



## **Welcome**

Welcome to the sixth bi-annual conference of the Digital Games Research Association, the second to be held on the North American continent and the first to be hosted in the United States. Georgia Tech is very proud to be hosting this year's DiGRA at the historical Georgian Terrace Hotel, located in the heart of midtown Atlanta.

## **The Theme: Defragging Game Studies**

The theme for DiGRA 2013 is "Defragging Game Studies," a playful linguistic remix of the terms "frag" and "defrag." Defragging is the computer term for reducing file fragmentation. Fraggling, derived from the military term for killing an officer in one's own unit, has become video game parlance for the temporary killing of another player.

In the early game studies community, a good deal of fraggling (in all three senses) took place between various camps, schools of thought and disciplines. This included discussions as to whether or not game studies should split into more discipline-centered communities; however, the overall trend has been to continue to grow our field as an "interdiscipline" that includes humanities, social sciences and psychology, computer science, design studies, and fine arts.

Borrowing from the computer engineering term, the theme for DiGRA 2013 highlights this process of defragmenting, which both embraces and better articulates our diverse methods and perspectives while allowing the game studies research community to remain a coherent and unified whole.

## **An interdiscipline? Ideal vs. Reality**

While the ideal of interdisciplinarity is a strong one, the distribution of this year's conference track is a strong indicator that, while still interdisciplinary, DiGRA is heavily weighted towards the humanities and social and behavioral sciences, two tracks which drastically outnumber smaller tracks in presentations, in some cases by an order of magnitude. This may be in part due to the growth in interest from students in those disciplines, in part from the academic stature of DiGRA relative to other publishing options, such as computer science. Many CS scholars told us that they did not submit to DiGRA because it does not have the same clout as other conferences they attend, such as CHI or SIGGRAPH. We are hoping as the discipline matures, this will change. We also see a growing interest in games as fine art, as seen through the eyes of artists, art historians and curators, as indicated by the Art History of Games co-located conference, as well as a continued and growing interest in gender, captured in the Feminists in Games co-located conference, as well as the XYZ exhibition, which will host our opening night reception.

### **Some Signs of Progress...**

These last two features of this year's DiGRA are an indication of the maturing of our objects of study and our shared disciplinary space. Whilst game studies is in rather good shape in terms of gender balance along other vectors—ethnicity, cultural background, race, geographic location—we are primarily a group of scholars, designers and artists of American and Western European origin, drawing from those traditions.

And the subjects of our scholarship and work tend to be equally homogenous, with an overabundance of work on online communities, in particular MMOs, learning games and games for change. The topic of independent and art-based games and their makers is a notable new focus seen in this year's program, as is a focus on close playings via the Well Played and Humanities & Games tracks.

### **DiGRA: A Brief Glimpse Backward and Forward**

2013 marks the 10th anniversary of the first DiGRA conference, which was held in Utrecht in 2003. The high quantity of submissions to DiGRA 2013 is another indicator that our "interdiscipline" is growing. Far from our often marginalized status in the early days, many universities now have games programs, and more are on the way. The ratio of faculty to students (including tenured faculty!) has shifted...many of the academic professors and researchers presenting at DiGRA 2013 were graduate students at the first and second DiGRA conferences. And the interest in games research from students continues to rise. This portents well for a long, upward slope.

DiGRA 2013 celebrates a decade of our discipline "making itself official" with a special panel, in which founders and luminaries from our field look back on the last ten years, reflecting on how game studies has grown and changed since the first DiGRA conference.

As we continue to grow and mature as a field, we should also endeavor to be more inclusive—of diverse perspectives, methodologies and subjects. We encourage delegates to engage in a dialog about this while we are all together in Atlanta as we look forward to the decades to come.

**Celia Pearce, Helen Kennedy & John Sharp**  
**DiGRA 2013 – Conference Convenors**