

A theoretical proposition for interactive telemedia design

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The transformation of communication media have been requiring new planning methodologies generating a new strategic concept for creative expression, for distante collaboration, for teleducation: scripting for interactive media.

Media authors have alternately been performing as content providers and as designers. They have been enlarging their spectrum, reinventing structures for hybrid human/artificial systems, enunciating metalinguistic propositions for interactive media.

While experiencing with and reinventing media languages, they have gradually abandoned traditional functions as individual producers of texts, images and sounds. They have indicated that the rising author of the new electronic age has to become a programmer, a designer, an architect of media systems, a composer of media processes.

However, this newly developed metalanguage has not yet been considered as an language in itself and therefore has never been seen as a corpus for serious investigation and further experimentation.

My purpose is to propose a concept to understand the work done by those media designers while advancing a theoretical proposition for orienting the design of interactive telemedia. Some historical experiments with this metalinguistic form of systemic expression will be reviewed. They have resulted in unheard forms of distante education and collaboration.

“La Plissure du Texte” was conceived by Roy Ascott, for 1983 Electra exhibition, in Paris, as participatory, dispersed authorship. In December, during sixteen days, the world’s first planetary fairy tale was telescripted via computer connections.

Proposed by Lyotard as an atelier of divergences, “Épreuves d’écriture” was performed, through a computer network, by twenty-six

French writers around fifty words relating to the problematic of immateriality. The collective text could be read at the "Centre Georges Pompidou," Paris, during the manifestation "Les Immatériaux" from March to July, 1985.

"Hearsay", organized by Norman White at A-Space Gallery in Toronto, November 1985, through the Artex Network, was based on a children's game wherein a story is secretly passed around. "The messenger," poem by hungarian-born Robert Zend, was successively transmitted and translated around the world and back to Toronto.

The Reflux Project, coordinated by myself from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, conceived teleart as informational flow. "Reflux" intended to build a structure to entail teams around the world to generate dialogical art, through a decentralized structure, an alternative for planetwide communication.

Participating nodes distributed proposals of dialogical art (influxes). Each node resent responses (fluxes), completing a movement of reflux. Works were exchanged, from January 1991 to March 1992, through fax, computer, telephone, videophone allowing for telecommunication language research.

"Hall of Whispers: a Virtual Opera," coordinated by Brian Andreas, from Orinda, California, September 1992 to January 1993, proposed "an interchange of stories about new worlds we feel rising within us". Andreas invited participants to "send their wishes for the future, their thoughts on the present, their meaning gathered from the textures of their lives to the 'Hall of Whispers'," through fax, electronic and standard mail

Those experiments in design for interactive telemedia will be discussed prompting a discussion on collective telewriting projects.