

**Novosibirsk State
Technical University**

Electronic literary text from linguistic studies perspective and key theoretical issues

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Introduction

- **Electronic literature is an area that has rapidly developed as a field of creative practice;**
- **Textuality and communication are now digitally mediated;**
- **How do I read this?**
- **Espen Aarseth established in «Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic literature» (1997):**
“non-trivial efforts is required from the reader of a cybertext in order to traverse the text”;
- **Genre in electronic literature is complicated by the interdisciplinary nature;**
- **Electronic work is equally shaped and delimited by technological innovations;**
- **Electronic genres emerge in response to and in conversation with literary and artistic traditions: Dada, Surrealism, modernism and postmodernism, Fluxus and etc.**

Defining electronic literature

- The term «electronic literature» is controversial within the field itself:

1. it is not specific enough;
2. refers essentially to any device powered by electricity.

- Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) – 1999:

“Electronic literature, or e-lit, refers to works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer. Within the broad category of electronic literature are several forms and threads of practice”

Some of which are:

- Hypertext fiction and poetry, on and off the Web;
- Kinetic poetry presented in Flash and using other platforms;
- Computer art installations, which ask viewers to read them or otherwise have literary aspects;
- Conversational characters, also known as chatterbots;
- Interactive fiction;
- Literary apps;
- Novels that take the form of emails, sms messages, or blogs;
- Poems and stories that are generated by computer, either interactively or based on parameters at the beginning;
- Collaborative writing projects that allow readers to contribute the text of a work;
- Literary performances online that develop new ways of writing.

Giselle Beiguelman

Code Movie 1 (2006)



Jim Andrews

Nio (2001)



Digitized Literature and Electronic literature

- “digital born literature” (Hayles, 2008);
- to be read/acted on a digital medium;
- could not be printed;
- electronic literature uses the affordances of the computer to dynamically render the story;
- electronic literature is algorithmic;
- N. Wardrip-Fruin defines a work of electronic literature as “a literary work that requires the digital computation performed by [...] computers” (Wardrip-Fruin, 2010);
- R. Simanowski states that “the condition of ‘digital computation’ is not fulfilled by the banal way of being created on a computer” (Simanowski, 2010);
- Electronic literature is based on tensions that contribute to establishing its specificity: tension on the media, on the semiotic forms, on the programmed writing and on the aesthetic experience.

Where do you find e-lit?

- [Electronic Literature Collection, Volume 1](#)
- [Electronic Literature Collection, Volume 2](#)
- [ELMCIP Knowledge Base](#)
- [I ♥ E-Poetry](#)
- [Dreaming Methods](#) (Andy Campbell and collaborators)
- [Secret Technology](#) (Jason Nelson)
- [Kate Pullinger](#)
- [Stir Fry Texts](#) (Jim Andrews)
- [Webyarns](#) (Alan Bigelow)
- [J.R. Carpenter](#)
- [crisscross](#) (Christine Wilks)
- [Young Hae Chang Heavy Industries](#)

Electronic literature: history

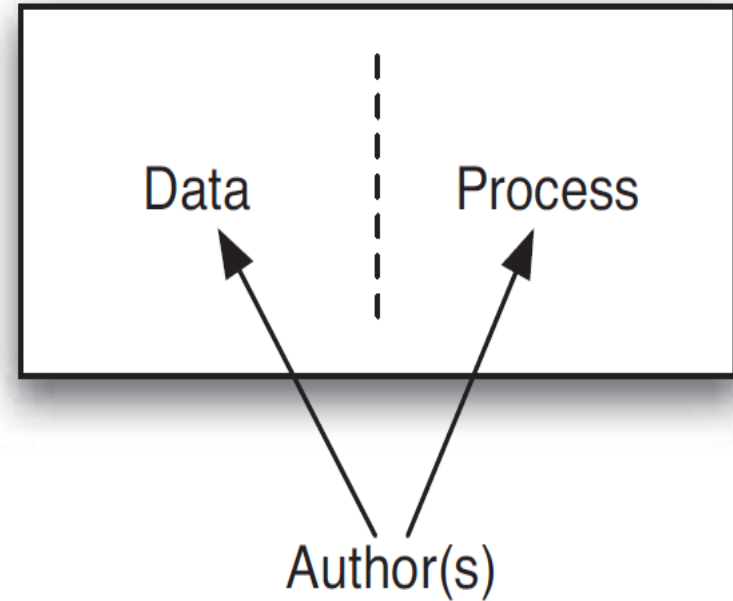
- “Afternoon” (1987) by M. Joyce;
- “Colossal Cave Adventure” (1976);
- MUD (Multi User Dungeon / Multiplayer world);
- Ch. Strachey, the [Love Letters generator](#) (1952);
- “The Garden of Forking Paths” (1941) by Jorge Luis Borges;
- Memex W. Bush (1945);
- procedural, participatory, encyclopedic, spatial properties [Murray];
- D.K. R. Licklider (1960s, the prototype of the Internet with free access to any user from anywhere on the world map);
- T. Nelson introduced the term hypertext (1963);
- “ELIZA” by J. Weizenbaum (1966);
- Seymour Papert and Alan Kay, the founders of artificial intelligence and an object-oriented approach to programming;
- World Wide Web (1989, T. Burns-Lee);

New media (NM) principles

- New media are forms of media that are computational and rely on computers for redistribution;
- Principles:
 1. Numerical representation (all objects of NM are composed of digital code; hence, they are numerical representations);
 2. Modularity (NM object has the same structure on different levels throughout;
 3. Automation (numerical coding (principles 1) and modular structure (principles 2) of NM objects allows for many operations in creation, manipulation and access of NM objects to be automated);
 4. Variability (a NM object is not fixed and can exist in various versions, which is another consequence of numerical principle and modularity principle);
 5. Transcoding is the direct digital-to-digital conversion of one encoding to another.

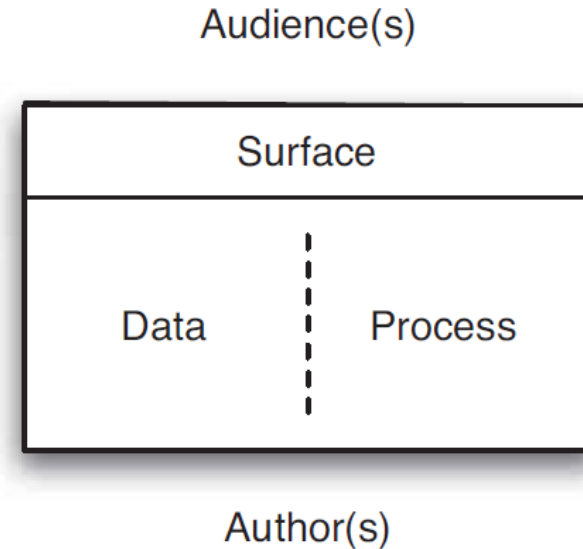
A view of digital media: data and process

- **Data elements are mostly precreated media (text, still images, video and animation, and sound and music);**
- **Processes - the working parts of the simulated machine.**



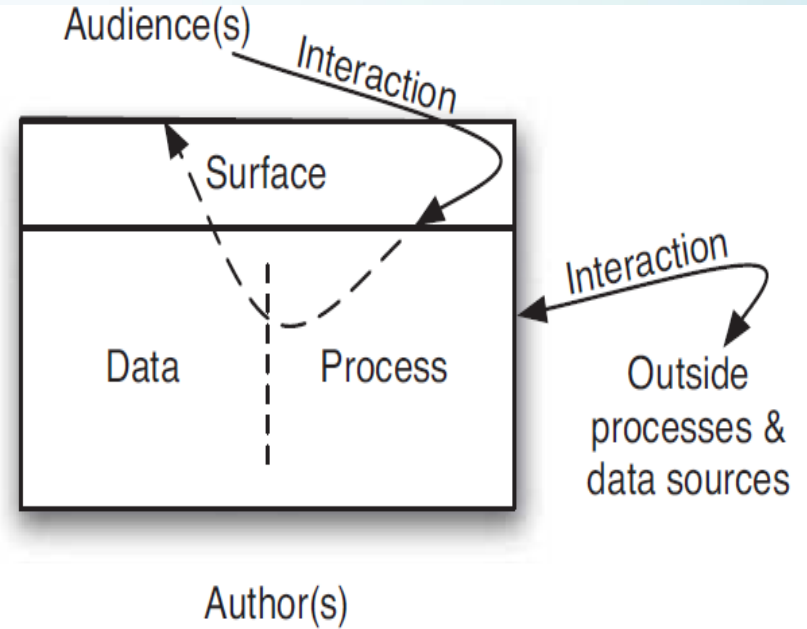
A view of digital media: surface

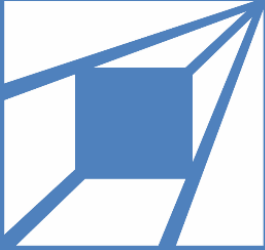
- **surface** - what the audience experiences (the output of the processes operating on the data, in the context of the physical hardware and setting, through which any audience interaction takes place).



A view of digital media: audience

Interaction takes place through the surface of the work, resulting in change to its internal data and/or processes.





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