Interactive Storytelling
Overview

• Look at interactive storytelling at different levels
  – Low-level nuts & bolts
  – Common interactive patterns / structure
  – Ways interactivity can be used
Why?

• Computer games are pervasive
  – Almost everybody games
  – From Sudoku to eSports

• Interactive stories require different skills than traditional creative writing

• Interesting to learn about how to make them
Let's Try One

• Let's play a simple interactive story
  – Brevity Quest
    • By Chris Longhurst
    • http://o.ooli.ca/BrevityQuest
    • Fantasy story
    • Experiment in brevity
Observations

- Very little text
  - Just a few words
  - Barely qualifies as a story by conventional measures
- Still a compelling experience
  - Because of interactivity
Twine

● How to make interactive stories?
● We'll use a tool called Twine
  – Choice-based interactive fiction
  – Specializes in text not graphics
    • Allows you to focus on interactivity without distractions
  – http://twinery.org/
Twine model

- Different passages (screens) with choices going to other passages
- Similar to CYOA books
Demo

- Create passage
- Set title (doesn't appear)
- Fill text
- Play it
Choices

• Choice syntax

It is a dark and stormy night.

Go Outside

You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.
Choices

- Choice syntax

- Introduction

  - It is a dark and stormy night.

- Go Outside

- You step outside.
  You get all wet from the rain.
Choices

• Choice syntax

Introduction

+ Tag

• It is a dark and stormy night.

Go Outside

Outside

+ Tag

• You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.

It is a dark and stormy night.

You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.
Choices

• Choice syntax

```
Introduction
+ Tag

• It is a dark and stormy night.
• [[Go Outside->Outside]]

Outside
+ Tag

• You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.
```

It is a dark and stormy night.

**Go Outside**

You step outside. You get all wet from the rain.
• Make another passage with an alternate choice on your own

[Go outside—>Outside]]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>choice</th>
<th>title of passage to go to if choice is taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"What would you like for dessert?" the server asks.

You look down at the restaurant menu.

"We have some ripe peaches. They are soft and juicy," the server says.

"We have a chocolate cake, a carrot cake, and a tiramisu," the server says.

"Good choice," the server says.
Choice-Based Patterns

- Patterns you might encounter when making your interactive stories
Linear

- Not very interactive
Linear

• Can have choices, but still hit plot points
  – Affects feel and interpretation of events even if events are the same
Linear: Same Events, Different Interpretation

While walking home, you notice a man throw some trash on the ground:

- Ignore it
- Pick it up

You do nothing:
- Go home

You pick it up and throw it away:
- Go home

You continue on your way home

I saw a man throw some trash on the ground.

I did nothing.

I continued on my way home.

I saw a man throw some trash on the ground.

I picked it up and threw it away.

I continued on my way home.
Gauntlet

- One path to get to end
  - Choose wrong, and game ends
Gauntlet

• Example:
  – http://o.ooli.ca/interactivestorytelling/BombDefusal.html

• When game ends, player must restart
  – Frustrating
  – Player must memorize correct path to get to end
  – Alternative: Go back to where wrong choice made
Loops

- Makes a game longer
- Content and choices repeat
  - Player can explore choices more deeply
- Can have a mix of small loops and big loops
Hub and Spoke

- One central hub
  - Lots of choices offered
  - Many choices loop back to central hub

- Good for optional content, conversations
Hub and Spoke

• Example:
  - http://o.ooli.ca/interactivestorytelling/CryingBaby.html
Map

- Different locations are passages

You are in the kitchen

You are in the living room

You are in the bedroom

Enter house

You are on Park Street

Visit the park

You are in the park

Leave the park

Leave house

Go to the kitchen

Go to the living room

Go to the bedroom

Go to the living room
Too Many Choices?

• More choices is good
  – Impractical to have too many choices
    • Due to exponential explosion
Let's Make Some Stories!

- Not enough time to make a full story
  - More writing required than normal stories
    - Choices mean lots extra content needed
  - Make a small scene
    - e.g. conversation or small area to explore
- Booklet contains some recipes for some more additional features of Twine
- At end, we’ll play each others’ stories
Need Inspiration?

• What are some things that interactive stories do better than normal stories?
Some Ways Interactivity is Better

- Exploration
  - Explore a space

- Self-expression and roleplaying
  - I did it my way!
  - Player controls focus and pacing
Some Ways Interactivity is Better

- Challenge
  - Puzzles or difficulties to overcome
  - Learn a skill

- Complicity
  - Players are responsible for outcome because it's based on their choices
    - Help develop empathy?

- Difficult choices and moral decisions
Need Inspiration?

- Booklet contains links to some games to try
Playtesting

- Let's try each others' games
  - Important!
- Players interact with what you've written
  - Players are unpredictable
  - Need to test your story to see if it works