement with the community. Sporadic messages to everyone about your work without any non-work messages, renders a person an unauthentic interloper. Also, while people understand

that it is not possible to answer every message or 'poke', one certainly needs to make an effort. Certain behaviours are considered typical in online networks, such as responding to messages and comments, thanking people for 'link love' and sharing information. It takes a lot of time and effort and a certain personality, and so is not suited to everyone. Fortunately, some organisations are engaging with social networks on the writer's behalf. The Sydney Writers Centre, for example, has a podcast, Facebook group, Twitter account and comprehensive website. The Australian Society of Authors and the ACT Writers Centre have Facebook groups too, as do many screen-based training organisations such as AFTRS' *LAMP* in Sydney and the Film and Television Institute in Western Australia.

The final example is creating a profile for a fictional character, company or product. This can be contentious if the fictional nature of the profile is not overt, but can be a fun and immersive way to promote a project. Joss Whedon's webisode *Dr Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, for instance, has the character Dr Horrible microblogging (short posts) in character through Twitter. This is a seamless marriage of the real world and the fictional world of *Dr Horrible*, as the story involves a character that is actively blogging. The character's promotion of himself is a natural extension. Despite the immersive and entertaining traits of this approach, it is not possible in all networks. Due to the creation of fake profiles with the intention to deceive, as well as the unclear nature of some profiles, some sites are banning or deterring such an approach.

Another factor in choosing a social media is the demographics of the technology or network. While many sites are designed to appeal to as many people as possible, some sites target certain interests (themed social networks) or certain ages. On the latter, there are social networks pitched at the baby-boomer generation, like Eons, Rezoom, Multiply and Saga Zone. Different social networks are popular in different countries. Orkut is the most popular in Brazil for example, not Facebook. A further warning, though: on top of being authentic and prepared for the time investment, is the proprietary nature of these sites. As filmmaker Lance Weiler (2008) notes, gathering contacts through such sites means you don't retain the contact information yourself. Unlike an email list, the data remains with the website.

Social Media Optimisation (SMO)

Another aspect to social media is making content – whether it be posts on a website, videos, audio or profiles – optimised for sharing. The ideal situation is for people to want to pass on information about your project, so they will

inform others of your work, but also because people are more inclined to act based on recommendations from trusted sources (such as friends) than from strangers (no matter how publicly well known). Of course, having great content is only the first step; if your online content is not optimised for social media it makes it difficult, even impossible, for people to share your information. Rohit Bhargava calls this technique ‘social media optimization’ (SMO):

The concept behind SMO is simple: implement changes to optimize a site so that it is more easily linked to, more highly visible in social media searches on custom search engines (such as Technorati), and more frequently included in relevant posts on blogs, podcasts and vlogs.

(Bhargava 2006)

Bhargava has offered ‘Five Rules of Social Media Optimization’:

1. Increase your linkability

This refers to the characteristics of the content, and how often it is updated. People are more likely to return to a site if it is updated often with content that is appealing and valuable. This content can be the actual fictional projects, teasers, or making-of information. Content that is spread widely is often referred to as ‘viral marketing’. ‘Viral marketing’ is one of those ideas that has, perhaps ironically, spread like wildfire. While the art and strategy of viral activity is tempered by the laws of luck and chaos, there are some principles that can guide the design and implementation. Marketer Seth Godin outlines the qualities that facilitate an idea being spread:

No one ‘sends’ an idea unless:

- a. they understand it
- b. they want it to spread
- c. they believe that spreading it will enhance their power (reputation, income, friendships) or their peace of mind
- d. the effort necessary to send the idea is less than the benefits.

No one ‘gets’ an idea unless:

- a. the first impression demands further investigation
- b. they already understand the foundation ideas necessary to get the new idea
- c. they trust or respect the sender enough to invest the time.

(Godin 2005)

In addition to this, people are more likely to send an idea if it is urgent (a short-term opportunity).

2. Make tagging and bookmarking easy

One way people find out about your content, whether it be on a photo-sharing site like Flickr, a blog or podcast, is through your 'tags'. These words categorise your content with keywords and can be accessed from all over the Internet. Also, for people to be able to share the exact post or video you've created, they need to be able to link directly to it. Some specially-created websites are designed using software like Flash. This is fine, but sometimes the designers don't make it possible for someone to link directly to a certain piece of content within the site. These 'permalinks' (permanent links) are crucial.

3. Reward inbound links

Acknowledging important inbound links is good manners. Although taking the time to go to the referring site and comment a thank you is good form, so are more automated methods such as making their link visible on your site by activating 'trackbacks' in blogging software.

4. Help your content travel

Making content easy to move greatly improves the process. This can be done with PDFs, embeddable videos, audio, slides and documents. Embedding means people can put it on their own website for viewing and as the original file is used, copyright is controlled. If content is copied, then it could be accompanied with a Creative Commons license. See the [Copyright](#) section for a discussion about these issues.

Usually people who post these embedded items link back to the original site as well, but it is good practice to make sure a website address is visible in all content. The further content is enabled to spread, the more likely it is that new people will find out about it. If all content ends with a call to action – like asking questions or prompts to contribute – people are even more likely to follow up.

5. Encourage the mashup

Making your content available for remixing encourages people to interact, invest time and share your content. This can be done in a number of ways. Some filmmakers, for instance, provide assets so that people can create versions of parts of their film. Examples include Bruce McDonald's *The Tracey Fragments* (2007) and the Australian project Remix My Lit [<http://www.remixmylit.com/>]. Promotional remixes are covered in the forthcoming section on [citizen marketing](#).

Additional 'rules' (more appropriately best practices) have been added to Bhargava's list and links can be found in his online article (Bhargava 2006). Although there are many other aspects to social media marketing, this section will conclude with a prompt to write press releases specifically for any bloggers, podcasters or online journalists you may approach (which is an increasingly popular strategy). Shift Communications have issued a 'Social Media Press Release Template' that outlines the bare necessities: [<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/smprtemplate.pdf>]. There is also a new site that has automated this template process: [<http://www.pitchengine.com/>]. See also the interview with [Random House](#) for an insight into the social media marketing approaches they are implementing and considering.

Virtual launches and tours

Another way to leverage the Internet (and social media) is through virtual tours. Many writers are familiar with conducting interviews on radio stations to promote their project, but something not all writers are familiar with is how easy it is for them to be interviewed on podcasts. A podcast is a term to describe the delivery of audio or video content online. Due to low barriers to broadcasting, and major portals such as Apple's iTunes, high profile, grassroots organisations and individuals alike can reach large audiences. So, rather than travelling to a location or waiting for a major broadcaster to call, an author can be interviewed on any number of these podcasts and reach a wide range of local and international audiences. To do this, a writer needs Internet access and free online chat software such as Skype (Skype also has special phone numbers that allow landline to Internet recordings, so it isn't necessary for every person on the call to have Skype either).

As an example, in 2007 podiobook (podcast audio fiction) author J C Hutchins conducted 'the first-ever cross-country, 50-state podcasting book tour'. Hutchins put the call out to podcasters in every state in the US, asking for a short interview in exchange for a shout-out from his website and the first podcast. This cross-country Skype tour (which could have been a multi-country Skype tour), was to promote the launch of his podiobook *7th Son* on 07-07-07. Hutchins also launched *7th Son* in the online virtual world *Second Life*, as did Cory Doctorow in 2005 with his book *Someone Comes to Town, Someone Leaves Town*. Such virtual launches enable people from all over the globe to share the event together in a digital space. Other tours can be arranged as partnerships with communities or technologies. Australian musician Missy Higgins, for example, recently engaged in a chat with her fans in the PalTalk community (Jasmine 2008). As for amplifying the reach of real-life launches and events, sites have also been created to promote offline tours, like Chris Anderson's *Book Tour* for authors [<http://www.booktour.com>].

Citizen marketing

Scrap the focus groups, fire the cool chasers, and hire your audience.

Alex Wipperfurth (2005)

A technique that has increased in popularity is 'citizen marketing': this is the idea that people will engage in marketing your product for you. Beyond word of mouth or 'word of mouse', it refers to audiences actively assisting you in your promotional activities. Sometimes people do this of their own accord, but more and more creators are overtly attempting to facilitate this happening, by supplying assets or calling for collective action.

Supplying assets

Our assets become their assets, and that's how they become fans of the movie. Russell Schwartz, President for Domestic Marketing,

New Line Cinema (Elliot 2006)

If people have access to your digital assets, part of a film, game, audio or text for example, then they can create their own promotions of it. For example, in 2006, New Line Cinema released footage and music so that people could create a new trailer of Liz Friedlander's *Take the Lead* (2006). Filmmaker Darren Aronofsky has provided video, stills and audio from his film *The Fountain* (2006), so that audiences can create a music video of Clint Mansell's soundtrack. The film, *The Watchmen*, ran a 'Veidt Enterprises Advertising Contest', asking fans to create TV commercials that would actually end up in the feature film [\[http://www.youtube.com/watchmenmovie\]](http://www.youtube.com/watchmenmovie). And, with a healthy dash of irony, is the promotion for Australian's television show about advertising: *Gruen Transfer* (ABC). 'Consumers Revenge' provides assets so viewers can create mock advertisements of fake products such as Gruen Beauty, Gruen Bank and Gruen Beer [\[http://www.abc.net.au/tv/gruentransfer/consumersrevenge.htm\]](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/gruentransfer/consumersrevenge.htm).

A recent guerrilla marketing campaign for the T C Jessep's *Emag of Efil* (artistsAWAKEproductions, 2008) doesn't give away assets but the actual book. Free copies of the book were sent to anyone who volunteered to promote it. The book is actually the first part of an extensive cross-platform expansion planned for the fiction.

Chart storming

Another citizen marketing technique is to call for your fans to assist with manipulating bestseller charts by purchasing your writing on a particular release day. On 08-08-08, two authors in different countries were due to have their respective books launched. Upon realising they shared the same launch date, Tee Morris and Philippa Ballantine decided to join forces and run a promotion called 'Double Trouble', as Morris explains:

Between our respective podcasts, mailing lists, and a media blitz spanning across podcasts and live radio shows, we're asking our readers and listeners to buy *The Case of The Pitcher's Pendant* and *Digital Magic*. Our goal is to get not one but *two* Dragon Moon titles into Amazon's Top Ten lists.'

Authors Scott Sigler and Seth Harwood accomplished similar feats on their own Amazon Days (Sigler on April 1, Harwood on March 16), but this promotion will be the first time two authors are working together to dominate Amazon's charts. [...] A good part of their promotion is viral marketing: getting this date out across four podcasts, circulating both original and fan-generated desktop artwork, free PDFs offered before the print release, and encouraging listeners to spread the word through blogs, Twitter, and other social marketing venues.

(Morris 2008)

Philippa Ballantine adds that 'authors now have the ability to introduce works to audiences globally and build a fan base' (Ballantine in Morris 2008). 'This,' she continues, 'is particularly valuable to authors like me on the other side of the world. A promotion like this is not only innovative, but a great example to the publishing industry of podcasting's potential as well as other Web 2.0 initiatives' (Ballantine in Morris 2008). As part of their Skype tour, Morris and Ballantine were interviewed by Australian podcaster Eric Scaresbrook, on his podcast *Erk Pod* (2008).

For some fun ideas on what sort of promotional activities a writer can ask of their fans, check out J C Hutchins' *Ministry of Propaganda* missions [<http://jchutchins.net/site/conspire/mop-missions/>]. To find out more about citizen marketing in general, see Ben McCon and Jackie Huba's *Church of the Customer* blog and books [<http://www.churchofthecustomer.com/>].

Experiential marketing

Reason is out, emotion is in.

Timothy deWaal Malefyt (2006)

This quote from Timothy deWaal Malefyt of BBDO Worldwide refers to the shift that advertising has undergone: 'a reprioritisation of experiential and sensory approaches to consumer marketing over traditional rational and cognitive approaches' (2006). That is, the rational approach of providing facts and detail to persuade people to buy has been superseded by campaigns that trigger emotional responses. This also means providing experiences through multiple modes to ignite the senses. One way to implement this approach is to create compelling 'trailers' for media that don't usually have trailers.

Trailers

Video has become increasingly popular on the Internet. Trailers have a long history with films, but are now being created to promote books. Liz Dubelman's *VidLit* is a successful book trailer company that started in 2004. Her clients included Random House, Time Warner and HarperCollins, who have now gone on to create their own book trailers [<http://www.harpercollins.ca/trailers>], along with Simon & Schuster's *Book Videos* [<http://www.bookvideos.tv/>]. So too, individual authors have also been creating their own video introductions to their stories: check out Miranda July's *No One Belongs Here More Than You* [<http://noonebelongshere.morethanyou.com/>]. Books aren't the only traditional art form using trailers. In 2007, UK's National Theatre started promoting their performances with trailers and have their own channel on YouTube [<http://www.youtube.com/NationalTheatre>]. And film trailers have seen some experimentation, such as Tartan Video's 13-minute preview of Park Chan-Wook's *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* (2006), and Digiscreen's 'webler' of Peter Greenaway's *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* [<http://www.digiscreen.ca/weblers/tulse/flash.html>].

Branded entertainment

The traditional models of these businesses [advertising and entertainment industries] is under pressure, and one of the most significant ways in which businesses are coping with change is through alliances that benefit all sides.

Scott Donaton (2004, xiii)

Scott Donaton's book, *Madison & Vine: Why the Entertainment and Advertising Industries Must Converge to Survive*, details the various ways in which advertising has moved from being peripheral to the entertainment experience, to being embedded or integrated with it. On one end of a branded entertainment continuum, if you like, is product placement within a book, film or TV show. In such circumstances, advertising can assist the writer in financing the project, or can be a call for a writer to graft the story and product together seamlessly. An example of the former is Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman's *Cathy's Book: If Found Call 650-266-8233* (Running Press Kids 2006), which has makeup product placement embedded as sketches by the narrator character. On the other end of this continuum are creative projects specially designed to promote a product or service.

These projects relate to writers in two ways: writers are hired to work on interactive branded entertainment projects, and writers can extend their own writing project with an interactive branded entertainment project. What the latter means is that writers are promoting their book, film, play or TV show by extending the story across other media such as websites. The belief is that a promotion is more successful if it is a credible aesthetic experience in itself. So, rather than copy-writing, the writer embarks on creating a compelling story that extends their main product, yet urges people to move to it.

Steven Hall embarked on such an approach for his debut novel *Raw Shark Texts*. He created an 'alternate reality game' that adapts part of the novel and thrusts the reader into the story world. The whole web-based event was written as an interactive version of part of the book's plot. On the website [www.lostenvelope.com], the reader sees exactly what the protagonist experiences at the beginning of the novel. The reader can listen to the phone message and decipher clues which will lead them to Flickr, YouTube, ebay and other sites. Most of the immersive efforts, however, were actually directed towards marketers and booksellers, as journalist Rachel Geise explains:

For several weeks, novelist Steven Hall and his publishers have been playing games with me. First was the request, which arrived by e-mail, to take an online inkblot test (the results indicated a mild case of paranoia – and with what came next, no wonder). Then I received a typewritten letter in the mail with the ominous greeting, "First things first, stay calm." It was sent to me by me, or at least, according to the signature, "The First Rachel Geise" and I advised myself to consult a Dr. Randle about my memory loss.

A few days later, yet another letter confirmed my membership in something called the Unspace Exploration Committee. That was followed by a message typed on a business card that read, “I need to speak to you,” and a telephone number. When I called, I got a recorded message from Dr. Randle advising me not to read any letters I might receive from myself and warning me not — “under any circumstances” — to read a book called *The Raw Shark Texts*.”

Giese, 2007

Another example is the ‘multi-channel marketing’ undertaken by Random House for John Twelve Hawks’ novel *The Traveller*. They created numerous fictional websites that are part of the story world told in the book, sites that had to be traversed by players to discern clues and establish plot. They also had women who were dressed up as the protagonist, attend BookExpo America. John Pitts, the marketing director at Doubleday (an imprint of Random House), commented on the campaign: ‘If you’re going to look to an industry for innovative and aggressive marketing tactics, it’s definitely those industries [film and TV] – not the publishing industry’ (Montopoli 2005). There have been numerous extended experiences to promote books, TV shows, feature films and games, all of which straddle successfully and unsuccessfully the fine line between creative content and marketing. For Australian examples of such projects see Max Barry’s use of a digital game, Hoodlum’s work referenced in Marissa Cooke’s profile, Isabelle Merlin’s use of blogs, and the case study of Ish Media’s project to promote Nick Earls and Rebecca Sparrow’s *Joel and Cat Set the Story Straight* (Penguin 2007).

Professional development

Digital marketing and distribution workshops and seminars are gradually being offered by more writers' centres and production schools. The following is a sampling of forthcoming sessions planned in Australia:

- ACT Film Makers Network always include online strategies in their courses: [<http://www.actfilmnet.org.au/>].
- ACT Writers Centre runs workshops on creating and promoting e-books: [<http://www.actwriters.org.au/>].
- Film Television Institute (WA) are holding an online discussion on promotion, marketing and distribution of short films in early December: [<http://www.fti.asn.au/>].
- Queensland Writers Centre is planning a series of hands-on workshops to assist writers: [<http://www.qwc.asn.au/>].
- Wide Angle Tasmania (TAS) plan on running a seminar on the changing media landscape with [David Gurney](#) (who is profiled in this guide): [<http://www.wideangle.org.au/>].
- Northern Rivers Writers' Centre has scheduled a seminar on e-publishing with David Reiter: [<http://www.nrwc.org.au/>].

In addition, many resources are available online. For instance, Fuel4Arts' 'Hot Sauce' website provides comprehensive guidance to arts promotion [<http://www.fuel4arts.com/sauce/>]. More are listed online.

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/distribution_howto]

[http://del.icio.us/Writersguide/marketing_howto]

For up-to-date information about digital marketing and distribution courses and workshops being run in Australia, subscribe to the Story of the Future mailing list. Send your news, events or opportunities to storyofthefuture@australiacouncil.gov.au.

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Further Material

[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/marketing_and_distribution/marketing_and_distribution_references]

Professional profile – Max Barry



[\[http://www.maxbarry.com\]](http://www.maxbarry.com)

The subtitle of your main website is ‘self promoting since 1998’. What sort of self promoting did you start with and what have been your influences since then?

At first I just threw up a basic website, because it seemed like a good idea at the time and I'm kind of geeky that way. This was back when I still believed that publishers would take care of marketing, so it was nothing special: just a page with Chapter 1 of my first novel *Syrup*, a Q&A where I interviewed myself, some brief biographical information, my email address and tour dates.

But hardly anyone visited that. There was no reason to: the site never changed and what was there wasn't especially fascinating. I really only started getting visitors in numbers when I released the game *NationStates* and began blogging.

Just like DVD extras, you supply deleted scenes, publisher and designer correspondence, writing notes, trivia and even computer wallpaper for your books. You also provide commentary (and even newsletters) whilst writing a book. Do you find that these appeal to both newcomers and fans?

I don't do the newsletters any more: I do the blog, although it's basically the same thing. I also stopped doing the running commentary of what I'm working on, because while I think it is interesting for some people, it was messing with my head. Also it was really embarrassing to get to the end of a novel I'd been yapping about on my site and realise it was actually a pile of

crap. So now I avoid talking about books I'm working on until somebody has agreed to publish them.

The extras, deleted scenes, etc., are just things I'd be interested in seeing from authors I like.

What I hope to do via the website is establish a longer-term connection with someone who cares enough to look up my website. That person could easily forget all about me by the time my next book comes out, and I want them not to: I want them to follow my career. The best way to do that, so far as I've figured out, is to give them stuff they're interested in.

The other side is it's incredibly cool to communicate with fans. I don't know how authors did it before the Web – in nine years I've received two physical mails from readers, and one of those told me I was going to Hell for blasphemy. I would feel very isolated if I didn't have regular reader emails and website comments, like maybe nobody was reading my books at all.

You supply the first chapter of each of your books for free at your website. How have you found this and any other similar approaches you've tried?

Well, putting up the first chapter is nothing special. I'd be an idiot if I didn't do that. I also post short stories for free, and allow anyone to reprint them under a Creative Commons license. So occasionally someone somewhere in the world includes one of my stories in their local newsletter or school newspaper or whatever. That's great, because it gives my writing some exposure: I don't see short stories as income generators but rather promotions for the novels, so any way I can get them out there is good.

Some people, like Cory Doctorow, put their entire novels up for free download and apparently this helps physical book sales. I've thought about this, but can't really believe anyone wants to read a whole novel on a computer screen. I still feel like that's more of a turn-off than an inducement. But I might change my mind on this in the future.

Your website has a login that people can sign up to, and you also have email lists. How important is it to collect such contact information and how do you use it?

It's not important, and I use it for precisely and no more than people expect. The idea that you should be building a database of emails you can spray

marketing junk to is outdated. All you need today is to produce regular content; there are plenty of ways for people to subscribe to it without you doing anything. The ability for people to sign up for emails of my blogs has been very useful, but will become steadily less so as more people use feed readers, and receive updates from all their favourite sites in one place.

You designed an Internet simulation game based on your book *Jennifer Government*. Did your publisher end up thinking you are ‘a left-field marketing genius, instead of a chump who blew four months on a web game when he should have been working on his next novel’?

NationStates [www.nationstates.net] was popular way beyond anything I could have anticipated, and introduced my writing to a lot of people who otherwise would never have heard of it. It’s hard to translate into sales, but *Jennifer Government* sold ten times as many copies as *Syrup*, and I’m sure *NationStates* was a significant part of that. So yes, it was definitely worthwhile.

My feeling is that nobody cares about new novels by authors they’ve never heard of. So I didn’t attempt to make people care; instead I offered them a free web game. Once they were playing that, they would see ads for these books by the site’s creator, including one upon which the game was based, and hopefully some would then check it out.

You can’t force people to buy your book, of course, or even to be interested in it. All you can do is let them know it exists. And the best way to do that is via something else they are interested in.

What advice would you give to an author considering starting a blog, email list or podcast?

I think regular output is a good thing. I try to update my site once a week, and that’s important to maintaining the connection.

There are a lot more blogs around now than when I started in 2004, so it’s probably harder to stand out. But if you’re a published author, you’ve probably got a book that has spoken quite profoundly and intimately to some people, and they’ll be interested in more of what you’ve got to say. So it’s simply a matter of talking to them.

Professional profile – Paul Mitchell



[\[http://www.paul-mitchell.com.au\]](http://www.paul-mitchell.com.au)

How long have you had a website and email list? What made you start it?

I've had the site and list for about four years. I started it because I was tired of sending emails about events that bounced and ISP's crazy spamming rules for large recipient emails. It was a good way, before Facebook and other community sites, to send out news about what had been happening in my writing career and what was coming up. People would often say, 'Let me know when you're having a reading or launching a book' and so it was a good way to make sure I didn't lose people interested in my writing. Convenience was important in regard to the email list. In regard to the site, it was a combination of needing a brochure site to promote my professional writing and a way of promoting my creative writing.

You have various items on your website (samples, links to buy, updates on events, reviews, etc.). How effective are these in promoting your writing?

It's very effective. Because I make my living out of professional writing (journalism, corporate writing, etc.), I need to be googleable. I get plenty of work from people who just google 'professional writer' or copywriter. It has also been an effective way to promote my creative writing; people will read one of my articles, stories, essays or poems and then get in touch or check out more of my work on the Web.

What did you do to promote your writing before the website?

I just sent out emails and talked to people in pubs/bars/literary events/unis, etc. :)

How do you use your offline (performance readings, workshops, etc.) and online activities together?

Well, all my offline activities are promoted online and then at offline activities I have a business card with my Web address/email and the loop is complete.

What have you found has worked and not worked?

I have been frustrated lately in that my emails have been landing in recipients' spam folders even though I haven't been sending many out. It looks like it will cost me a bit to update my email list program. In addition, there are a few issues in the back-end of my site that mean I can't easily access who has subscribed to the list – it gets difficult to take people off or add them on (often I don't know if they are subscribers). My site has not resulted in many online book sales – my feeling is that the people who would buy my books would be more likely to do it in a shop or at a reading. But in regards to promotion, it has been an absolute necessity for both creative and professional work.

What advice would you give to an author considering starting a blog, email list or podcast?

For promoting writing, I think a designated site is better than using blogs, Facebook or other community sites. There's a sense, for one reason or another, that a site (as opposed to a blog or Facebook profile) is more professional. There's a sameness to Facebook and blogs that you can avoid with your own site – and because I work in the professional writing sphere as well as creative, I really don't have a choice but to have my own site.

Any other comments you'd like to add?

When I started it, I never thought, 'Gee, who the hell do I think I am having my own site', despite the fact that I had only one book published. Now I've got three, a thriving professional writing business – and the site and list have been important players in that.

Case study – Marketing for Joel and Cat by Ish Media



[\[http://www.ishmedia.com.au\]](http://www.ishmedia.com.au)

How did the Joel and Cat website and competition come about?

Penguin Publishing approached Ish Media to come up with an online campaign surrounding the launch of the book *Joel and Cat Set the Story Straight*. The book was aimed at 12–16 year olds.

We were given the book to read and from this created a pitch containing ideas, audience research and budget. We gave Penguin two options – the ‘Blue Sky Approach’ and the ‘Get to the Point’ approach. The Blue Sky approach was a vision for true character extension online and integration with the print version of the book along with low-level social networking tools and the Tandem SMS Story event. The Get to the Point approach stripped out all of the extra content and functionality and concentrated on the Tandem SMS Story application and competition.

We ended up going with the Tandem SMS Story event and competition – as this seemed to be the strongest part of the proposition.

Describe the creative involvement of both Ish Media and the authors Nick Earls and Rebecca Sparrow?

We worked directly with Penguin rather than Nick or Rebecca. It was a combination of internal marketing and strategy departments and then Penguin relaying this information and managing the relationship with Nick and Rebecca. The process was incredibly streamlined with Penguin. They were invested whole-heartedly in the project and gave us the creative

support as we needed it without being controlling over the concept.

Reading the book gave us clear direction for the concept. Given that the premise was based on a tandem storytelling class project between two characters it seemed inevitable that we would try and do something that gave the audience a chance to experience how this works and the fun you can have with it.

What was the response like from the readers and the authors?

The authors were involved in creating the starting chapters for the tandem stories and generally were very invested in its on-going development. They were given administration capabilities to enable control over the direction the tandems were taking.

For the audience – we had great responses mixed with kids going crazy over the fact that they could SMS their responses into the site and see them instantly published. There was a substantial amount of curatorial effort behind the scenes ... but overall it was a hugely entertaining thing to watch and read. Ah the minds of teenagers!

It is obviously difficult to measure how many readers went from the book to the site and vice versa, but as far as I'm aware Penguin was happy with the overall response.

How did your experience with interactive projects inform your work on this project?

Ish works with a number of independent producers to create digital strategies and concepts for existing works. This experience was invaluable in our work with Penguin. Approaching existing creative properties means spending a substantial amount of time digesting the work, looking closely at the demographic and dissecting the key concepts and objectives of the property. Sometimes it's easier to be the 'fresh approach'. Coming into an existing creative work gives you an outsider perspective – a little closer to the way audiences may respond to it.

What advice would you give an author thinking about marketing or even extending their content online?

Looking at audience trends, researching popular methods of content consumption and understanding your demographic are key steps to

creating a truly relevant experience online. Take the core concepts of your work and reflect on how and what these concepts mean in the context of another platform (like online and mobile). The experience of reading a book is inherently different to the experience of content online. Think carefully about this and try to create concepts that give credit and sometimes control to audiences in other environments.

It's also important to outline your key objectives at the beginning. What do you actually want from your online audience? Is this about driving people to the book or vice versa or both?

DIY Part 1 – Concept to collaboration

By Therese Fingleton

Chapter	Career	Writing
8	Self-Employed	Digital
	Entrepreneurs	Multi-platform
	Employed	Promotional

The following three chapters chart some of the key steps involved in developing a new media property for a particular market. This is by no means the complete picture but rather a roadmap, which identifies common routes and important decision junctures to accompany your explorations in the new media industry.

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Motivation

An important factor in concept development is the goal of the creator. Is the purpose to entertain, educate, or allow the creator themselves to learn a new practice? Is it to create new work for commercialisation or indeed any combination of the above? The ultimate goal will influence the concept development and the process followed to realise the project.

This Guide assumes the creator is working toward generating income from the concept by commercialising it for a particular market.

Commercialisation does not imply anything about the style, content or audience of the concept, only that it will have a definable target audience and an associated business model through which to generate revenue for the creator and their collaborators, partners or business investors.

Irrespective of how these variables are ultimately resolved, whether you are creating a subscription-based mobile drama for women aged 25–35 or an educational multiplayer online role-playing game for children aged 8–12, your project will most likely involve completing some of the following steps with a team of collaborators: concept development; proof of concept; making the business case; developing a business plan and seeking development finance or investment.

Concept development

Section by Christy Dena

The more methods you explore, the more options you have.

(Bateman and Boon 2006, 5)

There are many schools of thought about the creation process and how it changes in the interactive context. Like all creative processes, what suits the creator matters. It helps, however, to broaden the field of possible and consider new ways of creating. The following section provides a glimpse into some of the ways one can approach game and cross-platform concept development.

Game concept development

In 2006, film production company Big Screen Entertainment Group announced they would develop a massively multiplayer role-playing game (MMORPG) tie-in for their forthcoming film *Babysitter Wanted*. The film was described as revolving ‘around a tormented and tortured young girl whose only concern is the safety of herself and the child she is babysitting’ (Sinclair 2006). The idea of the MMORPG was met with immediate derision from gamers, like ‘Platyphyllum’ at GameSpot:

... an MMO ROLE PLAYING GAME based on a movie, which centres on a BABYSITTER? How is that supposed to happen? You play as a monster and scare babysitters around or something?

(Sinclair 2006)

This misjudgement by Big Screen is a good example of how certain stories are not appropriate for games. Interactive projects need characters a gamer will want to play for hours. There also needs to be a wide scope for possible actions – which usually means a variety of locations and missions.

How do you begin though?

As a provocative guide, Chris Bateman and Richard Boon outline ‘seven varieties of design methods’ (Bateman and Boon 2006), which are briefly described here as:

- **First principles:** in this approach you start with what you want to do, then determine the nature of game world abstraction, design and lastly implementation.

- **Clone and tweak:** start with an existing game and modify it to suit your own needs.
- **Meta-rules:** start with rules or principles and design from there.
- **Expressing Technology:** start with a new technology and design specifically for its use.
- **The Frankenstein approach:** use existing materials for a new design.
- **Story-driven design:** the story drives the design process.
- **Iterative-design:** create a design, revise and repeat until complete.

On the story-driven approach, Flint Dille and John Zuur Platten (2007) recommend that game writers work in ways similar to screen writers: start with a hook; write the story premise (2–4 pages); list the characters (player-character, friends, allies, main boss the player has to overcome, level bosses and their minions); describe the locations and (if applicable) worlds; and consider any franchise constraints (if applicable). For a playcentric approach to creating games, with lots of concept development exercises and case studies, see the second edition of Tracy Fullerton's *Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games* (Elsevier 2008).

As with all formats, certain constraints need to be considered from the beginning:

- Is it meant to be replayable?
- Is it single-player or multi-player?
- Is it collaborative?
- What medium(s) will it be experienced on?
- Is it for those knowledgeable of a certain technology, art form or genre?
- Will it be for hardcore and/or casual players/audiences?
- Will it be experienced for short, medium or long sessions?
- Is it self-contained or episodic?
- What age-group(s) is it targeted at?
- Will it appeal to males and/or females?
- Will audiences be local or international?
- Is the game mono or multilingual?
- Will it be multicultural?
- What are the budget constraints?
- If commissioned, what will be the client brief constraints?

These factors apply to all forms of new writing, but it is also worth exploring some approaches peculiar to the emerging area of cross-platform writing.

Cross-platform concept development

In cross-platform writing projects, one needs to be acutely aware of the affordances of media, such as the Internet enabling real-time asynchronous communication between people all over the world. Appropriateness for certain parts of the story experience can then be applied. Backstory, for instance, would perhaps be best suited to a fixed medium such as a book or film. Blogs would be good for a single character, whereas a multiplayer game needs an ensemble of characters. Target audiences are very different in cross-platform projects, because each component of the project (each medium) can appeal to different audiences. This is both a blessing and a challenge. The first [Craft](#) chapter of this Guide discusses some helpful writing techniques to address this issue. But given the range of mediums involved in a cross-platform project, a question often posed by cross-platform writers is whether they should start thinking about the mediums or the story?

Story first, then characters, then choose the medium

Canadian cross-media creator Evan Jones (2007) says he doesn't start with the media in mind, but with the story. He then selects media according to what the characters would use. And so, just as an author writes dialogue according to the phrasing a character would use, a cross-platform writer thinks about the media a character would use. A character, for instance, may be suited to communicating using a blog (Web log, Internet diary), photographs, sketches, email or a book.

End experience first, then story

Interactive applications engineer Jonathan Marshall (2006) recommends beginning with the end point in mind. Specifically, Marshall suggests starting with the entry points and user journey, then considering the audience segments, and then the time, location and devices the audience will use to experience the fiction. A creator needs to think about where they want a person to experience the project and design accordingly: will they be alone at home in their study, with friends in a lounge room, or with strangers in a park? After the audience, end devices and experiential environments are well conceived, the story can then be developed.

Circulation patterns first

As you may have noticed, many creators of cross-platform projects think in spatial and experiential terms. One can therefore see a correlation with theme park design. Walt Disney was the first (in fun park design at least) to introduce the notion of the 'guest experience'. Rather than design according to economics or even what each ride developer wants, Walt

designed for the guest experience, revolutionising theme park design. Bob Rogers notes that this meant Walt planned the circulation patterns first:

That's the place where the people walk. They planned that as a first priority. Up to that point, designers usually focused on the positive space. That's the thing being built; rather than the negative space, the place where people will be. And he planned every attraction from the perspective of the guest rather than the operator or the manager. Walt focused on the people. [...] Walt's original revolution focused instead on the guests' experience ... putting the guests' priorities first: cleanliness, service, adventure, music, magic, fun, happy feet.

(Rogers, no date)

In the cross-platform writing context, this means thinking early on about what people will be doing *between* each medium. For example, how long it will take to move from one media to the next (are you asking a reader to put their book down to go to their computer, or to the cinema) and what obstacles are they facing (sign-ups, payments, learning new media)?

These are just a small selection of possible ways to approach concept development. A writer can work with a team, or alone, and develop a concept using any combination of these. Along with media, genre and audience constraints are business model considerations. The business model is more likely to be unobtrusive if integrated at the concept stage.

Proof of concept

Developing a proof of concept is generally required in any new media project being developed for a particular market. A proof of concept can take many forms, but the outcome should always be the same; a set of materials that enable the creator to clearly explain their idea to a range of external parties, such as distributors, online broadcasters, publishers and other third party investors.

When you don't need a proof of concept

If a creator has sufficient credits, experience and industry clout, they may be successful in pitching a concept with little development work. For example, if the concept is to extend a new or existing traditional media property for primarily marketing and/or distribution purposes, such as extending a book using a blog or social networking site to increase the audience, a creator may well get this idea off the ground without too much effort.

In this case the creator can immediately begin writing their manuscript, doing a basic scope of the content for the new media extensions and focus their 'business' attentions on signing the agent most likely to secure the best publishing deal. The same applies to screenwriters trying to secure a broadcast deal. Knowledge of which publishing houses and broadcasters are actively extending traditional media for marketing and/or distribution purposes will be important for such writers. Of course writers in this scenario may still wish to apply for traditional media grants to help fund this phase as it's still primarily about creating a traditional media product.

When you do need a proof of concept

In the new media industry the norm is to first develop a proof of concept and possibly a prototype to prove its creative and commercial viability. This is especially true for concepts with multiple delivery platforms, partners and complex business models. However, a proof of concept is not restricted to new media or software. It's common in engineering and mathematics and even used in filmmaking. Filmmakers working on concepts based on books, or films with complex technical challenges, will often develop a short as a proof of concept to secure the rights to a book or firm up investment. A proof of concept can involve developing product scoping documentation, an electronic proof of concept (EPOC), a paper prototype and in some cases a working prototype. Another key element of the proof of concept stage is the pitch. Be it a brief project overview, a more detailed set of pitching documents or a polished presentation, developing a strong pitch is another way of proving your concept. Which elements you develop depend

on the concept and how best to illustrate it, the potential opportunities to pitch or present the concept and the relevant market and what that market demands as a proof of concept.

Project scope document

The project scope defines the concept and range of the proposed project as well as what will not be included in the product. Clarifying the scope and limitations helps to establish realistic expectations of the many stakeholders, such as users or customers, funding agencies, investors and partners. It also provides a reference frame against which proposed changes can be evaluated.

The scope document will often describe what will be included in the initial version or release of the product and what will be included in subsequent versions. It will usually describe benefits the product is intended to bring to the various customer communities, and the product features and quality characteristics that will enable it to provide those benefits. Avoid the temptation to include every possible feature a potential customer category might conceivably want. Focus instead on those features and product characteristics that will provide the most value, at the most acceptable development cost, to the broadest community. If a staged evolution of the product is envisioned, indicate which major features will be deferred to later releases.

Electronic Proof of Concept (EPOC) and prototypes

Both an EPOC and a prototype can be used to demonstrate the creative, technical and innovative elements of a product. Creating an EPOC is also an effective way to delve more deeply into the user experience and to understand the unique aspects of what your product or service has to offer. An EPOC can range from a simple flash animation to display the design aesthetic and key touchstones across the different media (the game website, the social networking site, and video) to a website mock-up that appears to work as you click through, although it's actually just a series of images.

Prototypes are usually created for one of the following three reasons:

- Pitching – as part of your proof of concept materials which you would use in pitching for further investment
- Iterative design – as part of a design process that involves doing the initial design, building a prototype, reviewing the design, testing the interaction experience, revisiting the design and so on.

- Testing – to allow you test it with a user group. This will help identify design flaws and functionality problems and may even unearth new uses and functions you hadn't thought of.

While not all projects require the development of a prototype, doing so can improve the quality of requirements and specifications provided to developers further down the track. If you develop a prototype and test it with users, even if it is a paper prototype, potential design flaws can be eliminated much sooner and may prevent misunderstandings between team members, especially the designer and developer.

Working prototypes are more complex and in functionality terms may not be too far from the end product. The point of a working prototype is to have a playable version that demonstrates and tests the key technical aspects and usability of the product. For a website you might develop a simple wire frame (like a wire sketch of the site), which does not contain the content (words, images, video, etc.) but includes key functionality.

Paper prototyping

I cannot emphasize enough how important the inclusive quality of paper can be. Though some people shy away from paper prototypes because they feel they will not be taken seriously, I argue that many people are intimidated by a formal, highly technical design process and that the less 'professional' nature of paper prototyping is a great way to lighten the mood and engage a more diverse group.

Shawn Medero, University of Pennsylvania, 2007

Paper prototyping is a cheap, easy and fun way to design a testable 'walk through' of the product without spending hours on complex electronic designs. Being low-tech also means the designer can enlist the help of even the least tech-literate members of the team, which is vital in making sure you are designing a usable product. Paper prototyping doesn't work for all types of new media projects, but it can certainly be useful for most. With your paper prototype created you can test your product on team members but also on prospective users.

Rapid prototyping

Rapid prototyping is an approach gaining popularity amongst software and new media design and programming teams. It essentially reverses the prototyping process by asking the designer to interpret ideas for the product goals and user experience, and design a visual mock-up of the interfaces with a focus on the core value of the product. The designs are then passed on to the developer or programmer to realise in a working

prototype. These initial designs can also be integrated into a document to support a pitch for investment as discussed later in the [Pitch](#) section, in the following chapter DIY 3.

Although this approach doesn't mean that technical scope documents are not developed, it does mean that the developer can rapidly respond to the visual design, rather than only a lengthy set of technical scope documents. Rapid prototyping is often favoured for its ability to enhance communication between designers and developers (programmers) early on. It can show investors how the product will work and feedback from initial user testing can be utilised to make necessary changes to the prototype.

Prototyping in games development

The games development cycle is mature and defined with clear phases: pre-production, prototype, production and post-production. Pre-production is largely concerned with concept design, writing and production planning. Prototyping happens as part of pre-production. Generally, once initial planning has been completed, the team begins working on a prototype, often following a rapid prototyping methodology. Most prototypes are rudimentary, require minimum assets (artwork) and can be put together very quickly. Prototyping often occurs in tandem with the initial design phase to quickly try out new mechanics and ideas to see if they'll work in relation to the game as a whole.

Prototyping for mobile

If developing services for mobile, the best way to prototype is *not* on the mobile phone. If the services are to be provided through a mobile Internet service (WAP or mobile web), then it is a lot easier to test as a web service on a PC. Shrink the window down to the size of the mobile screen and check that the interaction works, that you can see what you are reading and that, most importantly, the users can interact with the service in the way you expect. This last point means that you may need to prototype different versions of the service for different handsets. The iPhone, while it has a great screen, uses a very large pointing device (the finger) to navigate, whereas others use a joystick to move up or down line by line.

If your mobile service is delivered in the form of a series of SMS messages, paper prototyping offers the best solution. If various paths can be trod, draw up a flowchart; if a single story is being told in parts, write this line by line on a piece of paper (fold the paper so only the current line is visible). As with any other story format, SMS stories, although short, still need to be good stories, so make sure to test them on an audience.

Once you get to the point of developing the final product, you are likely to be working with a technical partner who should be in a position to provide you with an early 'pilot' of the service based on your prototypes. If your story uses features related specifically to the nature of the mobile (such as GPS positioning), mock this up using an example location so you can test that the results are what you would expect (see what happens when there is no GPS signal, such as in a tunnel or between high buildings).

Prototyping for cross-platform

Many cross-platform projects are experienced in real-time and are reactive, preventing them from being revealed beforehand. For that reason most cross-platform prototypes would be done on paper as part of a proof of concept for pitching, or certain elements such as websites would be prototyped for iterative design and limited user testing.

Testing your idea works

As you develop your proof of concept in whatever form that takes, it's also wise to test that your idea works. This may sound obvious, but it can be overlooked until too far into the process. The proof of concept stage is the right time to catch design flaws and change direction. Ensure your team are all involved in the process so what is being designed is reviewed from all perspectives. Also try to test your prototypes on relevant user groups, and develop relationships with other industry experts to bounce ideas off and ensure that you are on the right track. This is especially important if you and your team are all new to this space. Industry experts can provide an external quality check and help identify any fatal flaws in your product design and development strategy.

Funding the proof of concept stage

A number of state and federal government arts and screen agencies offer grants or finance towards the development of EPOCs and prototypes. At this stage of development you may also wish to pitch the project to intended market partners. If they are sufficiently interested in the product they may contribute funds towards the proof of concept stage from their development budgets. A producer with solid experience in negotiating with commercial entities is invaluable at this stage. Some funding options are listed at [<http://delicious.com/Writersguide/funding>] and funding is covered in more detail in [DIY part two](#).

Collaboration

The really successful sessions were when everyone took their hat off and contributed different ideas from different perspectives.

Simon Hopkinson, 2006

As is clear from the previous section on developing a proof of concept, new media projects involve people with many skill sets: creative, technical and business. As mentioned in the Craft section, adopting the principle of 'early and equal' when working in collaboration, ultimately enhances the creative and business process and output. Early collaboration with specialists from other fields such as interactive designers and producers and people with a good understanding of your market will almost always produce a more rounded concept. It will also make best use of the particular qualities of the chosen format, media and devices and best tailor them to your desired audience. This is especially important if it is your first foray into writing for interactivity, as their knowledge will unlock new territories in which to establish your story world.

Team tactics

Projects are almost always realised by a team, or a number of teams. The two most common collaboration options are to work with an existing team, such as an interactive production company or games developer, or to assemble a team of independent collaborators. The former brings with it the stability, experience and infrastructure of an existing company. If your ultimate goal is to commercialise your content, a company with runs on the board and new media contacts may smooth your route to market. The trade-off might be sacrificing more authorship and ownership than anticipated and there may be more people with a claim to any profit generated. The latter may grant a greater level of creative independence, authorship and ownership, but will most likely be offset by a longer development time and more unknowns en route.

Motivation first, then model

When deciding whether to build a new team or work with an existing company, it's imperative that you understand commercial as well as creative motivations and that you factor in the three key drivers of time, quality and cost. Ask yourself the following questions early on to help you make the right decisions on who to collaborate with and how best to turn your concept into an income-generating product or business:

- Why are you trying to commercialise this particular concept?

- Are you planning to sell your IP or develop and market a new concept?
- Are you aiming to increase income from existing channels or generate a new income stream?
- Does your project need to be realised within a certain timeframe?
- Would setting up a new team and/or business involve a steep learning curve? Is this what you want and do you have the time?
- What standard of quality are you striving for and who do you need around you to achieve it?
- Do you have a budget (most likely none at all to begin with) or if not, do you have a track record in attracting funding or investment in the past?
- What are your expectations of a financial return for your own investment?

If you decide you would prefer to work with an existing team, identify companies that are producing products similar to yours, or have a strong knowledge of your target market and approach them to work with you. If you resolve to build a new team your next step is to figure out who you need and how to find them.

The production team

Much like in the film and theatre industries, many people in new media are freelancers who form teams around a specific project or production. These teams usually include some or all of the following members:

- **Writer or Director:** the person with the key creative input into the project such as a the writer, animator, graphic novelist or film/theatre director
- **Producer:** can be both a 'signing cheques' producer and a creative producer who might be a co-writer or bring other creative skills to the project and also understands your target audience or market
- **Interactive/Technical Producer:** the person who produces the interactive components and who will have technical expertise
- **Interactive Designer:** a designer with expertise in designing for interactive, dynamic, broadcast media (Web, mobile, interactive TV)
- **Developer/Programmer:** the person who codes the content and may build the framework for hosting or serving the content (e.g. website backend or games engine)
- **Marketing and communications specialist:** a person with experience in marketing on different platforms, viral marketing, creating online buzz for projects

- **Community Manager:** often required by online projects that grow communities, such as multi-player games and social networking sites
- **Business Manager/Developer:** a person with skills in market analysis, business development and management
- **Legal and financial experts:** as with any traditional media project, you will also need to enlist specialist advice at certain times.

The entrepreneurial team

If you already know that you wish to start a new business, , which is more likely if the project has significant budget and time requirements, you should give some thought to building the entrepreneurial capacity of your team. While it is possible to be a lone entrepreneur, the most successful business ventures, particularly in the new media, are built around teams (think Google and Yahoo). This team could simply be you and another member of the production team who form a company to manage this and other projects. But if you expect to pitch for serious investment, then work hard on building the best entrepreneurial team possible. Quality teams are more attractive to investors than a single person. The composition of the team will largely depend on your personal and business strengths and weaknesses, industry contacts, credits and networks. So begin by reflecting on what you can and cannot bring to the team proposition and build from there.

Where will I find my team?

Do your research and start networking! Approach creative and business people involved in other successful new media projects. Go to seminars and meet people. Lots of teams find each other this way. Make the most of the fact that it's still a small industry and that word of mouth and personal recommendations go a long way. Look up the case study subjects in this Guide and ask them to recommend team members.

It is advisable to have someone with solid producing experience on your team. Many film and TV producers are keen to work on new media projects. You can find producers through industry organisations and their annual conferences and networking events, referred to as 'speed-dating' in the media industry.

Contact schools and universities running courses in digital media and ask if you can put the word out through their courses or if they can recommend any bright sparks. Contact local arts organisations – they often have some form of job listing services. Some industry associations will post job notices to their members, although you may need to become a member first.

If you're in a position to pay your team members from the outset, use job posting and recruitment channels and the international outsourcing sites that are a phenomenon in Web and media communities.

Team development

This may be covering old ground, but it is valuable to revisit team development concepts before you embark on any collaboration. Apply the 'early and equal' principle again to build and sustain a strong team with a shared vision. Examine early and equally each member's motivations for being part of the team and revisit them frequently. In the early stages of many projects, team members will be working on a deferred payment, or in-kind basis. It is vital to agree up front what is expected of team members, for how long, for what reward and how their contributions will be recognised. Don't be too product focused and don't wait too long before addressing questions of IP ownership raised by working as a team.

Project management

As with team development it's also worth taking time to brush up on project management principles. While these points may be obvious to many, revisit them anyway to ensure your project is set up for success. The complexity of most new media projects means a project manager or team member must be appointed to take responsibility for managing the project. Teams are often dispersed and may even be in different countries. As the initiator of a project, don't fall into the trap of assuming you are the best person to manage it; this is not necessarily the case. Establish clear communication guidelines, how often you will communicate (weekly updates, monthly meetings, etc.) and using what channels (Skype, phone, email). Remember people with different backgrounds and skill sets may prefer different communication methods. Don't make assumptions, agree your methodology as a team and ensure the decision-making process is understood. Always keep the end goal in mind and measure progress frequently against the three project management pillars of time, quality and cost. Identify, understand and manage risks. Understand the motivations of investors, financiers and partners and manage their expectations accordingly.

Legal considerations

As you build a team to develop your proof of concept and start discussing it with other stakeholders, remember that what you are discussing is your Intellectual Property (IP). Be mindful from the outset of legal considerations that apply to your project, which can generally be protected, published, monetised and shared within some IP and copyright framework.

The Australian Copyright Council (<http://www.copyright.org.au/>) and IP Australia (www.ipaustralia.gov.au) are the best starting points for those new to the concept of IP and copyright. If creating new IP it is recommended you seek legal advice as early as possible. As well as protecting ownership of ideas, you will need a disclosure strategy. New media projects, be they games or interactive dramas, usually succeed or fail on their ability to capture the attention of an audience and take them on a compelling narrative journey. Team members and partners may be required to sign non-disclosure agreements binding them to not reveal details of the project in order to maintain its marketability.

The Australian Institute for Commercialisation (<http://www.ausicom.com>) recommends the following IP checklist:

- Make sure you own the IP.
- Is it the idea new?
- Will you infringe?
- Assess the commercial worth of your IP.
- Get the right IP for the technology and business strategy.
- Make sure you develop a strategy before you disclose your IP.

Your IP may be your most important asset. It is tradeable and can be protected, which is as important to commercial success as business, marketing and financial plans. Be sure to secure your IP protection before going to market. For more information on intellectual property, copyright and some other 'creative' options, refer to the [Copyright](#) chapter.

One of the barriers to creative and commercial innovation is the lack of clear, open-source material that encourages creative businesses to converge. Tools like these are a pre-requisite for effective collaboration and will enhance independent producers' development of cross-platform content ideas.

Jon Kingsbury, Director of the Creative Economy Programme, NESTA, UK, 2008

As the industry matures it will become easier to work out agreements with partners and production teams, but for the moment a lot of time may be spent working through issues of copyright and IP. Nesta in the UK has just published a range of tools designed to make it easy for TV and film producers to work with digital producers on convergent or 'cross-platform' projects. The tools include legal templates and can be found at [\[http://www.pact.co.uk/detail.asp?id=6412\]](http://www.pact.co.uk/detail.asp?id=6412).

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Study and professional development options

Further material

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Where to get help

Consult the Professional Development section of the Craft chapter for references to courses, mentorship and industry development programs aimed at building your concept development skills. Resources associated with the rest of this chapter can be found by following the links below. Some key organisations and initiatives are also listed.

[<http://delicious.com/Writersguide/teams>]

[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/project_management]

[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Prototype+Proof_of_Concept]

Special initiatives

A range of special initiatives has been funded in recent years to help artists and companies develop skills and showcase work. Although generally not intended for commercialisation these projects offer insights into the development process and some interesting case studies. The credits on these projects often read as a 'who's who' of emerging writers and producers in new media and can be a good way to find collaborators.

These initiatives are often a collaborative effort between agencies like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) or a commercial TV network and federal or state screen agencies.

iArts: ScreenWest, DCA and ABC TV launched *iArts* in 2008 to help artists and companies create cross-platform interactive projects to be hosted by ABC TV across its digital platforms

[<http://www.screenwest.com.au/go/screenwest-funding-program/d1-5-iarts-digital-interactive-arts-initiative>].

The Good Game Game: a cross between a training initiative and an experiment in crowd sourcing from ABC and Screen Australia
[\[http://www.abc.net.au/tv/goodgame/game/\]](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/goodgame/game/).

Great Moments in History: from Screen Australia and Telstra Corporation
[\[http://www.afc.gov.au/funding/fd/greatmoments/default.aspx\]](http://www.afc.gov.au/funding/fd/greatmoments/default.aspx).

Game On: an initiative of SAFC, Film Victoria and the ABC
[\[http://www.safilm.com.au/Content.aspx?p=21\]](http://www.safilm.com.au/Content.aspx?p=21)

Strange Attractors: showcases digital animation, including interactive animation
[\[http://www.abc.net.au/arts/strange/\]](http://www.abc.net.au/arts/strange/).

Legal considerations resources

The Australian Copyright Council [\[http://www.copyright.org.au/\]](http://www.copyright.org.au/) is an independent non-profit organisation that provides information, advice and training about copyright in Australia. They also produce publications, do research, and make submissions on copyright policy issues.

IP Australia is the Australian Government agency responsible for administering patents, trademarks, designs and plant breeder's rights. Their website [\[http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au\]](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au) is a great place to begin exploring legal considerations for your project. Resources on this site range from information on *The Copyright Act*, which governs copyright legislation in Australia, to practical guides on best practice in protecting your intellectual property such as *IP Basics in 10 Easy Steps* [\[http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/factsheets/basics_steps.shtml\]](http://www.ipaustralia.gov.au/factsheets/basics_steps.shtml).

The Arts Law Centre of Australia is the national community legal centre for the arts. Arts Law gives preliminary advice and information to artists and art organisations on a wide range of arts-related legal and business matters including contracts, copyright, business names and structures, defamation, insurance and employment. They offer initial consultations by phone free of charge and a range of free sample contracts online at [\[http://www.artslaw.com.au/default.asp\]](http://www.artslaw.com.au/default.asp).

Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) is an Australian copyright management company whose role is to provide a bridge between creators and users of copyright material. CAL represents authors, journalists, visual artists, surveyors, photographers and newspaper, magazine and book publishers as their non-exclusive agent to license the copying of their works to the general community [\[http://www.copyright.com.au/\]](http://www.copyright.com.au/). CAL works closely with

the Literature Board of the Australia Council (who published this Guide) on a range of digital publishing initiatives, including co-sponsoring Publishing the Story of the Future

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future/events/digital_publishing_seminar\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future/events/digital_publishing_seminar) and a national digital publishing research project

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/news_items/digital_publishing_research_-_call_for_industry_feedback\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/news_items/digital_publishing_research_-_call_for_industry_feedback).

DIY Part 2 – The business case and business models

By Jennifer Wilson

Chapter

9

Career

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Employed

Writing

Multi-platform

Digital

Promotional

The aim of this chapter is to help you make the business case for your project and identify which business models best suit the concept and your business.

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Making the business case

Section by Therese Fingleton

This is the task of defining why it's worth doing your project. Be it yourself, a production partner, publisher or broadcaster, every stakeholder in your project will need to be convinced that there is a sound business justification for developing this particular concept into a product or experience for a particular market. Making the business case involves in-depth research on the target market, considering how you will reach them and with what business model. The New Media Industry and Marketing and distribution chapters will also be useful for this phase.

What is your target market?

Thanks to the proliferation of studies and media polls published on the Internet, it is possible to carry out at least rudimentary market research to demonstrate your knowledge of your target market.

As well as research companies like Nielsen [<http://www.nielsen-online.com/>] and McKinsey [<http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com/>], relevant industry associations are a great place to start. For interactive media see Australian Interactive Media Industry Association [<http://www.aimia.com.au/>]; games, Games Development Association of Australia [<http://www.gdaa.com.au/>]; mobile, AIMIA Mobile Industry Group [<http://www.aimia.com.au/cms?page=1093>]; and publishing see Australian Publishing Association [<http://www.publishers.asn.au>] and especially the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia [<http://www.ieaa.com.au/>].

For international markets look for equivalent organisations overseas, read technology blogs and magazines and keep up to date with developments in the area you are operating in (online, mobile, console games, etc.). Markets outlined in the previous chapter are variously described in geographic, demographic and interest terms, so you should be able to define your market using these kinds of headings.

How do you reach it?

Follow the people you want as your followers. When developing an online educational video game for teenage girls, for example, it is essential to understand their media usage patterns including how they use the Internet, other media (magazines, TV, film) that interest them and competing products. A product for teenage girls must reach them where they are, on

their mobiles, on MySpace or Facebook, and increasingly not in front of the TV.

Reaching an audience means not advertising at them but connecting with them. If you think about your marketing and distribution strategy earlier rather than later you can use the various platforms available to reach your target market where they are and engage them meaningfully. The *KateModern* property mentioned in the Introduction is a perfect illustration of how this works. This drama is now broadcast on the social networking site Bebo, where its target audience hangs out.

What is your business model?

At a seminar just this week, someone suggested that business models in this new space 'will come and go like waves'. I think this summed it up well. There are new models and revenue and investment options evolving all the time. You just need to be aware of what's available and what suits your project and your objectives.

Jim Shomos, 2008

This is the part of the equation most in flux in the new media industry and currently most hotly debated. Everyone will want to know 'What's your business model?'. Factors include audience, medium, frequency of access, and duration of access. Bear in mind that it may be possible to fund the service in the beginning from investment (see further on in this section) and then finetune the business models as the audience and the service interact. For example, it is important not to spring sudden price increases (or even apply a price to a service that was previously free) without warning. Instead, it is preferable for services to have an idea of what their business models might be from the outset – even if they are to be applied at a later time.

Business models

If we called this Guide ‘Don’t panic!’ – it would reference the fear and uncertainty of many writers and creative people when faced with the idea of making money. While the quality of your craft is critical – so is feeding yourself, and if you are able to maintain your creative integrity while still making enough money to live, then it never even feels like a job. Whether you are employed as a writer, looking for someone to back you, or planning to take your beautiful baby to market yourself – it is always useful to have an idea of where the money might come from. There is nothing scary about business models. This section should help you understand where the money can come from and allow you to start thinking about what models might be right for you.

Business models: revenue sustainability

Simply put, the business model for a product, content or service is the manner in which the service will earn its keep. It is the answer to the questions ‘Who pays for what, to whom, why and how?’ While some digital products (content and services) are offered with no clear revenue return, income or funding model, if a product is to be viable, continue to be offered and potentially grow, it normally needs to generate revenue to pay for its costs. While there are exceptions to this, it is important that the business models for a product, content or service are understood and set from the beginning – even if sustainability itself is some way off.

Business models are the methods and form by which revenue will be earned.

The money usually comes from one of three sources: someone pays you to create something (fee for service); the users pay (transaction or subscription); or someone pays you for access to the users (advertising, sponsorship, affiliate marketing, etc.). The four most common business models are:

- **Transaction:** we pay something as a one-off cost. We buy a book or a pair of shoes or a flight; online we buy a music track, access to a piece of content (article, story) or some furniture for our online avatar.
- **Subscription:** we pay a regular, recurring fee for a service to be provided such as subscription TV, a phone service or a newspaper. Note that we might also pay a usage fee, which is a really a transaction fee for what we use, such as the number of calls we have made. Digital subscription fees provide access to content and services over the period of the subscription and may allow unlimited

access or an additional 'usage' fee when the included amount is exceeded.

- **Advertising:** we pay for something by giving it our time and attention. In printed, broadcast and televised media, it is not usually possible to determine if time and attention are being given by the user (as has been assumed by the advertiser); however in the digital environment this is possible through the user's response. Advertising is increasingly common in all forms of digital content.
- **Sponsorship:** really a form of advertising, akin to 'subscription' advertising. An advertiser pays a fixed sum of money to be promoted (and thus achieve time and attention from the user) for a fixed period of time or the life of a product. We see sponsorship in sports (Qantas Wallabies, Telstra Stadium) and television programs (brought to you by ...) and also in the digital space.

In addition, there are other variants of these business models (affiliate, freemium, product placement) worth considering that will be looked at in more detail later.

It is important to remember that business models can change over time, that there may be more than one business model in play at any one time (in fact this is a strength) and that business models might not work from the very beginning, but may require time before they generate reasonable returns.

The rare exceptions

There are really only three occasions where products are launched with no immediate business model:

- the service/product is a promotion for another service/product, and the sustainable business model relates to the other. Sometimes this might be giving away access to content, providing (digital) content free to encourage subsequent (hard) purchase (for example, Penguin giving away the first chapter of books) and is sometimes referred to as a 'loss leader'. In most cases, the item supplied is promotional in nature
- the service is designed to generate audience and not, at this stage at least, focus on revenue. There are myriad examples of digital products and services where the creators made money when they sold (all or part of) their product – rather than through running it. These include YouTube, MySpace and Facebook to name but a few. In fact there is a strong view that venture capitalists are starting to look at different numbers – like numbers of viewers and

users, rather than the strict dollar return. (Wired.com 2007: <http://www.wired.com/techbiz/startups/news/2007/12/monetize>). As Philip Bensaid, co-founder of Crusher said, 'Creating a desirable product is disconnected from trying to monetize it'

- in sites provided 'for the greater good' where revenue is not the focus. While many young entrepreneurs don't want to think about the money side, but rather the altruistic good of what they are doing, sustainability is important for digital products to remain available and open. There are digital content services supported by donation, government funding or corporate funding – but in many ways, these grants are a form of business model.

Selecting the right business model

The right business model is the model which works for your project. Not every model fits every type of content, game or service, but at some point, someone has to pay to keep the service going – this will either be your audience or people who want to get access to your audience. In the following sections, we'll firstly look at ways in which money is made, and then factors that impact on which business model is best for your project.

Generating Revenue – models and methods

Transaction

The most straightforward and simple of the business models is where consumers hand over money in return for something. The 'something' they buy can either be tangible (it exists) or intangible (access). Tangible does not always mean a hard product – the purchase of a music track for example is still a digital purchase (and only bits and bytes are bought) – but it is tangible in that it can be played. Transaction models work well for sales of digital things – mobile ringtones, mobile wallpapers, e-books, digital music, buying a skill for your character in a game, or even buying the game itself. They also works well for selling access to things, such as unlocking a site, opening up a new level in a game, buying an online magazine (webzine) or an online article.

Using a transaction to purchase a hard product has additional considerations such as warehousing, storage, delivery and returns. Amazon's success is due in part to its solid warehousing and distribution network. The delivery of digital goods is considerably easier than the delivery of hard goods. Before adopting 'transaction' as your business model, consider two key things:

- How will customers pay and how will this payment be handled – listed on a credit card receipt, refunded, etc.? (Read the section below on [Consumer Generated Revenue](#) for further information.)
- If hard products are being sold, issues of stock, supply, distribution and delivery should be taken into account and these have an impact on viability of the business.

Subscription

Subscription is where a customer enters into an agreement to make regular periodic payments in order to receive some form of benefit (product, access, etc.). Subscription is common as a business model in mobile – where content subscriptions and mobile TV subscriptions are offered to consumers. The subscription normally allows access to the purchased content – either unfettered over the time period of the subscription or limited to a maximum number of accesses over the relevant period. Unfettered access may be a monthly subscription to an online magazine, where the consumer may access the magazine and the changing content as often as they wish for no additional cost. Limited access may be for mobile TV which offers viewing of the mobile TV channels over the month, but with a cap on usage such as 15 minutes per session and a maximum of 200 minutes per month [<http://my.bigpond.com/mobile/foxtel.jsp?id=61&sec=1>].

Subscription is a common model in the mobile content space, notably where content is provided on-deck or in control of the carrier (see below under Mobile: On-deck or Off-deck). Carriers are then in a position to levy charges, including small charges, to the consumers through their telephone bill. Online subscription, while of key interest and apparently growing for niche social networks, remains a less common business model due to the complexity of payment methods. Where a dedicated community wants access limited to those who are truly interested in participating, subscription is seen as a way of deterring those who might join the site to take advantage of the community. Subscription is also seen as helping keep sites independent. Subscription can be mixed with transaction where a low subscription allows for access to standard services, and a single higher charge is levied for specific things such as viewing videos.

Advertising

Advertising is the most common form of monetisation, where the consumer is not expected to pay in money, but in attention and, potentially, brand loyalty. Where TV advertising is hard to quantify or accurately measure, Online it is possible to determine the amount of time, attention and, more importantly, *interest* shown by consumers based on their response –

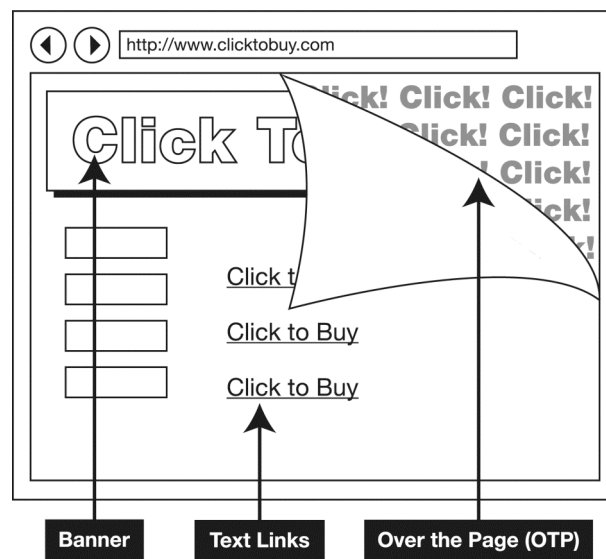
increasingly advertisers are looking to pay based on this response, rather than simply on the 'viewing figures' for a website. This is referred to as 'performance-based advertising' in contrast to 'brand advertising', where the exposure of the brand on TV or the internet, is the aim (and revenue is accorded for exposure to the advertisement rather than the performance or response to the ad).

Advertising Form

In the digital space, advertising can take on one of many forms. An image below shows how some of these play out on a web page:

- **Banner:** A ribbon or larger image ad that can run across the top or bottom of a page, down the sides of a page, or even be positioned in the middle of a page. There are specific names for each of these forms (skyscrapers, islands, etc.) but they can be lumped together as 'banners'. Banners can usually be clicked on by a user who would then be redirected to another site for information (the 'call to action').
- **Text links:** A line of text that performs the same function as a banner, but is text, in the form of a hyperlink. Text links can be positioned on a site specifically, sometimes in boxes designed to attract attention such as 'Top 10 online TV downloads' or 'Top Cheap Travel sites', or they can be served by an outside agency. Google AdSense is where text links are provided by Google, based on key words associated with your site.
- **Pre/Post roll:** Video ads that can run before (pre-roll) a piece of video content or after (post-roll) a piece of video content. The content can be interactive (click for redirection) but is often just a 'brand' message – more like a TV commercial.
- **Overlays:** Banners, text links or a variant that can be placed over an image or video and which have a single message with a call to action. For example, at the start of a video an overlay might be shown in the bottom third of the window which prompts you to 'click here for cheaper home finance'.
- **OTP (Over the Page):** An intrusive form of advertising where the ad, usually a video of some sort, rolls out over the page from the side or top. They can usually be closed by clicking somewhere within the ad, but the close button might be hard to see.
- **Interruptive or hijacking:** The consumer is provided with an ad, and only an ad, rather than the content they selected. There is usually a button which allows them to 'go directly to[site]' but again, this might be hard to see.

Of these types of advertising, banners and text links which are relevant to the site are generally not perceived badly by consumers and, where the targeting is extremely good, can generate excellent response. Pre-run ads are tolerated and many providers allow them to be 'fast forwarded'. The other forms of advertising are widely viewed as intrusive, but, as a result, may be more effective in capturing attention. Below is an example of a website showing the main advertising formats:



Advertising models (types)

Revenue from advertising also follows a series of models. The most common models that may be applied to any form of advertising are: CPM (Cost Per thousand 'M'): 'M' is the Roman numeral for 1,000, and this model is considered 'brand' advertising of the Internet (and mobile phone). The advertiser pays based on the number of thousand times the ad is served – but there is no guarantee that the consumer gives time or attention to the ad. CPM rates are usually quoted around \$15–\$20, but may achieve as much as \$30 where the audience is likely to be motivated to a product such as flights on a travel site, or as little as \$1 (JP Morgan Jan 2008: https://mm.jpmorgan.com/stp/t/c.do?i=2082C248&u=a_p*d_170762.pdf*h_-3ohpnmv).

CPC (Cost per Click): This is a performance-based measure where the advertiser pays based on the number of people who interact with the ad by clicking on it. The rates paid for CPC vary from \$0.30 for generic searches that might or might not be purchased, such as 'watch' or 'camera', up to as much as \$50 where the response is to something specific and where the link would likely be clicked only if the person were truly interested – such as

'income protection insurance'. An important measure of the likely success of CPC versus CPM is the 'Click through Rate' (CTR), which is tracked by sites to determine how well a CPC is likely to do and how the audience to that site responds to click-through requests.

CPA (Cost per Acquisition): Taking it one step further from interacting with the ad by clicking on it, CPA is where the consumer actually makes a purchase or signs up to a service. Rates paid here are higher than just clicking on an ad, but CPA can be seen as an extension of this model.

RoS (Run of Site): This is like 'distressed space' advertising in newspapers, where ads are placed in whatever gaps remain unsold. The revenue is almost always paid as some form of performance-based payment (CPC or CPA) and rarely as CPM. The ads may be placed anywhere on a site.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is where a single company pays for the right to be associated with a site (or a page or function within a site) for a defined period of time. It is akin to a type of 'subscription' where a single fee is paid for a period of time. Sponsorship normally includes the right to advertise, sometimes exclusively, and to associate the brand with the site (and the community engaged with the site).

Sponsorship can involve no money changing hands, but some services being provided (hosting, development, etc.), or can be up in the millions. It depends on how large the community for the site is (mobile or online); how engaged they are and how key a demographic for the sponsor this group is. Where the numbers to a site are not significant enough to warrant advertising, sponsorship may provide an income from the same potential source (brands, companies or agencies) but without the need to justify the numbers. This makes sponsorship an attractive 'first model' for many new digital content services.

Product placement

Product placement is almost a form of sponsorship as a single payment is usually made for the right to 'appear' for either the run of a content item or a period of time. Product placement can be either overt or subtle. Consumers are aware of brand placement in films like *James Bond* where the vodka martini was Smirnoff, the watch an Omega, the computer a Sony and the mobile phone a Nokia (oh, and a Sony Ericsson for the girl). It is important that the community engaging with the content be in the target demographic for the brand. Commonly, product placement will also include the same

rights as sponsorship, such as category exclusive advertising (drinks, mobile phones, etc.) on the service.

Consumer-generated revenue?

Before looking at the business models themselves, it is important to consider whether the consumer is paying directly, or if another company is effectively paying for access to the consumer's interest generated in the digital product. Looking at this in reverse, it is significantly easier to collect money from a company where an agreement is in place with an existing arrangement where they pay on supply of an invoice, for services rendered.

Collecting money from consumers is a completely different ball game. How will money be collected from each individual consumer? Taking credit cards as the payment mechanism requires an arrangement with a financial agency (usually a bank), potentially an online secure server for the processing of the credit cards, and methods to refund as required. There are companies who provide online credit card processing services (payment gateways), but normally a merchant agreement is still required with a bank to allow the transactions to be deposited in the provider's account. Two companies of interest are eWay [<http://www.eway.com.au/>] and PayPal [<http://www.paypal.com.au/au>]. PayPal is particularly interesting as they process credit card payments on behalf of clients with no direct merchant agreement of their own, and also handle direct bank debit – allowing customers without credit cards to still make online purchases [https://www.paypal.com/au/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_merchant-outside]. PayMate [<http://www.paymate.com/>] is an Australian competitor to PayPal and offers similar services.

Most credit card or direct debit payments have a minimum charge followed by a percentage of the transaction value. For example, the merchant fee (whether a bank or a payments provider) might be 50c per transaction plus 3% of the revenue, or it might be a percentage only – usually with a monthly fee for access to the service (banks normally provide in this manner). Basically, the nature in which charges are applied does not support the idea of 'micro-billing' – or billing for small amounts. Sites where there is a low value per consumer transaction will normally sell a higher value 'pack' to the consumer and then deduct from this pre-paid pack as purchases are made.

Another form of consumer-generated revenue is premium rate services (1900 numbers) either voice or SMS. These are forms of 'merchant services' where the merchant is the carrier and the charges are levied on a phone bill rather than through a credit card. It is important to note that the merchant

fee levied by carriers for their part in the billing and collection of this revenue is dramatically higher than that from banks and credit card merchants. Revenue returned is between 70% of the amount paid by the consumer (where the price is high, for example \$10) and 30% of the amount on lower values such as \$0.55. In the case of premium rate SMS, charges are also levied for the actual SMS messages themselves, and normally a broker (gateway provider) needs to be used to provide access to all the mobile operators. A fee is charged for their services also.

Factors which impact on the model

Some business models rely on specific factors. For example, if you want to make money through usual online advertising, then you need to have a high volume of traffic and a clear understanding of what ads will appeal to your market. If you believe you will have a dedicated market and a strong view of the things they like and don't like – then sponsorship is more appropriate than just advertising. If you think you've got the latest zeitgeist, then the audience is likely to be willing to pay to play (or participate). Below is an overview of the main factors that will have an impact on selecting the right business model. These factors will also help define your audience and your offering, and you should have an idea of what the answer is for each question.

The three types of content services addressed are games as a stand-alone group; digital content, which is an extension of a non-digital product (cross-media extension); and other forms of digital content (which are paying their own way).

The digital medium

The two main delivery mediums considered will be Internet and mobile. There are specific business models in mobile which are different from those on the Internet, but most Internet models will also apply to mobile services.

The size of audience

Audience can be broken down into mass appeal – broad appeal to a large percentage either of a specific demographic or across the board – or niche appeal – more likely to appeal to a niche audience, possibly one specifically targeted (comic enthusiasts) or likely to be used only occasionally. This equates to the 'head' of the long tail (mass) or the tail (niche). There is definitely a 'shoulder' group also – where the niche is large or likely to generate cross over.

Demographic of audience

Demographic is the type of audience. A digital service which appeals to users between the ages of 14 and 34 is more likely to be picked up than one which targets 55+, simply because more young people are comfortable in the digital environment. Also, very young children might not have easy access to the Internet, or mobile phones, and where they do, this might be mediated by their parents. That said, don't discount the 'non-GenC' groups, as the percentage of older and younger people online is growing rapidly. If your content appeals, people will work out both how to find it and how to use it.

Number of engagements and duration of each

As mentioned, different numbers have a different level of importance to a service, and often determine its success. Specifically, the digital environment counts:

- each individual user who accesses your content once per counting period. When the individual person is counted, this is referred to as 'unique viewer' or UV, and when it is counted by the machine (browser) which accesses the content, this is referred to as 'unique browser' or UB. Think of this as how many *people* will access your content each period (usually a month)
- the number of pages that are accessed in total by all your users over this same period of time (usually a month). This is known as Page Views (PV). Based on these figures, the average number of pages looked at by each user is calculated by dividing the total number of pages (PV) by the number of unique users (UV) or PV/UV
- the number of times each user comes back to the site within the period. It may be that each user only views two pages, but they come back over ten times a month – this is a very important statistics as it looks at how engaging (or sticky) a service is, relative to the function of the site
- how long people spend accessing the information on the site. This is referred to as the 'dwell time' – and is a measure of how engaged (and leaning forward) people are with that site. Some sites are designed to have you in and out quickly (search, directories and guides) while others want to keep you there for a long time (news, video, games, etc.).

Mobile: On-deck or off-deck?

Content on mobile phone services is usually provided in one of two ways. It can be provided by the carrier through their own menus on the screen, which is known as 'on deck' or 'walled garden' content; or it can be

accessed outside of this closed environment either through a mobile URL (like a website address) or by sending a text message and getting back a link to the URL (mobile page). The more open services can usually be accessed from any carrier and are called 'off-deck' services.

If the service is provided on-deck, then a partnership is made with the mobile carrier to deliver it, usually with any consumer-generated revenue shared, or a fee paid by the carrier for access to the content. If the service is off-deck, then the billing is not usually done by the carrier and different models need to be considered.

Brand-compatible or independent

Some content services work as branded content without negatively impacting the quality of the consumer engagement (in fact in some cases, can add to it, such as in games). The test is usually whether it makes sense or adds to the experience if you include the brand, or whether it just looks like advertising. Other content services wish to distance themselves from brands and be seen as independent. If the content is intended to be edgy, quirky or independent – it is usually not brand-compatible.

Limited life or ongoing service

Some digital content is designed to be accessed over a specific period of time, or is of a specific length, which once consumed, ends the experience for that consumer. Some games have a limited life – you play until you win (e.g. first person shooter games), whereas others are ongoing (MMORGs in particular). Some content services are linked with a promotion for another product and expire once the other product has reached a certain stage – e.g. expanded narrative online stories, which are preludes to movies or season fillers for TV programs.

Getting your timing right – freemiums

It is important to recognise that many people will not pay, in any form, for a service, content or product, which they have no real understanding of. Currently, 'word of mouth' is regarded as one of the most important viral promotional tools to help a product succeed. This is also known as 'buzz' or just 'viral'. Building up enough 'buzz' to break through the 'noise' in the right demographic will lead to interest, which in turn leads to take-up of the service. This 'buzz' might be referrals from one person to another, recommendation to take up or trial the product, or just coverage in relevant and important blogs (or social network and media services).

One way to encourage interest in the content or product is to 'give it away' for a period of time, or give away elements as part of promoting the service.

This is often referred to as the ‘free then fee’ or ‘freemiums’ model. See the [Marketing and Distribution](#) chapter for further elaboration on this. Once the service reaches a specific point, either in time or in usage, it is important that the right business model is ready to come into play in terms of generating revenue. Methods for this will be as outlined in the next section, but from the very beginning the future manner of generating revenue to create sustainability must be known, and must be explained to the early, non-paying users. This might be in the form of ‘first two months free’, or ‘free for three months to the first 50 people’ or even ‘first five levels of the game free’. If the revenue model is sprung on users without their knowledge at some arbitrary time (usually when the developer has run out money), there can be a community backlash.

Upgrades and enhancements

Many services allow for the payment of a premium (one-off, subscription, etc.) to allow additional things to happen. In the case of some services, it may be paying to ‘rent’ some digital products that your characters may take advantage of; to buy some (digital) tools or services; to buy skills (such as magic); or even to buy the next chapter in a story.

Enhancing the content may be as simple as allowing the user access to the next chapter, or may be about getting video related to the product, or unlocking additional levels in games. The manner of charging for these services may be levied on the user, and this is commonly accepted, or funded through alternate methods, like product placement or advertising.

Some other terms

Affiliate marketing

Another way of looking at CPC or CPA models can be referred to as ‘Affiliate Marketing’ – where sites (often with complementary services) agree to work with each other to their mutual advantage. It may be in the form of banner exchange – where sites host a banner ad for an affiliate site with payment based on some performance-based element. This is very useful when the affiliate model can be used to offer enhanced services to their users, and receive revenue in return.

Infomediary services

Infomediary services refer to services that are intermediary (go-between) for sites, but can have a revenue impact. ‘Member get Member’ schemes for example can be ways of rewarding your existing members (usually with intangible or digital-only items) for increasing the user base to a site. This may be member referrals to other sites as well as the host site. Another

infomediary service is the sale of members' lists (databases) for marketing purposes. While this has some issues in Australia due to the Spam Act (2003), many agencies are interested in marketing directly to a site's user base in some form of direct contact (email) rather than just through advertising. In other countries, the actual member lists can be 'sold' to third parties.

Some specific mobile considerations

On-deck services

With on-deck services, supplied through the carrier created and promoted portal, the business model is usually determined in conjunction with the carrier. The carrier may wish to offer the service to consumers for free, and they would normally pay the content provider a fee for use of their content and/or service. They may charge a fee, either one-off, ad hoc or subscription, for the service and they would normally share this with the content provider; or the carrier might place advertising on the site – which would possibly (but rarely) be shared with the content provider, or more likely retained by the carrier with a fee paid to the content provider as in the first case.

Off-deck services

Between the carrier controlled and supported on-deck and the 'wide world' of the open (mobile) Internet, most carriers also offer a supported or 'friendly off-deck'. In this case, the service is still run as an off-deck service in terms of revenue, being not supported or promoted by the carrier; however the carrier might be willing to undertake some billing for the service. As carriers value their 'real estate', they might also levy a premium to the content provider for decent (high) placement on this quasi off-deck area. Sites in this limbo space are usually provided as links from the carrier's walled garden, but the data is charged to the consumer and the sites are clearly identified as not being provided by the carrier. In the case of off-deck services, revenue generation is still needed and the issues of the wider Internet come into play here.

Professional development

Further material

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_2_150_the_business_case_and_business_models/references_and_resources\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_2_150_the_business_case_and_business_models/references_and_resources)

Cromarty, C. 2008 'Business Proposals Workshop' MEGA South Australia

Dixon, R. 2008 'Business Planning' MEGA New South Wales

Kennelly, G. 2008 'Rapid evaluation financial planning' MEGA South Australia

Lindsay, N. 2008 'Business angels to business opportunities' MEGA South Australia

Maio Mackay, M & Daly, P. 2008 'Researching the Opportunity' MEGA South Australia

Maio Mackay, M & Daly, P. 2008 'Market Research' MEGA South Australia

Masini, J. 2008 'Business Proposals' MEGA Victoria

Masini, J. 2008 'Venture Capital' MEGA Victoria

Neely, M. 2008 'Business Models & Investor Pitches' MEGA South Australia

Porter, B. 2008 'Financial Planning' MEGA South Australia

Williamson, S. 2008 'Mobile Markets and Opportunities' MEGA New South Wales

Business models resources

Business models and open content:

[\[http://www.anu.edu/people/Roger.Clarke/EC/BMIOC-0607.html\]](http://www.anu.edu/people/Roger.Clarke/EC/BMIOC-0607.html) (note slide show available to go with the slide summary)

Podcast on business models and the problems with relying on some of the easier ones: [\[http://www.firstcrackpodcast.com/archive/first-crack-78-the-trouble-with-business-models/\]](http://www.firstcrackpodcast.com/archive/first-crack-78-the-trouble-with-business-models/)

Articles about what people thought the business models on the Web might be. All over 10 years old, but some sobering reading:

[\[http://www.cris.com/~raydaly/sponarti.html\]](http://www.cris.com/~raydaly/sponarti.html)

John Gilmore article from *Time* 1993: [\[http://www.chemie.fu-berlin.de/outerspace/internet-article.html\]](http://www.chemie.fu-berlin.de/outerspace/internet-article.html)

Interview with Sara Lloyd: [\[http://www.thebookseller.com/in-depth/feature/49429-will-2008-be-the-year-of-the-e-book.html\]](http://www.thebookseller.com/in-depth/feature/49429-will-2008-be-the-year-of-the-e-book.html)

Australia Council for the Arts

Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia Council of the Arts.

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide)

Industry insight interview (Infolution)

Interview with Mark Neely from Infolution, a specialist consultancy who helps groups, companies and individuals get over the ‘pain’ of working out how to make a living in the digital space.

What do you think the challenge is for writers in this digital age if they want to embrace the new technologies and engage with the ‘empowered consumer’?

There are a few challenges:

- **Context:** content that is released digitally, especially written content, is accessed in varied contexts. When you write in hard book form, you can be reasonably confident that the material will be consumed in a limited range of contexts. Digital content can be transmitted or shifted to multiple devices and is typically free of these context restraints. This makes it difficult to anticipate the reading environment, occasion and expectation(s)/mindset(s) of the audience.

- **Attention spans:** we know that it’s more difficult to read text presented on computer screens than in print (reading rates are between 25% and 50% slower). This poses a challenge for long-form writing. Added to this is the growing perception (see Nicholas Carr’s controversial piece ‘Is Google Making Us Stupid?’, in *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine, [\[http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google\]](http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200807/google), that our information seeking and reading habits are being altered thanks to our growing dependency on search engines). Some audiences are becoming accustomed to information ‘grazing’ and seeking out small ‘chunks’ of material and, as a result, losing their ability to maintain focus and follow an extended narrative in longer pieces.

- **Partial attention:** side by side with the attention span issue is the reality that large segments of audiences rarely confine their attention to a single task. The notion of consumers operating in a state of ‘continuous partial attention’ [\[http://continuouspartialattention.jot.com/\]](http://continuouspartialattention.jot.com/) was documented as far back as 1997 (imagine the typical adolescent environment – listening to music while scanning the TV, playing on their laptop, SMSing close friends and communicating with the ‘extended tribe’ via chat or IM). How do you carve out adequate attention in such an environment to allow your story to breathe?

- **Architecture:** with print-based writing although the narrative might make use of various literary devices to provide a non-linear progression (e.g. jumping back and forth in time, switching between characters or from 1st to 3rd person perspective, etc.), the actual consumption process remains linear. Linearity is a logical and convenient architecture for a physical product that doesn't hold true for digital content. History tells us that each new medium is initially constrained by the metaphors of preceding media. Radio, for example, was stage theatre in front of a microphone. TV similarly, was largely the radio of the day, performed in front of a camera. It wasn't until a second generation of content developers emerged in each medium that we saw any true innovation or that the flexibility and strengths of each new medium were embraced. There is a risk that newcomers to digital content, especially those who previously worked in a different medium, will fail to embrace the flexibility and strengths of digital publishing, including the ability to free the narrative from the linear constraints of a digital product.

Models for games and 'digital as promotion' are fairly well explored. The biggest challenges seem to be in working out the business models (commercialisation process) for content designed specifically for a digital audience. Can you give your views on how to approach this?

I think the biggest hurdle to commercialising digital content is bringing the 'economic baggage' of the print publishing business into the mix. With books, for example, the traditional model is roughly this: you prepare a treatment, get commissioned to write (if you're lucky, get an advance), deliver the manuscript (12–24 months), edit galleys, etc. (add 6–12 months), sit back and wait for final book release (another 6–9 months), promote all you can and hope to get a royalty cheque. The royalty mechanic is fairly straightforward – 10% of wholesale, as a rule. The author makes the time investment in developing the content, and the publisher makes the dollar investment in printing, distribution and marketing/promotion. The publisher wears more of an economic risk burden, hence the imbalance in revenue share.

Digital publishing doesn't (or doesn't need to) have the same investment of time. It certainly doesn't have the same physical or distribution costs. Accordingly, the risk burden is different for both the writer and publisher. So the entire economic model needs to be revisited against this backdrop.

Authors need to revisit their revenue expectations from each product. If the time spent writing, editing and then waiting for a book to hit the 'shelves' is shorter, it means you can be more productive (i.e. turn out more products) over your writing lifetime. Instead of looking to make, say, \$150,000 from developing one product in a three-year cycle, perhaps you could switch your objective to making \$85,000 each from two products over a three-year cycle.

Publishers also need to revisit their revenue expectations from each product. With digital products, they can target a much larger potential market during the first release window (with no printing and distribution costs, no discounts to secure otherwise scarce shelf space, fewer economic constraints to launching in many markets at the same time). The shorter publishing cycle also means that there is less working capital tied up at any given point of time, also reducing pressure on maximising the internal rate of return.

Beyond these pure economic issues, there are two broader ('cultural') issues that need to be addressed:

Passive dependency: Many authors have an attitude akin to academics and prefer to be as far removed from the 'business' side of publishing as possible. Publishers, of course, encourage this mindset, as it allows them to secure a much more profitable relationship with authors (that is, carve out the lion's share of the revenue for supposedly shielding authors from the nasty business aspects of publishing). Authors need to recognise that digital publishing provides them with an opportunity to address this imbalance and, in so doing, reap more of the spoils of their labour. But it also requires them to consider themselves as business people first and creative second.

Market dynamics: The digital content industry is just as at risk from 'piracy' as the movie and music industries are (and have been). Authors need to recognise that a fair percentage of readers will *not* pay for their work in digital form. This means that if authors want to protect their income, they will need to do more than 'merely' write to generate income from those consumers who opt to obtain digital content products for free. Just as music labels/musicians and movie studios/directors are having to be more innovative so, too, will authors need to look beyond the finished written product to create additional products and services that meet consumer's needs – especially those who won't pay for the base product, if it is already available at no cost.

Have you heard of any success stories or even just good attempts to build sustainable content products in the digital space?

Most of the success stories I have heard of relate to nonfiction. As an author of nonfiction, it is becoming clear that one economic model is to use the physical or digital 'book' product as a loss-leader that creates a market for non-digital services (e.g. write a book on how to sell your business when you want to retire, then use the credibility and profile generated by the book to offer workshops and seminars, etc.).

In the fiction market, the equivalent would be to leverage the popularity of the book to offer paid speaking tours, creative writing workshops and derivative products (such as audio and illustrative editions, exclusive 'signed' products, expanded/extended editions with more backstory or additional plots, etc.). Basically, the objective here is to sell to your captive audience.

To use a music industry analogy, Nine Inch Nails recently released an album as a completely free download. On the back of the buzz they achieved by doing that, they then released limited edition CD and DVD versions, which featured a range of value-added offerings. These products were sold for prices ranging from \$50 to \$300. Here, NIN was targeting their hard-core fans – those who would value these premium offerings and pay the asking prices. Hundreds of thousands of people got the free version, but the smaller number who paid for the premium offerings were enough to make the album an economic success for NIN.

What would be your top four recommendations to help writers get started in this new space?

Build an audience before you look for a publishing deal. One of the key reasons why publishers reject more manuscripts than they accept is because of the risks inherent in taking on an 'untried' author or content product. Access to digital channels provides authors with the ability to demonstrate their skills and the existence of an audience for their content by building an appreciative fan-base online. Prove your market and you will be able to negotiate a much better deal.

Don't have a preconceived notion of what the 'product' is. We see examples all the time of cross-over products – books that become movies, movies that become books, games that become movies and books, etc. Focus on creating a compelling narrative and avoid getting locked in too

early to how you might unleash it on the market. Similarly, even if you have decided to produce it in one format, be open to exploring the potential for releasing it in other formats.

See yourself as a business person first. At the end of the day, no-one cares about your economic success more than you do. Not your publisher, not your agent, not your fans. It is up to you as author to take an active and informed role in ensuring your economic success.

Digital doesn't have to exist independent of physical. As an extension of recommendation two, don't think that simply because you have embarked on development of a digital product that both it (the product) and your efforts must remain in the digital realm.

Case study – Forget the Rules



Jim Shomos, Let's Talk Pty Ltd, Creator and Executive Producer, Forget the Rules
[\[http://www.forgettherules.com\]](http://www.forgettherules.com)

Tell us a little about you and your background before you got into cross-media writing.

I came into this industry in 1998. As a writer and producer I focused on feature films. I got close with a feature a couple of times but after six years of banging my head against a wall, the only writing credit I had was as a story liner on *Neighbours*. FTR went from concept to production funding within 12 months! I'm now developing ten projects across film, TV and digital media and working with people like Clayton and Shane Jacobson (creative duo behind feature hit *Kenny*).

How did you get started working as a writer of cross-media and interactive writing and where did the idea for FTR come from?

The three main characters for FTR (Pony, Lisa and Pepe) are based on crazy friends of mine. I had the idea of writing a TV series based on them and some themes I wanted to cover, floating around in my head for a couple of years. I went to a digital media seminar run by Film Victoria on 1 July 2004. It was during that seminar that I came up with the interactive format that is a feature of FTR1. FTR is a cheeky comedy/drama series clearly targeted at 18–39 year olds, so making it a cross-media series with 3-minute episodes and highly interactive suited this project.

At the same seminar I met Paul Baiguerra who was looking at getting into production of this type of content with his business partner Peter Dixon. By August we agreed on a joint venture to produce FTR. In October we shot a

4-episode pilot, in November we took part in a three-day Xmedia Lab in Melbourne ... in December we began pitching. By August 2005 we had financed the first series (FTR1) and our first episode was on-air 10 October 2005. It is the first comedy/drama series in the world to broadcast all episodes on TV, online and mobile and the series ran for 13 weeks (39 x 3-min episodes). FTR2 (30 x 3min episodes) was broadcast Nov/Dec 2007.

FTR was originally distributed across TV, mobile and the web. How did the small portable screen and online delivery influence the writing?

The first major shift from traditional TV or film is the short episode. Three-minute episodes mean you need more story-per-minute. Viewers will accept lower production standards if the story/writing is strong enough. But you have little time to hook them and keep them hooked. You don't have the luxury of introducing stories and revealing character over 10–13 weeks. When I wrote the pilot – which became the first four episodes – I titled the first episode 'number 33'. It was a small psychological thing for me to assume the show had been going for a while. If you watch the first episode of FTR1, you'll still get a good feel for the three main characters.

In FTR1 we had eight storylines over the 13 weeks. Three storylines were for entertainment but the other five had themes relevant to our target market ... and not covered originally or truly by heritage TV – if at all. You can't dilute the writing process or underestimate it 'just because you're broadcasting on digital media'. That's a mistake many make. You still need to do your best possible writing. Not everyone will be able to make 3–5-minute episodes work.

Over the two series we were able to give the characters personal journeys – especially in FTR2. Of all the awards we've won, the current nomination from our peers at the Australian Writers Guild for our writing on FTR2 is the one I'm proudest of (AWGIES ceremony 15 August 2008). My co-writer on FTR1 was Terri Psiakis. My co-writers on FTR2 were Tim Ferguson, May Yeung and Leisl Egan. It was May and Leisl's first credit, so to get a nomination for them is brilliant!

The mobile screen was the lowest common denominator, so production limitations were driven by this: brighter lighting, closer shots, simple editing, minimal special effects. Because FTR was also broadcast on TV we trod a fine line but have had great recognition from the TV industry locally and internationally about our production qualities – our team did a great job.

FTR 2 has branched out to include lots of social media channels and activities. How have you leveraged this approach for both storytelling and promotion?

We used networks like Facebook and MySpace more for promotion and keeping our fans in touch with the series and characters. They are great vehicles for giving fans more information about your characters – invaluable when you're writing 3-min episodes. We didn't really use them for storytelling.

They are powerful tools. 'Lisa's' character in FTR is an Ad Agency account manager. One fan wrote to her on Facebook asking for advice on how to breakthrough into the ad industry...

Can you describe the business models that both financed the production of FTR and provided a return to the company for this?

I am proud that both FTR1 and FTR2 were fully-financed productions. We raised over \$1.1 million in total for both series and everyone was paid award rates or above. No-one else has come close to financing 69 x 3min episodes in Australia for a cross-media production. That's the equivalent of 9 x ½ episodes on commercial TV.

FTR1 was fully financed by private investors – they own 49% – so we still retain control. Our distribution partners, Ch V (Foxtel) and 3 Mobiles, didn't provide a cent but they did provide scope for us to sell sponsorship and advertising. Our planned revenue streams were: share of subscription from 3 Mobile customers, ads and sponsorship, downloads of 'mobile merchandise' and international sales.

None of this occurred. We made some revenue from our subscriber share but it was negligible. However, as we (with our investors) own the IP, there is still scope for international sales and potential DVD sales.

FTR2 was financed by Optus TV and Film Victoria. This was a more traditional method of financing. Optus took the pay TV and mobile rights in Australia. We retained all other rights. We also had the right to bring on three other sponsors.

FTR also has the potential for format sales – different language versions being produced in different territories. Was there any consideration as to the most appropriate business model for FTR?

We were so far ahead of the industry with FTR1 that there were no 'appropriate business models'. *Forget the Rules* was our title, our creative mantra and our business mantra ... and really, it should be an industry mantra. At a seminar just this week, someone suggested that business models in this new space 'will come and go like waves'. I think this summed it up well. There are new models, revenue and investment options evolving all the time. You just need to be aware of what's available and what suits your project and your objectives.

The intense focus on 'business models' by everyone in this industry is choking it. You can already see the fingerprints on the neck of creativity and opportunity.

With FTR we had total creative control which is so rare for experienced TV practitioners, let alone first timers like us. We all got professionally paid to do something we love. Many got their first credits. For me personally it has provided opportunities and taken me to places I had never been – both physically and creatively. You have to be business savvy – or team up with someone who is – but if we all focused purely on making instant fortunes... we'd be in the wrong business.

If you were to approach doing FTR again, in the current environment, what changes might you implement that would impact on the business models you chose?

I wouldn't rush the production of the show. Short timing from funding to broadcast eliminates the possibility of securing sponsors and limits your marketing/promotion significantly. I would ensure we had a substantial marketing budget to drive our own promotions and PR – as well as pushing for major marketing support from distribution partners and increasing, not decreasing the interactive elements for our fans/viewers. With FTR2 we didn't deliver on many of the online and mobile interactive elements we planned. We shot ourselves in the foot with that. One by-product was that our average time-per visit online was 4.5 minutes with FTR2 compared to 19 minutes for FTR1. That's a huge difference and not a great story for potential sponsors. As part of this, I would bring on an expert (or two) to help us better leverage the social networking sites and opportunities.

FTR has won numerous awards, what impact has that had and how important is it to have recognised awards in this field?

The awards have been invaluable. I was struggling to get FTR2 up in 2006 – even my producing partners had given up on it. Then we got the double nomination in the MIPCOM awards. Of the 180 projects considered from 34 different countries that year, we were the only one with the double nomination. The day after we won, I was approached by the head of digital of ITV UK who had heard of FTR through one of the award judges. Within 30 minutes we had worked out a basic deal for their involvement in FTR2. Based on that deal we put together all the other funding (Film Victoria and Optus TV). That MIPCOM award led to exposure and credibility that helped get FTR2 up and introduce me to opportunities. Ironically, ITV pulled out two days after I finalised the other partners ... but to their credit, Optus and Film Victoria stuck by us.

The Greg Tepper Award in 2007 from Film Victoria was a joint win with the creative team from *Kenny* (Clayton and Shane Jacobson). It was a powerful statement by Film Victoria that they regarded success in digital media equally with feature films. A couple of months later Clayton and I started talking about working together and we're now doing an amazing digital media project, Mordy Koots ... plus Clayton is also attached as director on a feature film I'm producing.

You don't do this for the awards but this industry is so tough it's really nice to get the recognition and 'enjoy the roses' for a second or two. In this industry, there are a series of filters you have to go through before people respect or trust you enough to invest time and money in you. Awards are an important 'filter' that differentiate you. It's up to you however to leverage them ... no-one runs to your door with an open chequebook!

Case study – Blue Rocket Productions



David Gurney – Rocket Scientist
[\[http://www.blue-rocket.com.au\]](http://www.blue-rocket.com.au)

Tell us about Blue Rocket.

Blue Rocket is a digital media studio based in Hobart, Tasmania. We produce cartoons, mainly for kids, and our activities are spread across TV, broadband and mobile.

The Australian market is tiny in comparison to the global market. Does this mean that going off-shore is necessary?

The Australian market is very small and isolated. I think this is reflected in the way Australians view the market. Some creatives living in Sydney think Sydney is some sort of integral hub around which the rest of the world hovers in breathless anticipation. Creatives living elsewhere in Australia have fallen for this and think they've cracked the big time if they get recognition from the ones in Sydney. The fact is, the entire Australian market is only the size of one city in Europe or Asia or Latin America. We are therefore forced to play in the international arena if we want to have any chance of getting a return on investment.

Is it just for audience or for money, or are the two the same?

I think it's both but I would suggest that if the motivation is money you will fail. The audience is street wise and will see through your evil plan, so being motivated by the desire to provide compelling content will probably cut it better.

Can you do it yourself or do you need partners?

I think you need the right partners. No single partner will really help you across all platforms so it probably needs to be a mix. Also, when you partner with an organisation it's usually for a very long period of time so you need to be pretty sure that it's someone you can get along with and really trust.

We're looking at 'digital' – both mobile and online. Do you have any pointers for writers who are seeking a global audience?

This is a very challenging arena. The boundaries between online and mobile are becoming increasingly blurred and the environment is changing rapidly. Because interactivity is about allowing the audience to make its own story decisions, it is futile to attempt to impose a completely linear narrative model. I think writing for interactive is about generally guiding an audience in direction and giving them lots of freedom to make their own choices. For many participants the journey is more important than the outcome.

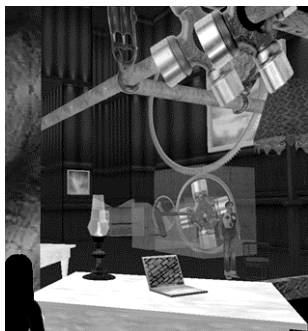
There is a great story around how *Bang the Cat* couldn't get traction in traditional media until it was a success in new media. Can you retell the story here briefly?

Well, I wanted to make an interstitial TV show that cost almost nothing to produce so I came up with *Bang the Cat*. It was simple really. In each episode a cat just sort of explodes. We produced some episodes and I took them off to international markets, optimistically expecting sales. Everyone who saw it fell about laughing and told me to keep taking the tablets. But we didn't make any sales until we started to get some serious traction in the mobile space. From there we got TV licences and now <http://www.bangthecat.com/> gets some reasonable traffic.

What advice would you give to people planning on looking for offshore opportunities?

If you're planning to look for opportunities offshore, I think the UK is the best place to start. The market has a similar sensibility to here but they are much more advanced and are a significantly larger market. If you can get traction in the UK it will be easier to grow into other territories from there.

Case study – Physical TV Company



Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman

[\[http://www.physicaltv.com.au\]](http://www.physicaltv.com.au)

Tell us briefly about The Physical TV Company and its projects.

Founded in 1997, The Physical TV Company specialises in arts-driven screen media, with a particular emphasis on dance (choreographed by Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen) and literature (by Richard James Allen, author of nine books of poetry and prose). We have produced seven award-winning short films which have screened at over 200 festivals and theatrical venues and broadcast on three continents, and a short feature, *Thursday's Fictions*, which won an ATOM award for Best Experimental Film in 2007 and is nominated for an ATOM Award for Best Multimodal Production in 2008. The many modes of *Thursday's Fictions* include a stage play, a poetry book, the film and the build of a 3D online immersive story world in Second Life. All of these incarnations received funds from different boards of the Australia Council at different times! For more information visit the Physical TV website [\[www.physicaltv.com.au\]](http://www.physicaltv.com.au) and the *Thursday's Fictions* website [\[www.thursdaysfictions.com\]](http://www.thursdaysfictions.com).

You've explored a range of business models for The Physical TV Company and your projects. Could you share with us what worked well and what didn't?

We are driven by creative ideas and fascinations with the media in which they can incarnate. If we want to create a work in which we are the initiators and owners of the property, we have to seek grants or other funding for the work. Otherwise our 'business model' is the commissioning model. In this model we approach or are approached by someone, often a university or an extant arts company, to create a work, and they may have a topic or a form in mind when making the approach. We enjoy responding to these

Australia Council for the Arts

Fingleton, T. Dena, C. & Wilson, J. 2008, *The writer's guide to making a digital living: choose your own adventure*, Sydney, Australia Council of the Arts.

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writersguide)

challenges and stretching the possibilities of the media and our creativity within them.

Have you found any conflicts between your artistic vision and business needs, and if so, how have you resolved that?

The Physical TV Company sustains itself through a mix of grants, commissions, royalties and sales of past productions and sales of the services of the artistic directors. These services include writing, directing, choreographing, editing, dramaturgy, conceptual design and teaching. We have found that the mix of skills is not just in line with our artistic interests but an asset to sustainability. The principals of The Physical TV Company are much in demand as teachers in tertiary institutions as well as at private studios, and we teach a range of things from artistic practice and studies to spiritual practices and philosophies, all of which, for us, are intrinsically entwined. We find teaching inspiring and stimulating, though its demands do sometimes require energy, which we would like to be spending on creative projects. However, it has seemed a fair trade-off thus far, given that the demands of starting and sustaining a business are equal or much greater to those of teaching, and certainly riskier. We are open to being convinced otherwise!

How do you find out about new approaches to building audience, promotions, business models and so on?

We have been fortunate to receive sponsorship from the Australia Council, AFTRS, the NSW FTO and the NSW Ministry for the Arts at various times to attend workshops, seminars and mentoring sessions to learn about 'new approaches to building audience, promotions, business models and so on'. We are also members of AIMIAA and have opportunities to attend their sessions, as well as Mobile Mondays in Sydney, which are gatherings of creative and business communities around the new possibilities for mobile phones. However, without sounding ungracious, it would be fair to say that most of the advisors discussing new media possibilities are novices themselves, because the media are so new, so unknown, so untried. We therefore often find ourselves wondering if we have the time or energy as a company to invest in processes which seem likely to have as good a chance of failing as otherwise. This issue refers back to the question of our own expertise as well. For some people, creativity and creative processes are mysterious and daunting, but business and business processes are not. For us, it is the reverse.

What would you suggest are the three key things you've learnt in this process?

You need a team. Writers and creative people need three other people:

- a business entrepreneur – someone who really lives for this stuff
- a tech enthusiast – as with the entrepreneur, someone who lives for this stuff
- a manager to hold the diverse priorities of creativity, business and technology together.

Consider other reasons for creating work in the digital space besides making money, especially when it comes to prototyping and proofs of concept. Make sure you know why you're doing whatever you're doing and who it's for. The creative arts as a practice and a product have value to humans. The question of whether they make money is not necessarily the best or only measure of this value.

Further material

Allen, R.J. and Pearlman, K. 2007 'Thursday's Fictions in Second Life', Melbourne Writers' Festival

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_2_150_the_business_case_and_business_models/references_and_resources\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_2_150_the_business_case_and_business_models/references_and_resources)

Hazlitt, G. 2007 'Thursday's Fictions in Second Life user journey'

[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMnseuxcCmA\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMnseuxcCmA)

Case study – Scorched, Firelight Productions



Marcus Gillezeau, Firelight Productions

[\[http://www.firelight.com.au\]](http://www.firelight.com.au)

Where did the initial impetus for your project come from?

It was an original concept by Ellenor Cox and Marcus Gillezeau. At the time, Sydney had only 80 weeks of water left in its dams, so we asked ‘what would happen if Sydney ran out of water and was surrounded by bushfires?’

Did you approach the story element of the project differently due to the digital nature of the medium?

Yes. The approach is very different in so far as you are aware that the audience is going to be watching, experiencing and consuming the story in different environments (the bus, the office, etc.) and on different screens (phone, computer, TV). The story can also be explored from many different perspectives as it is told across five or six websites and numerous third party social networking sites.

What is different about developing products across multiple-media platforms?

Developing a story that can work across multiple platforms requires a lot of attention to how people consume and engage with stories on the different platforms. How will someone experience the video or website using an iPhone on a bus? If they plug their iPhone in to their TV once they get home, what will the experience be like then? There is also a range of issues related to the length of webisodes, whether it is fiction or nonfiction. You also have to take in to account the kind of budget you might be able to realistically raise from each of the platforms. Commercial TV will pay a lot

for a one-hour drama (up to \$500,000 pre-sale). Web portals will most likely pay nothing for your content so you have to find other ways to raise a budget such as an advance on advertising revenue share.

Did you undertake business planning/develop a business case for your project? Did this help?

Sort of. We did approach the financing of the project differently to the standard government funding/TV network/distributor route. As the telemovie is to be broadcast on Channel 9, we attempted to get support from ninemsn (where the 'Scorched' website will be co-located as part of the broadcast deal). We had expected that since we were providing a significant amount of high-quality video content that ninemsn would pay an advance or pre-sale for that content, however they were only willing to provide internal in-kind support through advertising of the Scorched website (which they placed a value on). Ninemsn were not able to serve the media (video content) related to the online product and wanted to retain 100% of the ad revenue from our site, even when we were responsible for raising the revenue. When we were unable to keep the site on ninemsn due to these factors, we had to find money to pay for hosting and streaming on another site. Frustratingly, despite the telemovie being shown on Channel 9, they also seemed reluctant to publicise the *Scorched* telemovie – leading to more costs for us.

We have learnt a huge amount about how we would approach financing projects like *Scorched* in the future. The main one being that we have to convince the financing agencies, broadcasters and particularly the MEAA (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance Trades Union) to be more flexible about how we can monetise the proposition.

Describe the business models (revenue sources) that apply to your project. How were these selected?

The telemovie will be sold in the international market place through the distributors Granada International . We have been able to negotiate with the company doing the video streaming that the site be geoblocked [access is restricted to internet addresses originating from a specifically geographic region] to Australia and ungeoblocked on a country-by-country basis. This is a significant breakthrough for the monetisation of websites that are augmenting a heritage media product such as a telemovie. This is because the website, like the telemovie, can be sold as a premiere screening in other countries which increases its value.

What is the importance of the international community to your work? Is Australia too small a base or do you think companies can be successful working just in Australia?

The international community is crucial to our work but there is still some resistance to funding new media projects to the same levels that networks fund TV. However, that will change rapidly over the coming 12 months, especially since the merging of the AFC, FFC and Film Australia into Screen Australia. That merger will mean a more coordinated approach to financing new media should develop. What will be crucial is that Screen Australia develops funding policies that are flexible, and recognise that there are no strict formulae to how project finance structures might work.

What is a valuable thing you discovered whilst working in the digital content industry that you didn't know before?

If you are going to produce content for the internet, you need to develop an entirely new set of skills and knowledge that relate to the delivery systems involved in serving media and content to consumers. A simple analogy is it would be like a writer having to learn how to build and run a printing press to get their novel out to market. We have had to learn exactly how the delivery of our content works at a technical level, which has required a lot of time that we would normally have dedicated to the creative execution of our work.

Plus, making content for the net is a lot of fun. The interactivity with the audience is instant.

How do you stay current (professional development, networking)?

Attend conferences. Read. Talk a lot. Take a lot of people to breakfast, lunch and dinner. Trawl the Internet to see what's new. Subscribe to various online industry magazines.

DIY Part 3 – Business planning and pitching

By Therese Fingleton and Jennifer Wilson

Chapter

10

Career

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Employed

Writing

Multi-platform

Digital

Promotional

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Developing a business plan

While the business case is concerned with why it's worth realising a project, the business plan is all about how you are going to realise it. In many ways its purpose is to marry the key assertions from the research done to make the business case with a solid finance and management plan. Whether it is for a single product or a whole new business, statistics show that having a plan makes you 47% more likely to succeed. That alone is a huge motivation to do your planning early.

The project or product business plan

Although you are anticipating that another business entity will produce your project (with you as the writer/producer), presenting a strong product business plan to potential producers and publishers will help them understand the potential of the concept and position you as serious about your craft.

Part of the aim of a business plan is to outline the cost of realising a project and its expected return over a specified timeframe. The project or product business plan ignores infrastructure costs associated with setting up a new business, and focuses solely on production costs and the estimated product revenue. As its function is also to reiterate the business case (the why), the product business plan needs to outline why the idea is unique, how it fits in the market, the marketing and distribution strategy, the associated revenue models and the resources required to deliver it.

The entrepreneur's business plan

The entrepreneur's business plan is both for the product and for a new business venture to realise and monetise it. Writing an entrepreneur's business plan can be a little more daunting, but should still be only around 5–8 pages long. If you've got more than 30 pages – it's far too much. The entrepreneur's business plan should cover:

- what the business is, what it will deliver and what makes it special
- who you are and why you are the right person at the right time to build this business
- your competitors and your competitive advantage over them
- evidence why this business is likely to be a success
- factors that will help you succeed, which is often called a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and examine the environment you will be in and what impact this will have on your business
- your audience or market and your strategy for reaching it

- how you will earn revenue (what your business models are). This might change over time so talk about it.
- the hard part – the money. How much do you expect to spend and how much do you expect to earn? Try to estimate the first year on a month by month basis, and then the next two years on an annual basis. You should be able to read the business plan text (the earlier sections) to see how the numbers are supported. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance with the numbers.

Remember that making money from the beginning is both unusual and unlikely – showing a deficit is normal – but you need to think about how you will fund your project. Also, don't stint on paying yourself, in fact make this your *first* priority. If you decide to put some of your pay back into the business, that's fine, but without you there is no business at all.

Funding and finance

Depending on your revenue models and the motivations for commercialisation you defined earlier, it is most likely you will now pursue one of three options:

- secure independent production funds
- secure production funds and/or go into production with a commercial partner (broadcasters, games developers, publishers, etc.)
- pursue the start-up investment route to start your new business venture.

Independent production funding/finance

A number of state and federal government arts and screen agencies offer production funding. For those crossing from traditional media, in particular page and stage writers, it is important to remember you are moving into the 'screen' industries. This will inform who is providing funding. If you are successful in securing some government funding, then try to use it as leverage to obtain additional funding from broadcasters or publishers. Funding can also be secured through philanthropic organisations with a vested interest in the target group you are trying to tap into, particularly if you are working on a youth or educational product. Some of these might provide interest-free loans rather than grants.

Crowdfunding describes the collective cooperation, attention and trust by people who network and pool their money together, usually via the Internet, in order to support efforts initiated by other people or organisations.

The Foundation for P2P Alternatives

Crowdfunding [<http://p2pfoundation.net/Crowdfunding>] is an emerging funding option for independent productions. As described by the Foundation for P2P alternatives, it is a form of crowdsourcing (see Introduction) applied to finance. Instead of seeking finance from institutional sources, the supporting community is asked to support the project in a distributed fashion. A much cited example is *A Swarm of Angels*, a peer-funded film, funded using the Internet to locate 50,000 people each willing to pay \$25 to fund a one million dollar film.

Commercial production partner/funds

This is where your finely-honed pitch and business plan becomes very useful. You should have proved your concept by now, so get out and speak

to market partners. If you haven't yet managed to bring an experienced producer onto your team, now is the time to do it. Their experience will be invaluable in getting your project in front of the right people.

Start-up investment

Start-up investment involves a number of key stages and options.

Sweat equity

You probably know what this is by now as it's most likely what you've been operating on; employees (typically founders) working with little or no salary. This is typically done when working full time in a 'real' job and/or drawing down on a mortgage. It is reasonably simple at the early stages but needs to be properly accounted for eventually.

Seed capital

Seed capital is the money you use to fund the start-up of the business. It might be a small amount, it might be in dribs and drabs, it might be in the form of a loan – but seed capital is what would normally buy the equipment you need as well as the time you need to do the work. Time is one of the most important things you can buy.

3Fs – family, friends and fools

First, start with family, friends and fools. You are unlikely to fund the whole business from here, but successful companies have been started with a bank loan and the support of parents. The 3Fs are unlikely to want a major slice of your business and are really backing you, not necessarily the strength of your idea. You should consider the money you get from 3Fs as a loan, even if you do give them some equity in your company. As a loan, pay this back as soon as you can. The quicker you can pay it back (with or without interest) the more likely you are to be able to draw on this again should you need to.

Angel investors

Angel investors differ from venture capitalists in that they usually invest in your company seeking a return on their investment, but normally don't require the same equity stake. In the case of an angel – you might find a consortium that together provides you with the seed capital you need. Angels might also offer support services – sometimes they are lawyers or accountants who just want to help small businesses get started and in addition to a (usually smaller) sum of money, they might offer you skills, assistance and pro-bono work. Bear in mind that there is some cross-over between angel investors (who are investing in your business) and venture

capitalists (who are taking some of the capital, or equity in your business) and the lines are blurring.

Venture capital

These hard-nosed business people are looking for what might be the 'next big thing', and are interested in giving you money to make this happen, in return for a sizable stake in what you do. They will be looking to not only get their money back, but at least double it over a three-year period. They will be as interested in how they can get their money out (their 'exit strategy') as they will be in what you are delivering. Venture capitalists will back businesses that might not turn a profit on the basis that someone else will pay more to buy the company at some point in the future. Some good examples of this are MySpace, YouTube and Facebook – none of which was sustainable as a business (their income did not exceed their costs), but which had a huge value (billions) based on the high numbers of users.

Be aware that some venture capitalists will offer you money in kind (office space, telephone, stationery, use of equipment, etc.) rather than money – and this can make it a very expensive decision in the future.

Equity

Equity is the ownership of the business you create. If you own the business, you have all the equity (100%). In return for the money that people invest in your business, either in the beginning as seed capital or as you go along, you are likely to need to give away some of the equity. Before you start, work out how much you are prepared to give away and how much you are determined to keep. If you are in a partnership, determine how you will 'dilute' your stake – will each of you provide the same amount?

In general, think of there being 100 shares in your company. In order to have control, you need to be able to manage (as your own or in the hands of people you completely trust) 51%. You should aim at giving no more than 30% to any one investor (and that is a substantial amount) and multiple investors, each with their own equity stake, can spread your risk. You don't want someone else deciding what your company will do, so you need to make sure that no-one (other than you) can exercise control by having more than 50% of the shares (or equity). As a general rule, look at giving 10% to 3Fs; 20% to angels; and 30% to venture capitalists. As this will add up to 60% of your equity, try to avoid needing all these forms of investment and limit the amount you give them to less than the numbers above.

Pitching your idea and your business

Pitching tests the appeal of your project, its relevance, its viability. It forces you to know your project.

Jackie Turnure, 2006

The need to pitch your project is a reality of the new media industry that makes many writers uncomfortable. Being able to deliver a concise and compelling pitch is vital in helping prove your concept and you will have to pitch your idea over and over again, to everyone from new team members to investors. Practising your pitch will help you become adept at convincing others of the validity of your idea. Because the new media industry involves players across traditional media such as publishing, film and television, as well as IT companies, education providers and government, you never know when or where your next opportunity to pitch for investment will emerge,.

You would usually pitch your project in order to:

- sell your idea to a new team member you are trying to bring on board, or to a producer or developer, who will produce it
- sell your idea to a party who will fund you (a partner) to produce it (government agency, philanthropic organisation, broadcaster, publisher)
- sell your business as an idea to an investor, such as an angel investor or venture capitalist.

The pitch you give will usually take one of the following three forms:

- Elevator: a 15-second presentation on the project
- Document: a document (of varying style and length) that outlines the unique selling proposition and associated market opportunity of the project and may include illustration of design concepts
- Presentation: a formal presentation that is often an engaging oral version of what's in the document, complete with user experiences and visual aides.

How to get to pitch

You're all dressed up and ready to go, but you don't know how to get invited to the party! Once you've exhausted the 3Fs, you need to work out how to find investors who are desperate to back you – if only they knew where you were! There are groups in the digital space who run workshops to introduce people to investors, so keep an eye on newsletters, especially Slattery IT, who have a newsletter called *Slattery's Watch* which includes

information on events they host such as venture capitalist events.
[\[http://www.slatteryit.com.au/watch.html\]](http://www.slatteryit.com.au/watch.html).

Also, have a look at Michael Stone's presentation, which not only provides a checklist for many of the things mentioned above, but also information on the angel and venture capitalist investors.

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_3_150_business_planning_and_pitching_references\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_3_150_business_planning_and_pitching_references)

Generally, while investors get asked for money a lot – there aren't always a lot of things that interest them, so they continue looking for the next opportunity. You'd be surprised who is either an investor (even if just in a small way) or who knows one – and introductions are definitely the best! Investors, like all business people, respond well to a 'tease' that grabs their interest. This means both knowing their interest (do some research on other things they have invested in) and finding a hook for your project that will appeal to them.

Don't be afraid to make a cold approach – but don't do it with your whole business plan. What you need to provide is a concise two-page summary that explains what you are doing, helps them see the potential of what you are offering, outlines what you would do if you were funded (you don't need to spell out the money here) and has both the 'hook' to catch them and details on how they can contact you. If they don't respond, chase them nicely once then write them off. Bear in mind that anything you send them is unlikely to be returned, so don't send materials that you might want to use again. Ready? Ok, it's time to refine the pitch.

The elevator pitch

Although a creator will rarely have cause to deliver in an elevator, this is the pitch you will deliver again and again at every coffee break at every seminar, networking event and business meeting. Practice it with family and friends and at the water cooler so that when the opportunity arises you can tell anyone in less than one-minute what your project or product is all about.

The pitch document

This is a formal document to be sent to those you identify as a target for your project such as partners, broadcasters, games developers, etc. You might be asked to send this as a follow-up to an 'elevator pitch' chat at a networking or industry event. This is not something you will write in one sitting. You must revisit and revise this again and again during the

development of your project and may need to adapt it depending on who you are sending it to.

The pitch presentation

The pitch presentation includes many of the same elements as the pitch document. It is a formal presentation often backed up with visual aides, proof of concept designs and perhaps a demonstration of your prototype. A pitch presentation is about telling the story of your product or business and why it is worth investing in. It is absolutely crucial that you tailor your presentation for your audience. If you are pitching your product to someone who commissions online programming, they may be more interested in the creative content, than for example a group of angel investors who are primarily focused on whether your product or business will earn them the desired return on investment. Tell the audience a story and make it engaging. Don't simply read a pitch document! Lead with a hook – be it the opening line of your story, or a dramatic sequence from a game. Include the story of the user who is engaging with your product and make sure you end strongly leaving them wanting to hear more from you.

What's in a pitch?

In new media it is rare for one pitch to fit all situations. Whether delivering your pitch as a presentation or in a document, remember that just like any paper you write or presentation you give, it must be tailored for the audience. Here are some elements which you may wish to include in your pitch document or presentation:

- **The product name:** an easy task for a writer one assumes, but be prepared for it to change many times as you go through the iterative development process.
- **The one-liner:** a neat and succinct description of the product (e.g. an interactive episodic novella for mobile phone).
- **Product/project synopsis:** a one paragraph synopsis (for written pitch).
- **Format:** how the product is structured and delivered: 13 x 160 character episodes, delivered via SMS to mobile.
- **Problem solved:** if your product fills a gap in the market or solves a problem you have identified then describe the 'pain' of the user and how you are going to fix it.
- **The user experience:** describes a user experience, how a user hears about your product and interacts with it.
- **Design aesthetic:** this will vary hugely depending on the project, media, device and user group, but nevertheless, describe the aesthetic of the design and if possible include a sample.

- **Technology:** the platform the product will be built and delivered on, the device it will be played/read on and acknowledgement that it may need to be developed differently for different devices (especially true for mobile projects).
- **The business plan:** you will adapt the elements of your business plan for your pitch:
 - **Market:** the target market for the product (e.g. brand conscious, tech savvy, young adults aged 12–18 in English speaking markets with high mobile penetration).
 - **Unique selling point (USP):** what differentiates it from others on the market (e.g. compelling narrative, interactive format, strong brand association).
 - **Competition:** healthy as long as it is a known entity and the competitive advantage of your product is identified.
 - **Business model:** the economic driver behind the product, how it can be commercialised (e.g. subscription premium content charged at so many cents per episode).
 - **Marketing and distribution strategy:** will you use existing channels or develop new ones or both. This section should be tightly tailored for the pitch audience.
 - **User/audience testing:** even if you have tested with a paper prototype or just asked a group of people questions, include any information you have about testing the concept on your audience, what percentage of them would pay for the product and how much. You may not have this ready for your first pitch but add it in when you do.
 - **Resources and timeframe:** describe what is required to create the product or set up the new business and the expected timeframe.
 - **Return on investment (ROI):** whether pitching for pro bono assistance or thousands of dollars, don't ask for anything without stating what you offer in return, be it revenue, a new audience or a greater market share. Unless you include the ROI you are not pitching a new business opportunity.
 - **Team:** at the end of the day most investment is in people not ideas. Present you and your team, your successes and achievements, your commitment to the project and why you are the best people to realise it, or what people you need to bring on board to help.

Pitching tips from Jackie Turnure

- Know your audience – who you are pitching to and what they are looking for so you can design the pitch specifically for them;
- Structure your pitch so it is a dramatic story which expands and deepens, pulling the audience in and taking them on a journey;
- Tease and entice – get them hooked but don't reveal the entire experience, leave them wanting more;
- Know the weaknesses of the project and turn them into strengths, better that you acknowledge them than the audience does;
- Remember to have fun! If you are stressed or bored of your pitch then your pitch will be boring. If you are enjoying yourself, then the audience will be drawn in.

Next stage

Rarely will an investor back you on the strength of one meeting, so get ready to jump through hoops again – sometimes the same ones, sometimes slightly different. Refine and practise as you go. If you've got over the line with one investor – even if they don't fund you – this is a great place to move forward from. Don't be afraid to ask the investor whom else they might recommend for you to talk to – the whole community know each other and know what their colleagues are looking for.

If you're lucky enough to be funded – take a deep breath and ring both your lawyer and a good accountant. The critical things at this stage are to keep both hands on your project and carefully steer it forward. That means controlling your IP (lawyer), making sure your budgets are right (accountant) and starting to think carefully about who you might hire, what offices you need, and how you will get the whole thing off the ground. There are companies who specialise in providing short-term/focussed skill sets for start-ups. Skills they can supply range from CEOs to sales staff, through marketing, strategy or even IT managers – and their involvement can be one-off or ongoing. If they love your ideas, they will sometimes lower their fees for a small share of your company – but that takes you back to the equity issue and who has control.

More than anything, be realistic about your own strengths and weaknesses. Look to hire people who are strong where you are weak. A good business manager can let you be the creative genius – while still allowing you to build the business, content and products you were originally funded for – with a lot less headache than you trying to master spreadsheets if numbers aren't your forte.

If you've got money, then you've got backing for your idea and you've got faith from other people that you can succeed. Continue to believe in yourself and follow the plan you laid out (you did write a business plan, remember).

Concluding remarks

Although presented here in a linear fashion, developing a new media project or product from concept to the point of securing commercial partners or investment is largely an iterative, non-linear process. Although you will be able to lock off certain elements such as your prototype and business case research, be prepared to revisit each step frequently as you progress.

Ultimately, your aim is to develop your concept into a defensible product; a product which is unique, has a definable audience and for which you and your team own the IP. This is the kind of product or business that will secure investment. In the meantime your other challenge is to ensure that the end product retains the creative integrity and emotional engagement that you as a writer would expect of your most prized manuscript. Otherwise, why begin the journey at all?

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Foundation for P2P Alternatives. [<http://p2pfoundation.net/Crowdfunding>].

Lindsay, J (not dated) Presentation – ‘The Team’

Stone, M. 2008, Presentation – ‘Business Proposal Workshop’, presented at mega.

[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_3_150_business_planning_and_pitching/references]

Turnure, J. 2006, ‘Podcast – The Art of the Pitch’ lamp.edu.au, [<http://lamp.edu.au/2006/05/29/podcast-the-art-of-the-pitch/>].

Study/professional development options

Further reading

ArtsLaw (not dated) Sponsorship Agreements Guide,
[\[http://www.artslaw.com.au/Publications/ChecklistsGuides/SponsorshipAgreementsGuide.asp\]](http://www.artslaw.com.au/Publications/ChecklistsGuides/SponsorshipAgreementsGuide.asp).

Messenger, N. 2008, A Practical Guide for Artists and Arts Organisations,
[\[http://www.artslaw.com.au/Publications/Books/BusinessStructures.asp\]](http://www.artslaw.com.au/Publications/Books/BusinessStructures.asp).

Neely, M. 2007, 'The Entrepreneur's Challenge, Surviving the Early Years',
[\[http://infolution.com.au/?p=95\]](http://infolution.com.au/?p=95).

[\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/funding\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/funding)

GrantsLink is a federal and state government portal with information on a range of grants offered by category. All federal and state arts funding agencies, as well as a whole host of other government agencies that provide grants, can be found here:
[\[http://www.grantslink.gov.au/\]](http://www.grantslink.gov.au/).

Most state screen agencies offer some form of funding for new media and often run workshops and mentoring programs. Check their sites listed here:
[\[http://www.afc.gov.au/filminginaustralia/govassist/state/fiapage_7.aspx\]](http://www.afc.gov.au/filminginaustralia/govassist/state/fiapage_7.aspx).

Screen Australia (SA) is the new federal agency replacing the Australian Film Commission, Film Australia and the Film Finance Corporation, and has both a cultural and industry development role to play in the digital media arena. SA offers a range of cross-platform digital media development and production funding programs including:

- Interactive Digital Media: This information guide is as a starting point for Australian interactive digital media practitioners to explore funding and support options from a range of organisations, industry bodies and government agencies
[\[http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/filming_in_australia/GW_Filming-In-Australia.asp\]](http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/filming_in_australia/GW_Filming-In-Australia.asp). Underneath the 'Industry Information Guides' section, click on 'Interactive Media; funding, info and advice'.
- Cross-Platform Digital Media development funding seeks to provide experienced practitioners with the opportunity to create written and/or visual materials to ensure that digital media projects are as strong as possible when competing for production finance.
- Production investment is principally designed to provide professional development opportunities to talented digital media directors, producers and writers. Production funding aims also to encourage the interaction of digital media practitioners with film and television practitioners,
[\[http://www.afc.gov.au/funding/fd/digital/default.aspx\]](http://www.afc.gov.au/funding/fd/digital/default.aspx)

Online resources

- [\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Pitching\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Pitching)
- [\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Commercialisation\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Commercialisation)
- [\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/organisations_australia\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/organisations_australia)
- [\[http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Entrepreneurs\]](http://delicious.com/Writersguide/Entrepreneurs)

Ross Hill's (Geelong RMIT student) 'Hatch That' weekly podcast interviews with entrepreneurs, [\[http://www.hatchthat.com/\]](http://www.hatchthat.com/).

Ross Hill's 'The Hive' networking for entrepreneurs in Melbourne, [\[http://www.thehive.org.au/\]](http://www.thehive.org.au/).

Further Material

- [\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_3_150_business_planning_and_pitching/_references\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/diy_part_3_150_business_planning_and_pitching/_references)

Courses and industry development programs and networking

State-based entrepreneur meet-ups are a great informal way for newcomers to entrepreneurship to learn about the area. Meets are usually technical in focus, but you can find out who the guest speaker is beforehand and even recommend someone. The business models and marketing insights are valuable, [\[http://entrepreneur.meetup.com/cities/au/\]](http://entrepreneur.meetup.com/cities/au/).

Short courses in business and financial planning and legal considerations are offered through TAFE and Workers Education Association. Universities also offer short courses.

Centre for Screen Business at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School runs a range of business courses that include digital media components. They regularly post business research and articles via their blog [\[http://www.aftrsmia.com/CSB/\]](http://www.aftrsmia.com/CSB/). Upcoming short courses include *Introduction to financial modelling* and *Running your own creative business*. A Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Screen Business are also offered.

Specific university and industry groups also offer courses and programs on pitching and entrepreneurship. A few are listed here:

- Laboratory of Advanced Media Production (LAMP), a unit of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, where teams develop concepts and pitch to industry experts for feedback [\[http://www.lamp.edu.au\]](http://www.lamp.edu.au)
- MEGA is a workshop lab where mobile content and applications concepts are developed with industry experts and pitched to a panel of investors. It is offered in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. In South Australia it is accredited as an elective in

undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in film, media and IT at the three universities [<http://www.mega.org.au>]

- Digital Crossroads provides mentoring for young (or new) entrepreneurs,
[http://www.digitalcrossroads.com.au/entrepreneur_mentoring.php]
- Crossover labs is an international program, which works towards building pitches and early-stage concept prototypes,
[<http://www.crossoverlabs.com/>]
- RMIT University, Bachelor in Entrepreneurship,
[<http://www.rmit.edu.au/bbe>]
- Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Innovation Centre (ECIC), The University of Adelaide, Adelaide. The ECIC undertakes research and imparts knowledge about entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation; the successful development and management of projects; and the commercialisation of technology to facilitate improved performance in individuals, organisations, and communities
[<http://www.ecic.adelaide.edu.au/>]
- [[Entrepreneur Program – Ideas2Market](#)] is a small business program in Queensland that provides innovators and entrepreneurs with advice, ideas, hints and links that can assist them to take their ideas or products to market.
- QUT Creative Enterprise Australia is a specialist business incubator and business support organisation dedicated to meeting the needs of the Creative Industries (CI) Sector.
[<http://www.qut.creativeenterprise.com.au/>]

Many mainstream advisory firms such as KPMG, Cap Gemini and Accenture have 'Innovation' divisions, which look to support and mentor new businesses. They will help with business planning, feasibility, investment advice and advising.

DIY case studies – learn as you go

Chapter

11

Career

Self-Employed

Entrepreneurs

Employed

Writing

Multi-platform

Digital

Promotional

The following are case studies of projects being developed by emerging Australian new media writers and producers, all of whom participated in the LAMP: Story of the Future Residential Labs run by the Australia Council and LAMP (Laboratory of Advanced Media Production), at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in 2007, and subsequently received development assistance in the form of grants and mentoring.

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Case study – *What If Macbeth?* (virtual worlds)

Who are you?

I am Kerreen Ely-Harper, a graduate of the Drama and Film & Television Schools at the VCA (Victorian College of the Arts) and am a practicing theatre and film writer/director and teaching artist. I have written and directed a range of arts projects: professional and community based theatre; narrative short films; dance; and documentary, corporate and educational videos.

Where did the idea for *What If Macbeth?* come from and how has it evolved so far?

With the growing ‘tech savvy and globally connected generation’ I was concerned that many literary texts were in danger of becoming irrelevant and accessible only in their traditional forms. I wanted to find out how to investigate a literary text in a virtual environment. What would be the advantages and the limitations? What would be revealed about the text that could not be found by reading, attending a live performance, or watching a film? The key to unlocking this new narrative pathway would be the interactive non-linear component of Second Life. I felt this platform would have the greatest potential for community participation and creative possibilities for the audience and myself.

How did you form the team and what are your roles? What partners are you working with?

I sought out experts in multimedia and literary texts in virtual worlds (specifically Second Life) who would both embrace the vision and have the expertise to ensure the viability of the concept. I collaborated with Dr Angela Thomas, a specialist in New Media Literacies at Sydney University, and multimedia producer and artist Kate Richards.

The team’s process is a highly collaborative one, and our skill and experience level diverse. I bring my acting, theatre and film experience, and knowledge of the source text – Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* – to the project table. Angela is the project’s co-author and interactive designer. Kate is the project manager and creative producer.

We formed an investment partnership with the NMC (New Media Consortium) in the US for the first prototype build. Second Life artists Beth Satchjen and UK-based Christopher Holden were engaged by the NMC to work with us in realising the design and functionality concepts. Melbourne-based multimedia artist Adam Nash joined the team as design and sound consultant.

What is different about creating a community that encourages co-creative works, as opposed to creating your own work?

In co-creative work my main focus is to provide maximum opportunities for the community to inhabit, respond, create and own the material as well as there being a shared vision between all participants. In my own work I am less concerned about participation and trade my facilitator hat for a directorial one. But as in co-creative works I believe the best work comes from a shared vision between all the collaborators.

When conceiving interactive components of the work, I have had to allow for a non-linear navigation through the story world. This has been quite challenging especially when dealing with an unfolding linear narrative. We have had to strike a balance between the original property (the play text) and adaptation that will both engage and provoke the community user/s 'call to action' without over reliance on the original property, but will also act as a prompt to seek it out in the virtual world. As the writer you are creating a series of multi-non-linear pathway spaces for the community to inhabit, create, leave and return to. In virtual world storytelling, the navigation spaces are as much the 'text' as is the narrative content.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

The commercial viability of *What If Macbeth?* is paramount for its sustainability and my continued involvement. I believe that only by embracing the future through relevant and developing technology can the widest audience be reached. In order to achieve this, the project requires a business plan with attainable income generation initiatives. This is constantly being reviewed and discussed between the team and our partners as we move closer to releasing the site to the general public.

My most significant learning to date has been dealing with the scope, unpredictability and limitations of the Second Life platform, and how these often opposing elements affect design and delivery. While I have become

more flexible and ambitious in my ideas without losing sight of the original vision of Second Life's potential for fantasy, abstract and symbol, I have also come to recognise that the quality of the user's experience will invariably determine the success of the project.

The current investment partnership with NMC has enabled production of the first stage of the *What If Macbeth?* project. The challenge for us will be securing further investment both in Australia and internationally to ensure the work's long-term commercial future.

What would you say to other writers and theatre people considering the use of new media?

Heed Shakespeare's call to embrace 'the brave new world'. Be open to the possibilities that new media can bring to the writing and performing process, especially in the areas of adaptation, collective and collaborative storytelling. Thoroughly research and investigate the range of online platforms available and be prepared to re-define the parameters of authorship and linear text in 3D interactive spaces. Or else risk the loss of great and yet untold stories.

Case study – *Wild Ark* (cross-platform writing)

Who are you?

I'm Shoni Ellis, the creator behind *Wild Ark*. My background is predominantly in education, teaching as well as developing a range of education and community engagement projects, programs and resources for different organisations. I've written a variety of print and online education resources. Most recently I worked as a writer for Australian Screen Online, developing educational material to accompany film and audio clips from the National Film and Sound Archives. I became interested in using digital media because I wanted to explore more creative ways to reach, connect and engage young people through using the same channels that they use.

Where did the idea for *Wild Ark* come from and how has it evolved so far?

A few years ago, walking along the shoreline at Cornelian Bay in Hobart, I was thinking about how many stories were layered in the landscape and how to convey these to the passer by. I wanted to know about the Aboriginal people who'd created the middens and what happened to the people who lived in the boatsheds when the tide came in. Interpretation signs present one solution, but they're expensive, date quickly and have limited appeal. Instead, I began to consider what would be possible if I could access and contribute to stories through my mobile phone.

A few years later *Wild Ark* was conceived while working as an education officer at Melbourne Zoo and observing how visitors, and in particular, children, interact with the information on display at each of the exhibits. I started exploring ideas I thought would enhance the zoo experience amongst young visitors and help maintain an ongoing relationship once they had left for the day.

What is/are your role(s) in the project and who are you working with?

Predominantly my role has been that of a writer and producer, but working independently means I wear many hats. As the project progresses the various roles required to develop it have become clearer and I am gradually putting a team together to develop a prototype to pilot at our partner zoo.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

Evolving *Wild Ark* from a creative concept into a commercially viable project continues to be a challenging process. Although I had worked as a writer previously, I had always worked to a brief with clear parameters in relation to time, budget, style, content and audience. *Wild Ark* has provided me with the scope to negotiate my own parameters and priorities and construct my own brief. However, assuming the role of writer and producer means I'm also constantly trying to strike a balance between my creative vision and what makes sense in terms of business.

Wild Ark has extended my skills as a writer, introduced me to new professional networks and challenged me to adopt new business processes and practices. Navigating the production process has proven difficult because there are few people working in a similar space or examples of similar projects to be guided by. However, it's also an exciting time to explore new possibilities and mix and mash up different art forms and make new hybrid media that better cater for a rapidly changing world.

How has working with a writing mentor helped you with this project?

I've had the privilege of working with Mark Shirrefs, an experienced children's film and television writer who has helped me negotiate the challenges of not only writing my first fictional work, but also writing an interactive narrative for a new medium.

We spent a lot of time exploring different ideas including the role of game play and interactivity and what would or wouldn't work on a micro screen.

What would you say to an emerging writer who is considering the use of new media?

I think new forms of digital media present a fantastic opportunity for emerging writers to reach and engage their own audiences. The industry in Australia is relatively young and continues to evolve rapidly, which means you can make your own discoveries, forge your own path and create your own opportunities.

Case study – Hearts Akimbo (online)

Who are you?

We come from quite different backgrounds. Sarah Jane Woulahan is a prolific writer/director of award-winning independent films, Australian music videos, and more recently documentaries and short satires for SBS and JTV. Rachel O'Reilly has a literature background and has worked for ten years as a media art festival manager, arts writer and curator of contemporary film, video and new media art projects. She writes experimental literary short fiction in all her spare time. David Campbell is a designer who works primarily with artists and arts organisations, ranging from DIY spaces to state galleries, on projects across new media, Web and print. We all write; we are all avid interlocutors and consumers of contemporary fiction, philosophy, film, and cultural commentary – we connect about writing on this level.

Where did the idea for Hearts Akimbo come from and how has it evolved so far?

Hearts Akimbo has had many incarnations in its short life. It started as an idea for a multi-linear text and video-based psycho-geographic website that would document the passionate and surreal story of Sarah Jane's successful stalking of her now-boyfriend through anonymous and romantic notes, letters, graffiti, philosophy, and public art – a plot which became so interestingly complicated by additional anonymous communiqués from additional anonymous admirers interwoven throughout. Sarah had recently made the idea into a documentary called 'I Love Like Blood' for the SBS series 'Podlove', and the website was intended as a strong complementary vehicle for that project. We took that project to LAMP: Story of the Future and soon realised that it was quite static and oh so very particular as narrative. What we really wanted to do was make that story of possibility, mystery and unique romantic creativity into an open platform for user-generated romantic projects, discussion, hilarity and playfulness for a whole generation of 2.0 users dipping in to the love and dating scene, not at all interested in RSVP-style dating rituals and formulas, and wanting to share great stories, tips, and moments. So what started as a celebration of one person's obsessional adventure turned into a niche social network, user-generated gallery and cultural advice and commentary portal.

How did you form the team and what are your roles?

We had known each other for years, were familiar with and supportive of each other's work, but had never collaborated. From Sarah Jane's original project idea, Rachel came on board as a project editor and writer, and Dave was our first choice as designer. The ladies manage all aspects of the idea, including research, content development, documentation, and interface and user-journey planning. Our roles merge at the highest levels of decision-making and concept design, where we take a collaborative approach for best results. Sarah Jane is an expert on user-generated video and content and a great driver of new ideas and their visualisation into site designs; Rachel has a knack for turning our collaborative ideas into great written content and concepts, and is continually framing the project and pitch, ensuring each edit aligns with our main, evolving project idea and intended audience; Dave's unique aesthetic and perspective on latest visual trends and applications feeds directly back in to better project ideas and concepts, as well as being incredibly pretty to look at.

What is different about creating a community that encourages co-creative works, as opposed to creating your own work?

It requires a much more complex combination of optimism, awareness and calculated doubt. Optimism is required in the sense that you need to believe in community in the first place – the specific interests, needs and compelling desires of inherently creative people other than yourself, and how that community might actually enjoy interacting and connecting (not how you would like them to). Awareness is needed in terms of knowing what else is, or has, attracted most attention online, and how we feel about those successful projects alongside ours (we are constantly discussing similarities and points of opposition). Doubt is also valuable in so far as our peers are smart as hell and aren't going to waste time with the most wonderful idea or community of users online if the interface, story and subtext of that specific community formation, is not interesting, compelling, rewarding in and of itself.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

We are all essentially artists even in terms of our approach to ideas, to notions of community, and in our assessment of the strength of project concepts. We can be fussy, overly thoughtful and hard to please. But that has also put us in good standing for working with a creative business

looking for fun and interesting projects with a well-developed sense of identity and a genuine interest in impacting positively upon culture and audiences. We have met with and pitched our concept to social media experts, business start-up consultants, social network designers, and tossed around all sorts of online business models and strategies, which as well as being confusing has opened our world up to the ambitiously creative work that goes in to business design and business concept management. From our own creative work we know there is always perspective to be gained from people working outside or alongside your own path, specialisations or choice of media.

For this project we know when to be less precious about our creative work in the interest of learning more about, and tailoring our project to, the realities of the online environment. Everyone we have solicited advice from has provided different takes on those realities, what can and can't be achieved and what you should and shouldn't aim for. You have to really suss out the key marketing approaches, community-building strategies and business models that are going to help your idea find its genuine but broadest possible audience, retaining industry potential alongside the creative and narrative integrity of user journeys.

How has working with both business and writing mentors helped you with this project?

A writing mentor in the online space is always more than a writing mentor. It is a rare luxury to be able to bounce around ideas with someone more experienced in an industry, prior to that idea's full development. As well as feedback aimed at writing our concept and creative content into a more commercial position, Christy Dena threw useful links, asides, articles and resources our way. She also organised meetings with experienced experts in the field whom we would otherwise never have had access to.

Through our experience at LAMP we were also lucky to establish a project-specific relationship with Melbourne-based design studio Portable Content, a prominent cross-platform business with experience building user-generated 2.0 communities including the Portable Film Festival and the upcoming Swappler.com. They were interested in the potential of the project and came on board with general, technical and business development support in return for a token percentage of our development funds. They are assisting with wire frame plans, bring industry awareness, and once we came to writing up our business plan, imparted priceless

advice and experience. Their flexibility and support has been most useful as we have found our way.

What would you say to a writer who is considering the use of new media?

If you can love writing as a job, as a strategy, as a means of meeting and collaborating with different skill sets, and as a way of connecting audiences through text, you would probably love working with new media. Of course any person who identifies as a writer creatively really has to be aware of the intractable impact of technology on contemporary culture and cultural practice. For those who want to earn a living from their writing, being able to work with technology, embrace new platforms formally and creatively, and liaise with the design and Web specialists is quite essential. You will bring a wealth of textual savvy and perspective of great creative use to the field, and your writing practice will probably radically expand and mature as a result.

Case study – *TellTales* (online game)

Who are you?

TellTales is made up of Bernard Cohen, Director of The Writing Workshop [www.writingworkshop.com.au] and Vogel award-winning author of four novels and a children's book; Natalie Kershaw, software engineer and writer short listed for Vogel award; and Dan Ormella, designer and exhibition designer at the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Where did the idea for *TellTales* come from and how has it evolved so far?

Bernard and Natalie were discussing the issues (and problems!) around creative writing distance education. Bernard uses a lot of word games and game-like activities in The Writing Workshop program, but these didn't translate so well to the Internet. Natalie designed a collaborative method more suited for online and remote use – we named it 'TellTales'. In 2007 *TellTales* was accepted for LAMP where we were encouraged to consider expanding its application across other media.

What are your roles in the project and describe any experience or skills other than writing that have helped you develop this project?

Bernard is responsible for educational oversight, audience testing and development, and business development. He founded The Writing Workshop in 2006 and since then has worked directly with around 2000 children.

Natalie is responsible for software development and production. She is a highly experienced software engineer and has previously overseen large-scale projects in the communications area.

Dan is responsible for visual design and many elements of the game design. He and Natalie work together on the information architecture. His experience in exhibition design for children is crucial as are his interests in writing and gaming.

What is different about creating a community that encourages co-creative works, as opposed to creating your own work?

Our aim is to encourage a community based around creating the best work possible within the cohort of writers playing *TellTales*. Whilst we intend to encourage large numbers to participate, the *TellTales* community will provide a scaffold, which enables participants to improve their creative writing within the process of co-creation through our unique method of peer feedback.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

We are extremely optimistic about *TellTales*, and have had strong commercial interest every time we've presented it in a commercial setting (including at LAMP in 2007).

The project is in the development and commercialisation phase, but we haven't yet completed it. Because the three of us are working in separate areas but on equal levels, we decided to set up a company with us as equal shareholders. We've now registered TellTales Productions Pty Limited. We all feel that the engagement and education of children is what's driving *TellTales*, so commercial decisions must not compromise on the quality of what we are trying to achieve.

The biggest challenge to date has been turning commercial interest into commercial commitment – we think we're getting there! Rewards include early phase paper and bluetack tests with 8–12 year olds who absolutely loved the *TellTales* game, and seeing the design and technology coming together.

What would you say to other writers considering the use of new media?

First, there's nothing whatsoever to stop you. Digital media are easily available to use (though commercial projects may require funding and infrastructure closer to film production than to writing). My advice would be to build a website (easiest distribution method ever devised!) and see if it feels good to put work out in that manner; see what sort of audience you attract and then think about whether you'd like to take a step away from the Internet's 'gift culture'. That's the tricky bit.

Have you sought advice from any organisations during your TellTales adventures, such as ASA, AWG or ArtsLaw or any other government

departments that you would recommend to writers embarking on similar process?

We did seek information concerning IP protection from ArtsLaw, but the issues we needed to address were too specialised for their regular pro bono consultants and we were referred on (and ended up seeking legal advice elsewhere).

Case Study – Raphael Sammut (cross-platform)

Who are you?

I'm Raphael Sammut, a screen director and screenwriter with a particular interest in cross-platform entertainment. I have studied multimedia, video, film and television production and always had an interest in writing and directing for the screen, regardless of size or mode of delivery. Prior to this project, my writing was in linear form across various script lengths.

Where did the idea for this project come from and how has it evolved so far?

This project began as an idea for a linear story for children and evolved naturally through further expansion of my own understanding of non-linear and cross-platform storytelling. It was actually an idea that had been shelved for a few years because I wasn't exactly sure how to approach it. After attending various information sessions organised by the Australia Council and the Australian, Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) I began to understand the reach for stories to be told across new mediums. This seemed to fit incredibly well with my idea because it was intended for an audience who were already moving seamlessly across mediums. As I delved deeper into the story and thought about my idea for a new format, the more the pieces seemed to come together. So what began as story inspired by my own childhood experiences, soon became a story world, which organically required telling over various mediums.

What is/are your role(s) in the project and who are you working with?

As the original creator of the idea, my role began as the writer on the project, which was supported by the Australia Council through their '*Write in your face*' grant initiative. This developed by default into a writer/producer role and I began searching for a support team to take part in the Australia Council and AFTRS run Laboratory of Advanced Media Production (LAMP). I came across a well-reputed company called Ish Media, run by Managing Director Debra Allanson, Creative Director Kylie Robertson and Production Director Karla Burt. When I approached them, Ish already had various new media projects on their slate and were looking at launching a second season for their popular comedy series '*Girl Friday*'. My project was met with great enthusiasm and they just seemed to fit. Kylie even took part in the LAMP: Story of the Future workshop along with Interaction Designer

Keren Moran, so they were an integral part of the project from a very early stage. They were as excited about this as I was so we joined forces and started looking at how it would work.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

At the end of the LAMP: Story of the Future program, the project was presented at a VIP industry day and was met with great interest and enthusiasm by representatives from several commercial media groups and the ABC. This was a new and exciting experience for me and I began to realise there would be a market for the project and a path for funding, once the right framework for its development and production was in place. I also realised that the project would benefit from working with a more experienced group. This led to a formal relationship with Ish Media, to jointly develop and produce the project. Ish then moved quickly to bring the ABC and the Australian Children's Television Foundation on board to fund development, and be potential project partners. The credibility this adds to the project in the wider market place is as important as their funding. Both the ABC and Ish Media have already met with BBC executives who have expressed interest in seeing the developed project. Finding international partnerships, especially for large scale and relatively expensive projects such as this, is an important step to funding and the commercialisation path.

How has working with mentors, and in particular a games writing mentor, helped you with this project?

Working with the support of a great team is always a welcome advantage but having the assistance and feedback of highly regarded and well-established mentors is essential. The main challenge with this project was finding the right mentors who not only understood the screen narrative aspect but also the cross-platform mode of delivery. This concept is still relatively new and has its own unique set of challenges.

In the end, working with two established mentors for different aspects of the project seemed the most suitable approach. An experienced children's television mentor is helping to shape the structure and script the television component of the narrative. This is still a crucial part of the storytelling to this demographic and adds an aspect of credibility to the story. A games writing mentor with skills and experience writing for games and mixed-media projects also brought an important and fresh approach to the team.

His role is important because he is a fresh pair eyes to turn to when the story elements and different platforms become so intermingled that it can be confusing to see what is purposeful and what isn't. The games writing mentor can come in and out and look at things from a planning level while suggesting different solutions or offering examples of what is already working out there or has worked in the past.

What would you say to a screenwriter who is considering the use of new media?

This project had an organic fit with new media. To me it seemed that the story itself called for new modes of storytelling. Screenwriters along with all other screen creators and technicians have many tools available to them and should let the story itself guide what is required. Choosing not to use certain mediums just because their advantages and limitations are not yet understood is doing oneself an injustice. Technology is improving at an ever-increasing rate and with this comes evolution and adaptation. The more tools we have access to, the more diverse our stories can be.

If you only have a grey lead pencil, you can only draw a monochrome picture. You can create a beautiful picture but it will still consist of different shades of the same grey colour. If you have a set of colour pencils however you can create a range of different pictures in different colours. This doesn't mean that you won't use the grey lead anymore, some pictures may still work better in monochrome, but others may call for colour and some may even need a mix of everything as well as a combination of different canvasses.

Case study – Faction Comics (online)

Who are you?

I'm Sam Clayton, creator of Faction Comics. I've worked and studied in the film and TV industry for about five years and in 2006 I completed a Masters in Production Design from the Australian Film Television and Radio School. During this time I have worked mainly in a variety of art department roles. Ever since I was young I enjoyed writing and illustrating my own comics. For the last year and a half I have been working on '*The 13th Samaritan*', a graphic novel that I have co-written with Joshua Tyler.

Where did the idea for Faction Comics come from and how has it evolved so far?

I attended LAMP: Story of the Future in November last year. I had originally intended to flesh out an idea about building a website around '*The 13th Samaritan*' but at LAMP you are asked to think about other possibilities as to where your idea may go. My team and I took an element of the website that involved users submitting their own comics with the possibility of getting them published and expanded on that. So far the idea has stuck to that central theme but we aim to include an animation element by encouraging users to submit their own animated productions. We will also include the possibility of users downloading comics to their mobile devices and have just completed a prototype wire frame of the site.

What is/are your role(s) in the project and who else is involved?

I have been driving the project as a creative and business director since LAMP, and have been talking with a lot of comic and manga artists and writers about submitting work for the site once it is live. Both financial and mentoring support have been provided by children's television broadcaster Nickelodeon, resulting in the development of a very solid prototype. I have just agreed to a deal with Nickelodeon and hope to work with them on developing the project in the future.

What is different about creating a community that encourages co-creative works, as opposed to creating your own work?

I think creating a community workspace allows you to create your own work but also have the options of finding somebody to work with who

complements your skills. If you're a writer but can't illustrate it would allow you to find an illustrator and vice versa. The community aspect is also important as you can have your work seen by not only other artists and illustrators but also the general public. It's also sometimes best when you're working with someone else so they can give you that kick in the butt you may have needed to get things done.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

I think when it comes to turning the concept into a business you have to decide what aspects of the concept are most important to you and which ones aren't. Before picking the business model we decided which elements of the concept were likely to produce income and worked from there. After this model was picked we thought of a catch that would make users return to the site.

To create balance between the creative and business sides of this project I've tried to make sure I listen to not only the artists and writers but also the broadcaster. The most challenging and rewarding aspect of the project has been the meeting and dealing with so many different people from both the creative and business worlds.

What would you say to a graphic novelist who is considering the use of new media?

New media provides a way of exploring new elements that can be added on to a story contained within a graphic novel, in particular fan interaction. It allows them to help build the world within the story by coming up with backstories, spin-off characters and fan art. It provides a platform for access to the story by more people. It also provides the opportunity to get in touch with not only fans but also fellow writers and artists.

Case study – *Captive* (role-playing game)

Who are you?

I am Andrew Wilson, from Zoot Film. I'm a producer of 14 years based in Tasmania. Initially I worked in the commercial sector before broadening into film and new media. Have been funded for three short films since 2003, I am currently working on several new media, documentary and commercial projects.

Where did the idea for *Captive* come from and how has it evolved so far?

Captive sprung from a documentary that co-producer Catherine Pettman and I are working on. We attended a Story of the Future seminar which basically started the creative juices flowing as our eyes were pretty much glued open to the wide world of new media opportunities. It has evolved in an interesting manner for we now find ourselves coming full circle back to the place where we originally started, the story. Over the past year or so, we have collected a library of information on the world of new media thanks to attending LAMP: Story of the Future and other seminars, working with highly experienced mentors such as Matt Costello through the Made for Market scheme, and the ongoing and sound advice we continually receive from the Story of the Future's mother figure, Therese Fingleton, who we owe a lot of thanks to for her unwavering support of our project. From all the info we have ingested and stirred about we're now able to freely write the story of *Captive*, focusing on a really juicy and exciting plot devised with the massive assistance of Hamish Maxwell-Stewart. Hamish is our historical guru, concept writer, as well as keen gamer (board games mostly). So with him we have a very strong team and things are progressing in a really exciting way.

How did you form the team and what are your roles?

Catherine and I have been working together for several years now and *Captive* really just happened from working on the doco together. We both share the creative and logistical work load. Hamish came to us through a bit of sniffing around for a local historical writer. He was recommended to us by another historian we initially approached and like I mentioned before, Hamish is a huge asset to our team, we feel very fortunate to be able to

work with him. Hamish is officially our Historical Consultant and Concept Story Writer.

What has been your experience of working with a games writing mentor?

Brilliant, Matt was awesome. He inspired us and enabled us to become focused by filling in the gaps of knowledge we were missing. The knowledge was really important as it meant we could make informed decisions on what to do next and more specifically what our desired result is for this stage of the project.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

Well the experience so far is that we haven't yet achieved that goal. This isn't negative though. What I mean is that several more steps are going to be required before we reach that point. At the moment we are a project that is about to go out to the market place with enough background and thought put into it so that investors will see it possibly as a commercial venture. Without the funding through the Australia Council we would not be in this position, it's important to state this. The funding has pushed our project to the next level and our aim is to create a pitch document so that investors' palms start to itch. At that point we'll hand them a pen so they can pull out their chequebook and use it.

A valuable lesson would have to be ensuring you always make decisions based on the original reason for starting the journey in the first place. In other words, many people will give you amazing advice; the challenge is to remain focused on what you want to do because in the end that is what keeps the candle burning.

Our business model at the moment is to roll with the punches. We're entering into a new market so right now it's important for us to leave the door open so we can look at all the different ways of producing our product. When we start to approach investors, that's when we'll need to have a solid model behind us, until then it's open to suggestion which should help us pick the right one on the day.

There have been too many surprises to mention and challenges as well. The rewards for me have been the personal knowledge I've gained on the topic *Captive* is about. That has been the free benefit in a way because it's a

topic I am deeply interested in and it's exciting to think that one day we'll hopefully deliver a product to market that allows children to experience that topic in a way that will really excite them.

What would you say to writers considering the use of new media?

Open yourself to the market because today's new media technology really allows writers to go more deeply into their story worlds than ever before. New media is a place where backstory becomes the running companion to the main story arc because producers have many more places where they can connect the audience to the story. It can seem complicated but the simple matter is new media means you can get more mileage out of the world you've painstakingly created. This means you get to have more fun with your characters for a much longer time.

Case study – MACHINE (social networking game)

Who are you?

I'm Chris Rattray, a freelance writer with article credits in Tasmanian magazines *Enterprise* and *SAUCE*, and Perth's *X-Press*. In the last fifteen years I've written several plays for the stage, most of which have been produced locally. I've been professionally engaged as an editor, sub-editor, proofreader and script editor for a variety of clients. *MACHINE* is the second IP for video games that I've had a hand in writing and developing.

Where did the idea for *MACHINE* come from and how has it evolved so far?

Bruce Moyle and David Quinn originally envisioned a game, intended as an ARG, centred around the notion of corporate espionage and intrigue. Through the process at LAMP: Story of the Future in Queensland last year, this idea was further refined, retaining the corporate espionage slant, but dispensing with the ARG delivery method in favour of a social networking paradigm. At this stage the idea was mostly about game mechanics rather than narrative. However, through the LAMP process, we started to conceive of a game world and this led to the beginnings of a narrative. The game has now evolved to a narrative-driven game experience, with solid characters, plot and excitement, while retaining the notion of corporate espionage that sparked the entire idea.

How did you form the team and what are your roles?

As a collective, we share an office under the name 'Joffre Street Productions' where we each conduct our individual businesses and come together as a project demands. The team was already in place when we conceived of *MACHINE*. David and I are co-writers. Bruce is producer and project manager. Dion Brooksis the designer.

What has been your experience of working with a games writing mentor?

Being able to work with a writing mentor has been fantastic, especially when they've been on the same wavelength. I've found it an encouraging experience to be able to share my original ideas with someone who is able to objectively view and appreciate it within the context of the whole idea.

The feedback and criticism given from mentors has been relevant and empowering. It gives me confidence in my writing skills.

Tell us about your experience of turning the creative concept into a commercially viable one.

(Bruce Moyle)

We are still currently working on that with the support of Story of the Future and Screen Tasmania. It is a very different path we are treading here and breaking into the games industry isn't easy but we are giving it our best. With the advice of our mentors we are distilling MACHINE down to something that will hopefully be commercially viable to construct and then sell. The hardest area of the project is working out what part to keep and what to ditch either because they don't fit or it isn't possible at our current level of expertise.

What would you say to writers considering the use of new media?

Be confident – you can do it. We're all pioneers in this frontier, but you can do your homework by playing as many old games as you can and analysing their narrative structures. It's also an excuse to raid second-hand bookstores for old game-books and role-playing games, as the non-linear narrative found in these books and games will serve as a good way to start training your mind to think around the corner, down the street, up a tree, and outside the box. However, no matter what the delivery method, a solid idea will persist and find its expression in whatever manner it ultimately chooses.

Conclusion

Chapter	Career	Writing
12	Employed	Digital
	Self-Employed	Multi-platform
	Entrepreneurs	Promotional

The questions identified in the Introduction section are commonly asked by writers entering the field of writing in new media, or planning to use new media as a tool in promoting and growing their traditional media writing businesses. This guide has sought to categorise and answer these questions, or at least provide valuable insight and direction to help you find the answer for yourself.

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Questions answered

Employment models

- With more media and more stories, is there more work for creative writers?
- Can I work as a writer on other people's creative projects?
- Can I finally give up my day job?

Revisit the New Writing Universe chart

[\[http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_pdf\]](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/writers_guide/quick_links/new_writing_universe_pdf) for a reminder of just how vast and diverse creative writing is in a new media context. Of course not all of these forms of writing are financially viable as income earning options, but many are and more will become so in the future. You might not be able to give up your 'day job' just yet but with some creativity, persistence and business nous you may be able to redefine it to include a lot more creative writing.

Employment insights

- There is a huge range of employment options for creative writers in new media, but they will rarely come and find you. You often need to create them.
- Working as a writer on other people's projects is great way to learn new skills and break into the industry.
- There are plenty of professional development options, seek them out.
- Build good relationships with others in the industry. They may lead you to your next job or become a valuable mentor.

Craft and concept models

- Will my literary writing skills transfer to the world of interactive media?
- Can my existing works find new life as interactive content or games?
- How do I know if my idea will make a good game?
- Am I capable of developing digital native ideas?

Hopefully it should be apparent that writing talent is writing talent irrespective of which world you are writing in, new or old or both. But it should also be evident that this talent needs massaging to be relevant and you need to be on intimate terms with the medium you are writing for. No writer would consider changing genres, say from writing novels to writing

for performance, without first being sufficiently motivated to do so by a passion for that form of literary expression and an understanding of the new craft challenges presented by writing in the new genre. Moving into writing for new media is no different. To be a successful games writer you must play games and appreciate and engage with them emotionally, in the same way as a screenwriter must appreciate what audiences see on the big screen and how it makes them feel. Knowing whether you have an idea that will work as a game or some other new media format is something that will only come with experience and a deeper understanding of that form of storytelling and story 'reading'.

Craft insights:

- There is a wide range of writing formats.
- There is a role for traditional media with new media.
- There are many writing roles in digital games and cross-platform writing.
- Interactivity is a different way of writing.
- There is a range of types of interactivity.
- Game writing requires working with game-play.
- Game writing requires expressive narrative through many elements beyond text.
- Cross-platform writing has its own constraints and benefits.

Collaboration models

- If my audience becomes co-creators, what about the integrity of my work?
- I don't know the first thing about websites or game engines. Who would I collaborate with, how would I find them, how would that work?

The two scenarios of collaboration, with your audience on the one hand and with 'professionals' on the other, are the main forms of collaboration that any writer in this space needs to employ. While collaborating with other professionals to get the job done is a necessity, collaborating with audiences and users is more a matter of choice. Writers need to understand however that user-generated content is not going to go away and many believe it will only increase. It will not be relevant or appropriate for every project, but the democratisation of production brought about by the cheap and accessible supply of every tool imaginable, from video camera to publishing platforms, means that audiences are increasingly demanding to be part of the conversation.

Whatever history has taught us about prophesising doom for media distribution channels, it has certainly taught us that ignoring your audience means eventually losing them. Trading at least a sliver of authorship to avoid obscurity may be the biggest challenge for writers in today's environment, and may well produce new and intriguing creative writing offspring with as profound an impact on audiences as Shakespeare, Dickens and Joyce had in their day.

Collaboration insights

- Collaborate early and listen equally to all members of your team.
- Be prepared to wear more than one hat.
- Build a team that balances creativity, business acumen and technical skills.
- Seek advice about the best business and partnership structures for your project.

Marketing and distribution models

- If I want to stick to writing for traditional media, does digital technology offer me more options to find and reach new audiences?
- Who is my audience and with so much noise how will they find my work?

Audiences for new media content cross age, gender and geographic divides. They are globally dispersed and often potentially more numerous than for traditional media, but sometimes they are also tucked into small niches, so writers need to understand this new audience make-up and work with it.

Marketing and distribution insights

- There are many ways a writer can market and distribute their fiction with accessible and free technologies.
- Just having a website is not enough.
- Social media requires certain techniques, time and effort.
- There are many unconventional approaches to promotion.
- Considering the experience of the consumer is crucial.
- Extending the fiction across media and with specially-created experiences can be promotional in itself.
- Getting your voice heard is about both creating the right noise and about doing it in the right place. Co-opt your audience, make them your ambassadors, contributors and critics. They will then become your advocates.

Copyright and business models

- How can I stop people from copying and illegally distributing my work?
- Should I just put my work out there and let it build me an audience?
- How can I generate revenue from my creative content?
- Who funds and invests in interactive media, websites and games?

For those serious about earning income from new media writing, it should now be clear that the previous model of passive dependency, where publishers and distributors take care of business, will no longer suffice. Writers need to be aware of the nuances of the multiple production and distribution platforms and how features like customisation (audiences choosing what, when and how they engage with content) and interactivity (playing with, remixing and mashing up content) impact everything from copyright protection to revenue models, and to embed this thinking into the creative process where appropriate.

As we've seen there are no hard and fast rules about how to generate revenue from your content and new business models are emerging all the time. The same goes for investment. The new media industry is incredibly diverse and as such can attract investment from any sector. All industries from engineering to education, health services, creative industries, the arts and government are stakeholders in this industry, as potential creators, consumers, re-mixers, publishers and distributors of content. So one can expect that business, investment and partnership models never dreamed of before might emerge from such an assorted playing field.

The only real rules are that there are no rules, so more than ever, writers need to be party to discussions around marketing, monetising and protecting their work.

Copyright and business model insights

- Don't be afraid of the commercial elements of new media – make them your own.
- Sustainability, especially revenue sustainability, is not a dirty word. It's how your passion can fund your life.
- Use experts to help where you don't know the answer. Don't feel that you need to be alone.
- Demand your rights, in terms of getting recognition for your digital content; and demand good quality digital content in return.
- Understand some of the key concepts of the market – they will help you understand the power of the digital age.

- Don't discount mobile, and don't think it is just another screen to the same Web service. Give it the attention that it demands – your audience is!

Looking for the Story of the Future

What does the future look like?

We can expect the debate around how best to provide high-speed broadband and mobile services to a distributed population across a massive landmass to continue to dominate discussions in Australia and have knock-on effects on the delivery of content for some time. It seems fairly clear that while building it is no guarantee that they will come, having a road they can travel down, be it fast Internet or ubiquitous 3G mobile coverage, is critical to them actually starting to travel.

Meanwhile more sophisticated and increasingly mobile-compatible content will continue to be developed by Australian producers in anticipation of better infrastructure and to service other markets with infrastructure already in place. Current media usage patterns suggest we can expect further growth in the creation and use of immersive and interactive social media such as virtual worlds and games, for employment, education, self-expression and entertainment. Audiences including students of literature will develop skills in analysing and critiquing new media writing, as is already happening with tasks like this one recently set for Year 7 high school students (around 13 years old):

Your friend has to read an engaging novel. She texts you about the novel you are reading. Imagine you are sending a text message to him/her about the plot of your novel. Tell your friend what happens in your novel in the short time and space that a text message allows. Don't go into any other detail. Just concentrate on what happens.

When it comes to audiences, writers comfortably expect to look further afield than Australia for supporters. Given that what is being created, be it a game, website or even a book, can be produced, stored and distributed in digital format, exporting your work becomes an increasingly viable option. Aside from being able to exploit global distribution platforms to reach new audiences, digital content also offers other competitive advantages. It can be exported at a fraction of the costs incurred by industries such as manufacturing, and can be delivered to the other side of the world without producing significant carbon emissions. While territorial rights will remain a large factor in any export strategy, the tyranny of distance that has so long beset Australian companies operating in a global context does not handicap new media creators.

One can also expect Australia's proximity to the large emerging markets in the world, China and India, to provide a further competitive advantage, this

time over competitors from other regions, with fewer economic and social ties to these markets.

Business models and copyright provisions will warrant further debate, in a free market economy trends are set by how users spend their time and money. As such, one can expect that business models and copyright adjustments will cement as producers and publishers adjust the pricing and supply of content and services in response to the market demand.

The current 'commoditisation' of content – where digital publishers (new media companies) feel awash in a sea of content, mainly from legacy media such as newspapers, magazine and broadcast, needs to change. While it is true that many new media companies do not see the value of content created specifically for the digital medium (digital native content), consumers themselves are increasingly recognising the value of something 'new' as opposed to something merely 'repackaged'. Indeed, research from the University of Southern California

[\[http://www.digitalcenter.org/pages/site_content.asp?intGlobalId=22\]](http://www.digitalcenter.org/pages/site_content.asp?intGlobalId=22) indicated that since 2005, consumers have been willing to pay for quality digital content. For our part, as consumers of digital content, we also need to be willing to ask for more – and to pay for quality. How else can we expect others to do so?

All in all the future looks bright in the new media country and there is no reason why writers should not have a large claim in the land grab.

As for the final question:

- Can somebody please tell me, what is Twitter?

The best answer has to be SIGN UP AND SEE!

Perhaps as a writer setting out to make a digital living this could be your mantra!

Glossary

ARG – An alternate reality game (ARG) is an interactive narrative that uses the real world as a platform, often involving multiple media and game elements, to tell a story that may be affected by participants' ideas or actions.

Banner – a form of advertising where a visual banner appears across the top or bottom of a site. The term has come to mean any form of graphical display element on a page, including down the side of the page (skyscraper) or in the middle of the page (island), and are often referred to by position (Top Right). (See 'Text links'.)

Blogs – a shortened form of the term 'web logs', which were thought pieces written to be read by a (possibly unknown) audience. Generally, consideration and thought is put into a blog, and blogs are a great place to find out about new concepts, new ideas or new sites. (Video blogs also exist.)

Buzz – generating word of mouth, excitement or interest in a product or service. Things with 'buzz' are talked about, shared with people and forwarded on to others. Buzz is the current zeitgeist – or the hot topic of moment.

Citizen marketing – the idea that people will engage in marketing your product for you. Sometimes people do this of their own accord, but more and more creators are overtly attempting to facilitate this happening, by supplying assets or calling for collective action.

CPA – Cost per Acquisition/Action. Similar model to CPC, where payment is made based on action such as signing up to the site clicked through.

CPC – Cost per Click. Unlike CPM, the revenue is paid based on the number of people who respond to the ad (click on this). The rates are generally higher than for CPM, as few people will respond to an ad – but are more likely to be interested in the offer.

CPM – Cost per Thousand (M) – Online advertising model where the revenue is agreed based on the thousands of people to whom the ad is shown. Like other broadcast advertising, response is not relevant and the cost goes up as the ad is shown to more people.

Creative Commons – a form of licensing content which allows the rights holder to define the rights that can be shared/used by other people. Similiar to an ‘open source’ licensing system.

Cross-platform writing – writing that is expressed across different media platforms. It does not refer to digital games with multiple platforms, digital games that are available on different game platforms, or cross-platform distribution of content.

Digital content – content (text, images, video) which is provided through a digital consumption device. Digital content may start life as non-digital but is digitised for delivery to the end user.

Digital Rights Management (DRM) – a form of copy protection which is applied to content to stop it being shared at will or without approval of the original copyright owner. Very contentious subject in all forms of creative content (including music, video, film, etc.) as the owners wish to maximise their return through limiting access to those who have fulfilled the conditions required (normally – paid for the content), but this is at odds with the promotional possibilities and sharing nature of digital content.

Digital Video Recorder (DVR) – also known as a Personal Video Recorder – a device which allows for the recording of television onto a hard disk from where it can be replayed, fast-forwarded, etc.

Discovery – the ability to find new things. This is difficult if filtering is very effective. When we reduce the noise, we are more likely to see what we know/want and less likely to find/discover unusual things.

Downloadable – content which is delivered in the form of a file that can be saved and accessed at a later date. Usually there is a delay in the delivery of the content (while the whole file is delivered) but the user can normally access this at leisure without restriction. Most Digital Rights Management is focussed on ensuring that downloadable content cannot be shared.

e-book – a book provided in an electronic (digital) form. They can be in different formats and can require dedicated readers (e-book readers). Some e-books are provided in PDF (Portable Document Format) which can be read using a free reader (from Adobe Acrobat).

Filtering – applying a screen which limits the responses to a specific action (e.g. a search) by ‘filtering’ out the undesired elements. Also referred to as ‘removing the noise’.

Freemiums – offering a product or service free in the beginning to generate interest and take-up and then a charging model is applied. It is important that consumers know that the service will only be free for a period of time.

Generation (Gen) C – a highly connected group of digital consumers who are actively engaged with their community and use this to filter and discover information in the digital space. They are a more creative generation than any previous, empowered by communications and computers. While they often cross-over with Generation Y, Gen C exhibits highly and hyper-connected behaviours, rather than being born in a specific year range. Approximately 10% of Gen C are over 45.

Heritage media – see Legacy media

HTML – Hypertext Markup Language. The formatting language used to write web pages, which defines how they will look.

Joost – an internet TV service which provides almost 500 TV channels with over 25,000 programs. Joost downloads a player to the computer and can then stream high quality video programs through this to the user. Other Internet TV services include Hulu and Veoh.

Legacy media – content which is developed for consumption through a linear or non-interactive form such as TV, film or publication (book, magazine or newspaper). Legacy content might be created digitally (written on a computer, filmed using digital film), but the consumption is assumed to be through a non-digital device. (Note that a digital TV taking a digital signal from a digitally made piece of content is still regarded as Legacy when the content is consumed in a passive, sit back manner.)

Long Tail – a concept that the Internet has opened up the possibilities of finding a market for all forms of niche (small volume) content. Basically, whereas the top songs are bought by most people, there is usually at least one person who will buy a copy of all the other songs. A theory developed by Chris Anderson, the ‘head’ is normally 50% of the sales, and the ‘tail’ can be very, very long.

Mash-up – taking content and chopping and changing this to deliver something new. Sometimes mash-ups will include content from a variety of sources ‘mashed up’ in a new offer.

Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG) – games where there are massive numbers of players (often in the millions) who all participate and interact with each other in an online environment. The players all share a ‘world’ and create characters who live out their lives in this world (Role Player).

MMS – Multimedia Messaging Service. Similar to SMS or text message, this is a form of mobile messaging which allows the incorporation of rich media content (images, short video, long text).

Native digital content – content which is developed with the specific intent of being consumed in some digital form – usually in an interactive manner (see Legacy Media).

Noise – the general increase in life volumes created as a result of increased connectivity. The volumes increased are in content, information, communication and connectedness. Due to the volume of the ‘noise’ which exists around us, it is important to create ‘buzz’ to get cut-through on the noise.

Off-deck – the opposite of On-deck, where the content provided is made available more like a web model. The consumer enters the address (or clicks on a link in an SMS message) and can access the content regardless of their mobile carrier. See the section on mobile for pros and cons.

On-deck – the name given for services which are provided by a mobile carrier within a dedicated area, often where content is free, subsidised or the data rates waived. The content that is provided in this area is under the control of the carrier – even if they contract with third parties to deliver the sites

Open source – a standard, system or development process which is not controlled or owned by one person or company, but is open to being used by many people.

PoD (Publish on Demand) – the ability to have a publication (book, magazine, newspaper) converted from a digital to a hard copy upon request. There may be some time delays (in terms of printing) but storage of

the pre-printed publications is not required as only a single digital form need be held.

Portals – internet sites which aggregate or provide content on a variety of topics or which link through to more content. Ninemsn is a portal site, as is Yahoo!7. News Ltd is also a portal site (to the rest of the News Ltd family) while Fairfax [www.fairfax.com.au] is actually more of an index to the Fairfax suite of sites, rather than a portal (it does not provide information itself).

Prosumers – the amalgamation of ‘producers’ and ‘consumers’. Where as producers make original content (blogs, videos, load up photos, etc.), prosumers interact with this and comment on the content created, rather than just anonymously consuming it.

Prototype – building an example of something so that you can see how it might work as a finished product.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) – paying for a preferential presence in search engine results.

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) – the manner by which websites embed specific information within the site to allow the site to be more easily found by search engines such as Google. SEO is an art as well as a science and includes creating sites within a site to allow the sub-sites to be more easily found; applying rich metadata tags to a site; making arrangements with other sites to reference each other so they are more easily found, etc. SEO is designed to get around the theoretically impersonal nature of search by skewing the results in one’s favour.

Short Message Service (SMS) – a mobile phone text message. Called ‘short’ as the message text is limited to 160 characters in length. The single most prevalent form of digital communication in the world.

Social media – the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio.

Social Marketing Optimization (SMO) – a set of methods for generating interest (buzz) through the use of social media. This includes tactics such as RSS feeds, tagging (allowing people to Digg this), blogging and commenting or ‘feeding’ to create interest

Streamed video – video which is delivered in the form of a digital ‘stream’ – much like radio. It is not delivered as a file (download) but as a right-now form of video. Audio (notably from digital radio) can also be delivered in this format.

Subscription – payment of a regular amount of money to gain/retain access to a service. Subscriptions may include a specific number of accesses, for example, a 20 access subscription would allow you to access a service 20 times in the relevant period. Many subscriptions are for unlimited access during the period.

Tagging – the ability for consumers to mark a piece of content, blog, website, image, photo, story, etc. as something they like. Tagging is similar to bookmarking, but social media tagging sites allow the tags on content to be aggregated (gathered together) to provide a ‘rating’ based on tags.

Text links – a form of advertising where the element to be clicked on appears as a link of text on the page. The line is hyperlinked to either another site or another page. In this way, it performs similar to a banner ad, but is displayed only as a line of text.

Traditional Content – see legacy media

Twitter – a type of short message service (140 characters) where all messages are passed into effectively a ‘stream’ of messages and the stream can viewed as a whole (unfiltered) or through seeing only messages from those one is interested in following. Replies can be made and direct (personal) message sent. The stream can also be viewed by special (hash - #) tags or by searching for a specific word. Often called ‘micro-blogging’, Twitter is more a ‘stream of comment’ than a considered piece of writing. Intensely presence (NOW) based and collaborative.

VoD (Video on Demand) – the delivery of video upon specific request. Commonly used for online and mobile, the content might be short (30 seconds) or long (full length movies) and is typified by being delivered upon request (streamed or downloaded).

WAP – Wireless Application Protocol. One of the ways in which content and ‘web-like’ information can be delivered to mobile phones. It is often used as a shortcut to refer to mobile sites (WAP sites), even when they are provided through other forms of connectivity.

Wiki – from the Hawaiian for ‘fast’ – wiki, as used now, is the name given to information or reference work which is developed collaboratively using online tools. Wikipedia is an example of an encyclopaedia developed online in a collaborative manner.