

# The New Media Writing Prize Special Collection

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## Introduction

This article introduces the New Media Writing Prize (NMWP) special collection ([webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2912](https://webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2912)) created on behalf of the six UK Legal Deposit Libraries<sup>1</sup> and hosted by the UK Web Archive.<sup>2</sup> The article is divided into two sections, presenting the perspectives of the archivists and the organizers of the prize respectively. The first section outlines the scope of the collection and how it fits within wider collecting activity. It explains the methodology and workflows behind building the collection, with a special focus on the quality assurance aspect of the process, and on what constitutes a ‘good copy’ in the context of complex digital narratives. Furthermore, it touches on the history of the collaborations between the British Library and digital writing communities, which resulted in numerous workshops, events, residencies and ultimately the creation of this collection. The second section presents the history of the prize from the point of view of its organizers, highlighting its evolution through the years and plans for the future.

## A curatorial perspective

### *Collecting emerging formats at the British Library*

Following the introduction of The Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations in 2013,<sup>3</sup> all six UK legal deposit libraries (LDLs) embarked on a collaborative effort to build their knowledge and capability for collecting born-digital publications. Emerging formats are part of these publications: they are defined as born-digital works whose formats are more complex than those currently in the libraries’ collections and would require further development of the libraries’ existing collecting practices and infrastructure.

To begin their research on emerging formats, the libraries decided to prioritize two types of publication: book as mobile apps and web-based interactive narratives. The former are digital books published as mobile apps, and often make use of the interactive functionality typical of mobile technology as well as relying heavily on the specific hardware and software they were created for. Web-based interactive narratives expect the reader to make decisions in order to determine how the narrative will unfold. They share some interactive features with mobile apps,

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<sup>1</sup> National Library of Scotland, ‘UK legal deposit libraries’. Available at: <[nls.uk/guides/publishers/legal-deposit-libraries/](https://nls.uk/guides/publishers/legal-deposit-libraries/)> [accessed 13 March 2022].

<sup>2</sup> UKWA, UK Web Archive. Available at: <[webarchive.org.uk/](https://webarchive.org.uk/)> [accessed 13 March 2022].

<sup>3</sup> legislation.gov.uk, ‘The Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013’. Available at: <[legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/777/made#:~:text=%E2%80%94\(1\)%20A%20deposit%20library,to%20the%20visually%20impaired%20person](https://legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/777/made#:~:text=%E2%80%94(1)%20A%20deposit%20library,to%20the%20visually%20impaired%20person)> [accessed 13 March 2022].

but instead of being packaged and sold as apps, they are published and distributed on the web.<sup>4</sup>

Web-based interactive narratives were easier for the libraries to collect, thanks to already-established workflows and collection methods – such as those employed by the UK Web Archive, which proved successful in capturing good copies of complex online publications. The UK Web Archive holds curated collections of websites around a specific topic or theme, labelled ‘special collections’. With the help of Lynda Clark, AHRC Postdoctoral Innovation Placement for Interactive Fiction,<sup>5</sup> the libraries created an Interactive Narratives collection hosted in the UK Web Archive, using web archiving tools to capture examples of web-based interactive fiction. The collection is part of the wider E-publishing Trends/Emerging Formats special collection and contains over 200 websites at the time of writing.<sup>6</sup> The narratives included present a mix of text, sound and video elements, as well as different types of interactions (hypertext, parser-based, choice-based and multi-modal).<sup>7</sup>

Building on Clark’s work, the NMWP special collection was created to archive copies of all shortlisted and winning entries to the prize since its launch and into the future.

### ***Building the NMWP special collection***

#### *Rationale*

The NMWP is a UK-based award, with its archive hosted on a UK domain website,<sup>8</sup> which falls under the remit of Legal Deposit collecting. The variety of format types, genres and content represented, as well as the diverse backgrounds of shortlisted authors and winners make for a significant collection of contemporary digital writing. As the majority of these publications only exist in digital format, collecting and preserving copies of these works is a time-sensitive, critical effort.

#### *Scope*

Information on the collection scope is available in full in the ‘New Media Writing Prize (NMWP) Collection Scoping Document’ on the British Library Shared Research Repository,<sup>9</sup> in an effort to increase transparency around curatorial practices and provide relevant documentation to researchers.

The main resources the collection was built around are the following:

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<sup>4</sup> Caylin Smith and Ian Cooke, ‘Emerging Formats: Complex Digital Media and its Impact on the UK Legal Deposit Libraries’, *Alexandria*, xxvii:3 (Dec. 2017), pp. 175–18. doi: [10.1177/0955749018775878](https://doi.org/10.1177/0955749018775878)

<sup>5</sup> The British Library, ‘Case studies: Lynda Clark’. Available at: [bl.uk/case-studies/lynda-clark](http://bl.uk/case-studies/lynda-clark) [accessed 01 March 2022].

<sup>6</sup> UK Web Archive, ‘New Media Writing Prize’. Available at: [webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2912](http://webarchive.org.uk/en/ukwa/collection/2912) [accessed 01 March 2022].

<sup>7</sup> Lynda Clark, Giulia Carla Rossi and Stella Wisdom, ‘Archiving Interactive Narratives at the British Library’, in Anne-Gwenn Bossier, David E. Millard, Charlie Hargood (eds.), *Interactive Storytelling. ICIDS 2020*, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol. 12497 (Cham, 2020). doi: [10.1007/978-3-030-62516-0\\_27](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62516-0_27)

<sup>8</sup> NMWP, New Media Writing Prize. Available at: [newmediawritingprize.co.uk/](http://newmediawritingprize.co.uk/) [accessed 13 March 2022].

<sup>9</sup> Giulia Carla Rossi, ‘New Media Writing Prize (NMWP) Collection Scoping Document’ (2021). Available at: [bl.iro.bl.uk/concern/reports/4e649b8e-c4c0-4494-895b-197a9c4ac150?locale=en&search\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.iro.bl.uk%2Fcatalog%3Futf8%3D%25E2%259C%2593%26search\\_field%3Dall\\_fields%26q%3Dnew%2Bmedia%2Bwriting](http://bl.iro.bl.uk/concern/reports/4e649b8e-c4c0-4494-895b-197a9c4ac150?locale=en&search_url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.iro.bl.uk%2Fcatalog%3Futf8%3D%25E2%259C%2593%26search_field%3Dall_fields%26q%3Dnew%2Bmedia%2Bwriting) [accessed 01 March 2022].

- The NMWP website. The website was already included in the British Library Annotation and Curation Tool (ACT), with its first capture dated 2013 as part of the annual UK domain crawl. A description of the website with the relevant metadata was created in 2019 and since then the website has been crawled quarterly.
- Publications referred to in the ‘Shortlists & Winners’ webpage of the NMWP official website (and ‘Previous Shortlists & Winners’ in their ‘Archive’ section).
- Online contextual information surrounding a shortlisted or winning publication (if they fall within the UK Web Archive wider remit, in terms of geographic location, permissions and technical capabilities).

### *Limitations*

Creating a collection in the UK Web Archive meant that works that are not web-based (e.g. apps) couldn’t be included in the collection. Content hosted primarily on video-sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo) was also out of scope for this collection method. Prizes awarded to organizations or to works in progress were examined on a case-by-case basis to decide whether a website useful to the collection could be identified, acknowledging that a generic website might generate confusion if added to a special collection. Works that were no longer accessible online could not be archived.

### *Methodology*

The first stage of the work involved dividing the prize into UK-based works and non-UK-based works (the latter requiring extra permissions to clear in order to be collected). Direct contact with the authors was made possible by Bournemouth University: James Pope’s help was invaluable in approaching non-UK authors, introducing the project and alerting authors to the arrival of an email from the UK Web Archive asking for permission to archive their website. Following the creation of this collection, the NMWP Terms & Conditions have been updated to include a clause stating: ‘Each entrant agrees to grant permission for the work to be archived in the New Media Writing Prize Collection at the British Library [...]’.<sup>10</sup> This new clause makes the need for an introductory email redundant and streamlines the process for securing permissions. UK-based authors were also contacted in order to raise awareness about the project and increase access to the collection through the use of UKWA Open Licence permissions.

The collection was organized by year to aid navigation and discoverability of individual entries. Each yearly sub-collection contains between fifteen and thirty-five websites, including web-based works that won or were shortlisted for one of the prize categories for that year, as well as web-based contextual information about these works.

### *Contextual information*

For the scope of this project, contextual information was defined as all descriptive material surrounding a work that isn’t the work itself, but contributes to clarifying the context in which a work was originally published, as well as authorial intent and instructions on use. Contextual webpages were selected on a case-by-case basis, depending on their relevance to the collection, as well as their hosting location. While apps themselves couldn’t be captured, Apple Store and Google Play webpages provided useful documentation on version history as

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<sup>10</sup> Bournemouth University in association with if:book UK, ‘New Media Writing Prize 2021 Competition Rules’, p. 3. Available at: <[newmediawritingprize.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/New-Media-Writing-Prize-ts-and-cs-2021.pdf](http://newmediawritingprize.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/New-Media-Writing-Prize-ts-and-cs-2021.pdf)> [accessed 07 March 2022].

well as reviews from users; however, owing to scope and copyright restrictions, these were captured only when a UK webpage could be identified.

Websites containing descriptions and reviews of the works were also significant sources of contextual information. Domain owners for the ‘ELMCIP Knowledge Base’ ([elmcip.net/](http://elmcip.net/)) and ‘I <3 E-Poetry’ ([iloveepoetry.org/](http://iloveepoetry.org/)) granted the Library top-level permissions to archive their websites. Entries were archived for each NMWP publication that appears on either of these websites, adding significant value to the contextual information in the UK Web Archive collection.

### *Workflow and tools*

A spreadsheet was created and shared among collaborators on the project in order to record data about publications in scope and their authors (including information about authors’ nationality, to help with permissions). Collection of the works followed a case-by-case approach, considering for each publication what could be collected, how, and if any relevant contextual information could be identified online.

W3ACT,<sup>11</sup> the Annotation and Curation Tool used by the British Library to facilitate curatorial tasks related to web archiving, was the main tool used to build the collection. It uses the Heritrix web crawler,<sup>12</sup> developed by the Internet Archive, to collect archival copies of websites and add them into the UK Web Archive. While Heritrix is optimized to deal with high numbers of websites, Webrecorder tools<sup>13</sup> were used to supplement the collection of publications with complex dynamic content (such as embedded videos or audio files). With these tools, it was possible to create different ‘captures’: archival copies of the original websites that can be browsed and interacted with in a comparable way to their live online versions. Since W3ACT doesn’t interface with Webrecorder, individual ‘Read me’ files were created for each Webrecorder capture, including information about the tool and browser version used, who did the capture and when, and any other notable features that might have affected the capture (such as the use of live data in the work).

The quality of the archival copies generated was monitored throughout the collection building process, but it quickly became apparent that a technical checklist wouldn’t be enough to verify the quality of an interactive narrative. A series of questions emerged that were related to quality assurance for highly interactive publications, such as: what constitutes a ‘good’ capture in the context of interactive narratives? Which criteria should be followed to determine the success of a capture? Which features need retaining in order to maintain the meaning of the narrative? These questions informed a Ph.D. Placement undertaken by Tegan Pyke at the British Library in 2021, focused on building a methodology for identifying good captures within the NMWP collection.

### *Quality assurance*

Quality assurance of the NMWP Collection began at the start of June 2021, two years after the archiving of shortlisted NMWP entries first started. At this point, a total of seventy-six works had been collected on W3ACT, with 970 separate instances – or functional copies of the works – between them.

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<sup>11</sup> anjackson, ‘ukwa/w3act’, GitHub. Available at: <[github.com/ukwa/w3act](https://github.com/ukwa/w3act)> [accessed 28 March 2022].

<sup>12</sup> anjackson, ‘internetarchive/heritrix3’, GitHub. Available at: <[github.com/internetarchive/heritrix3](https://github.com/internetarchive/heritrix3)> [accessed 28 March 2022].

<sup>13</sup> Webrecorder, ‘Tools’. Available at: <[webrecorder.net/tools](https://webrecorder.net/tools)> [accessed 28 March 2022].

*Digital literature in the archive*

Within the academic field, hypertext literature originates from North America in the 1980s and 90s, with its first examples written on the *Storyspace* hypertext authoring programme.<sup>14</sup> These early works made use of the hyperlink to connect passages of text, a technique that is reminiscent of post-structuralist literary theory and, in particular, a theory created by postmodern philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Rhizome theory, as it is known, rejects the concept of traditional, hierarchical data structuring for rich, interconnected structures with no definable top or bottom, where no single node takes on greater importance than the others. As a result, many hypertext works ‘generally have more than one entry point, many internal branches, and no clear ending’.<sup>15</sup>

With the advent of the World Wide Web, hypertext literature developed further, incorporating multimedia – moving and still graphic images, sounds, and, as time has passed, video assets – and the ability to link to externally hosted content. Contemporary works usually make use of both of these techniques, combined with JavaScript applications that allow for further functionality. Some also make use of application programming interfaces (APIs), which act as intermediaries with external programmes and software. Online, these highly nuanced and complex new media works flourish but, when placed in the isolation of an archive, they suffer; externally hosted media will not display, external pages will not be accessible, and dynamic JavaScript functionality is likely to fail.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the works within the NMWP Collection are affected by this isolation. For instance, Amira Hanafi’s 2018 Main Prize-winning entry *A Dictionary of the Revolution*<sup>17</sup> – a linguistic memory archive produced via interviews with nearly 200 people living across Egypt – becomes almost completely inoperable in archival conditions, as the work’s JavaScript interface is no longer able to detect a user’s selection. In comparison, J. R. Carpenter’s 2016 Main Prize-winning entry *The Gathering Cloud*<sup>18</sup> – which covers the hidden costs of cloud computing – loses only two sets of externally hosted images, neither of which majorly affects the piece.

As a result, readers cannot experience a full, ‘authentic’ version of works within the repository.

**Methodology***Creating assessment criteria*

With ‘completeness’ not possible for a considerable portion of the NMWP Collection, new criteria were needed to define a successful capture. With the works themselves being based within the literary sphere – spanning both fiction and non-fiction – a decision was made to approach them via literary analysis; more specifically, via the appraisal of literary elements. While these are numerous, within the NMWP Collection three specific elements repeatedly came to the forefront: narrative, theme, and atmosphere. Though many readers will be

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<sup>14</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (Notre Dame, 2008), p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (New York, 1997), p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Maureen Pennock, ‘Web-Archiving’, in *DPC Technology Watch Report* (2013), vol. xiii(i). Available at: <[dpconline.org/docs/technology-watch-reports/865-dpctw13-01-pdf/file](https://dpconline.org/docs/technology-watch-reports/865-dpctw13-01-pdf/file)> [accessed 3 January 2022].

<sup>17</sup> Amira Hanafi, *A Dictionary of the Revolution* (2017). Available at: <[qamosalthawra.com/](https://qamosalthawra.com/)> [accessed 06 April 2022].

<sup>18</sup> J. R. Carpenter, *The Gathering Cloud* (2016). Available at: <[luckysoap.com/thegatheringcloud/](https://luckysoap.com/thegatheringcloud/)> [accessed 6 April 2022].

familiar with these elements, they're produced differently in new media works than they are in traditional print literature. These differences will be explained using Katharine Norman's 2012 winning Main Prize entry, *Window (For John Cage)*.<sup>19</sup>

*Window (For John Cage)*, described as 'a poetic mediation on place and experience' by the author, is the result of a year-long project recording ambient noise and photographs from Norman's bedroom window. Displayed via a multi-layered HTML5 canvas, readers can choose what layer is seen by selecting one of four options from a slider; 'dark', 'text', 'words', and 'day'. On all four layers, the sound recordings for each month are present, along with seven selectors which allow the reader to create their own sound mix; moving these selectors vertically affects their volume, while horizontal movement changes their balance. On the 'dark' layer, only the selectors are present, while on the 'day' layer, the selectors are present alongside corresponding photographs. The 'text' layer reveals short essays – based around the composer the piece is dedicated to, John Cage, and Norman's personal reflections – on a blue tinted background, while the 'words' layer displays abstract lines of poetic verse – selected at random from a pre-scripted JavaScript string – on an orange overlay. Lastly, the month being viewed can be changed via small thumbnail images at the bottom of the canvas.

*Window (For John Cage)* is, like most new media texts, multimodal. In fact, from its description we can see it covers all five modes of communication as defined by Arola et al.:<sup>20</sup> the 'text' and 'words' modes are linguistic, the photography elements are visual, the noises are aural, the positioning of various elements are spatial, and the selectors are gestural. At odds with print literature, where elements are established via writing, the integration of multimedia is how new media works create theirs. *Window (For John Cage)*'s narrative is produced via the chronology of the month selection and the two linguistic modes, so for the narrative to remain 'intact', all of these elements must be retained. Similarly, its atmosphere is produced partially by the descriptions and linguistic imagery in the 'words' mode but also by the work's use of image and audio assets. Here, we see the nuance of the multimodal technique come into play; while *Window (For John Cage)*'s atmosphere would remain largely intact should the image and audio assets be retained and the linguistic mode absent, it would be lost if the reverse were true.

The same is seen in *Window (For John Cage)*'s theme. While explicitly stated in the work's title and various parts of the 'text' layer, it's the ambient audio that really embodies the theme of the piece. It acts as a direct link to the composer himself, whose famous track '4'33'' was created with the idea that 'ambient sounds of the environment – or even dead silence – would themselves occur within' a 'truly empty rhythmic structure'.<sup>21</sup> While traces of the theme remain if the aural mode of the piece is lost, the audio is required for it to be a truly 'authentic' reading experience for users of the NMWP Collection.

In this way, we can see the new criteria at work. For *Window (For John Cage)* to be a passing capture, its chronological sequencing and linguistic mode must be retained for the narrative element to be complete. Its aural and visual modes must be retained for its atmosphere to be complete, and its aural mode must be intact for its theme to be complete.

### *Assessing the Collection*

With the new criterion of narrative, atmosphere, and theme established, the NMWP Collection's instances were reviewed on an individual, case-by-case basis. In each case,

<sup>19</sup> Katharine Norman, *Window (For John Cage)* (2012). Available at: <[novamara.com/window-for-john-cage/](http://novamara.com/window-for-john-cage/)> [accessed 6 April 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Kristin L. Arola, Jennifer Sheppard and Cheryl E. Ball, *Writer/Designer: A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* (Boston, 2014), pp. 3-13.

<sup>21</sup> James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 60.



the essential modes were identified first on the live version of the work – where these were available – before the archival versions were viewed.

Alongside the review of these core elements, a work’s instances were also assessed on their possibility for improvement, regardless of whether they had a passing capture or not. Those that did were flagged as eligible for re-crawl with a brief description of assets or pages to be targeted. Those that were ineligible were flagged as such with a reason why, be it external hosting of elements or a lack of live version to collect from. With all works, any missing aspects crucial to the piece were noted.

### *Status of current collection*

Out of the seventy-six works collected by the UK Web Archive, thirty-three were deemed to have passing archival instances. Out of these, eleven were ‘complete’, with only one undergoing a slight cosmetic change from the loss of an externally hosted Google font. The remaining twenty-one works, while not ‘complete’, were narratively, thematically, and atmospherically intact. Of these, seventeen of them were eligible for further crawls to target deep links – pages beyond the initial homepage – and missing assets.

### *Failed Captures*

Out of the archived works, forty-two did not meet the criteria of an acceptable capture. These failing works were organized into groups depending on the reason for failure. These were as follows:

- Incomplete Narrative
- Incomplete Atmosphere
- Incomplete Theme
- Obsolete Media Player
- Playback Error

As can be seen in fig. 1, no works failed owing to incomplete themes and only a single work, a shortlisted entry for the 2016 Main Prize titled *aimisola.net/hymiwo.po*,<sup>22</sup> failed owing to an incomplete atmosphere. Following this, the lead causes for failure were incomplete narrative, obsolete media player, and playback error. These will be expanded upon below.

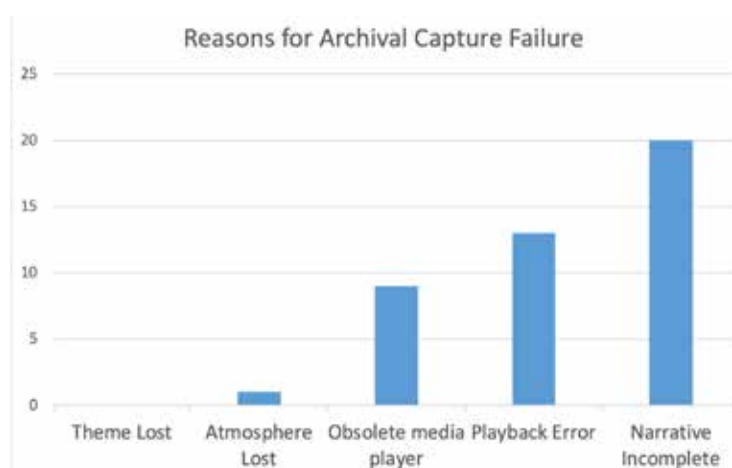


Fig. 1. Graph showing reasons for archival capture failure.

<sup>22</sup> Álvaro Seiça & Sindre Sørensen, *aimisola.net/hymiwo.po* (2015). Available at: <[aimisola.net/hymiwo.po](http://aimisola.net/hymiwo.po)> [accessed 7 April 2022].

### *Incomplete narrative*

A total of twenty of the NMWP Collection's captured works failed the quality assurance process owing to incomplete narratives. Loss of narrative occurred in a number of different ways, from missing multimedia assets essential for understanding or continuation through to lack of capture of deep links within the work. Of these works, fourteen are recommended for re-crawl to collect missing assets and should have 'intact' captures once this is done. A further four works were flagged for review by the UK Web Archive team, to determine if assets have been collected but are displaying incorrectly. Two are no longer online and, because of this, cannot be improved.

The most worrying discovery in this group was a change to the hotlinking policy of *itch.io* – the preferred hosting platform for many interactive new media works – in June 2020. This development means that crawls undertaken from this date with the W3ACT tool do not capture the works themselves but a notice within the containing iFrame, telling viewers to instead play the work on the *itch.io* site directly. While the majority of the works hosted on the platform were collected before this date, two works – *MetaQuest*,<sup>23</sup> a 2016 student entry, and *The Unsettled Ground*,<sup>24</sup> a 2020 Main Prize entry – had crawls initiated after this change. As a result, these works have no passing captures and will not have one until a workaround is found.

### *Obsolete media player*

In the constantly shifting technological landscape, it's common for software and their related formats to fall out of favour and, in extreme cases, become completely obsolete. This is the case with Adobe Flash, a multimedia authoring tool and dissemination software, whose popularity peaked in the early 2000s, and Unity Web Player, another multimedia software platform used primarily by game developers. Both have reached end-of-life, the former on 12 January 2020<sup>25</sup> and the latter in 2016.<sup>26</sup>

Without the use of emulation software on either the client or server side, works produced for these players are no longer viewable online. As a result, these works were flagged as failing the quality assurance process. Within the NMWP Collection, this accounts for a total of eleven works – nine of which are dependent on Adobe Flash Player and two of which require Unity Web Player. If emulation software is established on the UK Web Archive in the future, all of these works should have passing captures.

### *Playback error*

The thirteen remaining works were all affected by varying errors on the platform that W3ACT uses to play back archived instances for quality assurance purposes (QA PyWb). The majority were affected by a single, known issue where QA PyWb's Java proxy rewrites portions of the work's source code as it loads, causing the work to redirect to either a missing page or broken code error message.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Cockcroft, *MetaQuest* (2016). Available at: <[soot.itch.io/metaquest](https://soot.itch.io/metaquest)> [accessed 7 April 2022].

<sup>24</sup> Thomas McMullan & Rik Chilvers, *The Unsettled Ground* (2016). Available at: <[thomas-mac.itch.io/the-unsettled-ground](https://thomas-mac.itch.io/the-unsettled-ground)> [accessed 7 April 2022].

<sup>25</sup> Adobe, 'Adobe Flash Player EOL General Information Page', *adobe.com* (2021). Available at: <[adobe.com/uk/products/flashplayer/end-of-life.html](https://adobe.com/uk/products/flashplayer/end-of-life.html)> [accessed 7 April 2022].

<sup>26</sup> Jonas Echterhoff, 'Unity Web Player Roadmap', *blog.unity.com* (2015). Available at: <[blog.unity.com/technology/unity-web-player-roadmap](https://blog.unity.com/technology/unity-web-player-roadmap)> [accessed 7 April 2022].

<sup>27</sup> crarugal, 'QA PyWb resolving to /null', UK Web Archive on Github (2021). Available at: <[github.com/ukwa/ukwa-pywb/issues/63](https://github.com/ukwa/ukwa-pywb/issues/63)> [accessed 7 April 2022].



Testing with the beta of the next version of the platform showed that several of these works were viewable on it. With this in mind, it's highly likely many of the thirteen works that were unable to be viewed during the quality assurance process will have passing captures once the next iteration of the platform is released.

### *Eligibility for re-crawl*

Of the seventy-three works collected by the UK Web Archive for the NMWP Collection, a total of thirty-one have been recommended for re-crawl. Just under half of these have failed the quality assurance process. The other seventeen have passing captures but can be improved via targeting of further assets to create a more authentic experience. Once re-crawls have been performed, the collection should have forty-seven works captured with their narratives, themes, and atmospheres intact. This number will be bolstered to sixty if the works affected by the QA PyWb rewrite error display correctly when the next version of the software is released and are largely intact as presumed. Considering the challenges faced in the archiving of complex digital objects, particularly given the range and variety which new media works encompass, this would represent a highly successful project.

### ***Learning about emerging formats through Library collaborations with writers of interactive narratives***

Before initiating projects to collect and preserve emerging formats works, the British Library collaborated with experimental writers to learn about their methods and the digital tools they use. Funded by the AHRC's Creative Works London Knowledge Exchange Hub for the Creative Economy, in 2014-15 the British Library hosted its first interactive writer-in-residence on a project integrated within the Library's *Lines In The Ice* exhibition.<sup>28</sup> Rob Sherman created a hybrid physical and digital narrative framework called *On My Wife's Back* about fictional explorer Isaak Scinbank who had travelled to the Arctic in 1852 looking for the missing Sir John Franklin, a real historical figure who led an infamous doomed 1845 expedition to discover the Northwest Passage where the ships became icebound and the entire crew died.

Prior to this residency Sherman was best known for *The Black Crown Project*,<sup>29</sup> a web-based digital narrative launched in 2013, which originated from an idea for his University of Exeter MA dissertation. This was developed via a collaboration between publisher Random House and Failbetter Games, creator of *Fallen London* who provided their StoryNexus web-based story authoring system for building the work. Dan Franklin, Random House's Digital Publisher during this time, facilitated this collaboration, as he was keen to explore potential markets for interactive digital publications. Franklin also engaged with digital writing communities and was a NMWP judge in the early years of the prize.<sup>30</sup>

Sherman's British Library residency provided an alternative perspective to explore historical events and produced a range of outputs, including a digital map, ship's biscuits baked from original recipes with written messages on them and a hand-bound book created

<sup>28</sup> Creativeworks London, 'Entrepreneur-in-Residence Scheme Rob Sherman and the British Library' (2015). Available at: <[creativeworkslondon.org.uk/entrepreneur\\_scheme/rob-sherman-and-the-british-library/](http://creativeworkslondon.org.uk/entrepreneur_scheme/rob-sherman-and-the-british-library/)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>29</sup> Adam Smith, 'Wandering In Words: Black Crown Interview' (2013). Available at: <[rockpapershotgun.com/wandering-in-words-black-crown-interview](http://rockpapershotgun.com/wandering-in-words-black-crown-interview)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>30</sup> James Pope, 'The New Media Writing Prize: The Interviews' (2015). Available at: <[thewritingplatform.com/2015/07/the-new-media-writing-prize-the-interviews/](http://thewritingplatform.com/2015/07/the-new-media-writing-prize-the-interviews/)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

in collaboration with the Library's conservation team.<sup>31</sup> Made to look like an aged artefact, Scinbank's journal was displayed in the exhibition accompanied with faux labels written by Sherman as part of the narrative, alongside genuine historical nineteenth-century collection items about the Franklin expedition. The residency also installed a hidden web server, as a digital cairn in the exhibition gallery, which visitors could connect to with their personal digital devices to engage with additional content.

To celebrate the end of the project Sherman hosted an event where he performed a number of songs that he recorded as part of the residency.<sup>32</sup> He also invited special guests, writers Kate Pullinger, Nancy Campbell and J. R. Carpenter to give readings of their work. Carpenter performed a script from *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*,<sup>33</sup> her computer-generated digital narrative about a mythical sea voyage undertaken by two characters, an owl and a girl, inspired by Edward Lear's Victorian nonsense poem. This web-based work displays text over a cartographic image of an old sea chart, with each iteration of the story displayed in text that lasts forty seconds on screen before being generated afresh. Alongside generative poetry web-work *Along the Briny Beach*,<sup>34</sup> it formed part of Carpenter's interdisciplinary practice-led doctoral research, which she analysed in her Ph.D. thesis 'Writing Coastlines: Locating Narrative Resonance in Transatlantic Communications Networks'.<sup>35</sup>

Sherman and the British Library's Digital Scholarship department had been introduced to Carpenter by the Eccles Centre for American Studies, who awarded her a fellowship in 2015<sup>36</sup> to undertake further research about the documentation of Atlantic Canadian coastlines related to her doctoral work.<sup>37</sup> British Library curators became aware of NMWP in early 2017 when Carpenter was awarded the 2016 Main Prize for her web-based digital poem *The Gathering Cloud*.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Royston Haward and Zoe Miller, "'The Salmon Book': Conservation in Reverse' (2014). Available at: <[britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/collectioncare/2014/11/the-salmon-book-conservation-in-reverse-.html](http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/collectioncare/2014/11/the-salmon-book-conservation-in-reverse-.html)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>32</sup> Rob Sherman, *Songs from 'On My Wife's Back'* (2016). Available at: <[soundcloud.com/the-british-library/sets/songs-from-on-my-wifes-back](https://soundcloud.com/the-british-library/sets/songs-from-on-my-wifes-back)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>33</sup> J. R. Carpenter, *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* (2013). Available at: <[luckysoap.com/owlandgirl/](http://luckysoap.com/owlandgirl/)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>34</sup> J. R. Carpenter, *Along the Briny Beach* (2012). Available at: <[luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach/](http://luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach/)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>35</sup> J. R. Carpenter (2015), 'Writing Coastlines: Locating Narrative Resonance in Transatlantic Communications Networks' (Ph.D. thesis, University of the Arts London and Falmouth University, 2015).

<sup>36</sup> Eccles Centre for American Studies – The British Library, 'Current and Previous Fellowship Holders at The Eccles Centre – The British Library' (2022). Available at: <[bl.uk/eccles-centre/fellowships-and-awards/fellowships-previous-holders](http://bl.uk/eccles-centre/fellowships-and-awards/fellowships-previous-holders)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>37</sup> J. R. Carpenter, 'Sea Birds, Castaways, and Phantom Islands off Newfoundland', <[blogs.bl.uk/americas](http://blogs.bl.uk/americas)> (2015). Available at: <[blogs.bl.uk/americas/2015/10/sea-birds-castaways-and-phantom-islands-off-newfoundland.html](http://blogs.bl.uk/americas/2015/10/sea-birds-castaways-and-phantom-islands-off-newfoundland.html)> [accessed 27 May 2022].

<sup>38</sup> Anon. 'J. R. Carpenter takes the big prize at the 2016 New Media Writing Prize Awards' (2017). Available at: <[theliteraryplatform.com/news/2017/01/jr-carpenter-takes-the-big-prize-at-the-2016-new-media-writing-prize-awards](http://theliteraryplatform.com/news/2017/01/jr-carpenter-takes-the-big-prize-at-the-2016-new-media-writing-prize-awards)> [accessed 27 May 2022].



Fig. 2. Main Award winner J. R. Carpenter with if:book UK (Main Prize sponsor) Director Chris Meade at the 2016 awards evening.

Following his British Library residency, Sherman undertook a Ph.D. in Digital Writing and Human-Computer Interaction supervised by Kate Pullinger at Bath Spa University; *Project knole: An Autocosmic Approach To Authoring A Resonant Computational Character*.<sup>39</sup> Pullinger, whose work *Breathe* was NMWP shortlisted in 2018,<sup>40</sup> also supervised the doctoral research of NMWP inaugural winner Christine Wilks.<sup>41</sup>

In subsequent years, as part of the British Library's focus on researching emerging electronic literature works, Library staff actively engaged with the NMWP: Digital Curator Stella Wisdom judged entries in 2017 and Jerry Jenkins, Curator of Contemporary British Publications and Emerging Media, was on the jury panel for the 2018 prize. Furthermore, in 2019 the Library hosted a public Digital Conversations event to celebrate and reflect on ten years of the prize. Participating in the judging process and hosting this event increased curatorial understanding of new types of interactive narratives and the technologies used to create them, which led to discussions with the prize organizers and eventually to the British Library's collection and preservation of shortlisted and winning NMWP works.

## The New Media Writing Prize's perspective

### *Beginnings and developments*

The body of work which has become the NMWP special collection was born in 2010 when Dorset artist Sue Luminati created the first (and only) Poole Literary Festival. Whilst the

<sup>39</sup> R. P. Sherman, 'Project knole: An Autocosmic Approach to Authoring Resonant Computational Characters' (Ph.D. thesis, Bath Spa University, 2021).

<sup>40</sup> Tom Abba, Jon Dovey and Kate Pullinger (eds.), *Ambient Literature: Towards a New Poetics of Situated Writing and Reading Practices* (Cham, 2020) [doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41456-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-41456-6)

<sup>41</sup> C. Wilks, 'Stitched up' in the 'Conversengine': Using Expressive Processing and Multimodal Languages to Create a Character-Driven Interactive Digital Narrative' (Ph.D. thesis, Bath Spa University, 2021).

event featured well-known print writers as the headline contributors, including Michael Morpurgo and Carol Ann Duffy, Luminati was also interested in digital storytelling and wanted to include an event within the festival to celebrate new kinds of writing. To this end, she approached Bournemouth University's faculty of Media and Communication where James Pope was working with what was then called 'hypertext fiction'. Having researched readers' responses to hypertext fiction for his Ph.D., and having worked in the community with young people on digital storytelling projects, Pope had awareness of the latest developments in interactive digital literature. The first NMWP<sup>42</sup> was opened, with no strong sense of what might arrive as entries: although there was an abundance and diversity of 'digital literature' (the terminology tends to evolve with the art-form itself) being made by university-based artists, as well as in the wider artistic community, Pope wasn't sure if an event outside of the academic world would attract interest.<sup>43</sup>

Christine Wilks won the first edition of the prize<sup>44</sup> with her entry *Underbelly*,<sup>45</sup> an immersive piece of digital-interactive storytelling, demonstrating all five of the modes defined by Kress in his book *Multimodal Discourse*:<sup>46</sup> the linguistic, visual, audial, spatial, and gestural. The interface is visually rich and complex, the voice-over narration is poetically rendered, and the ghostly images of Victorian female coalminers elicit an emotional response in the reader. *Underbelly*, along with many other works based on Adobe Flash, has with time become 'obsolete', presenting archivists with the challenges and opportunities of how to preserve and present works based on old technology, as discussed above.



Fig. 3. Screenshot from *Underbelly*, by Christine Wilks.

<sup>42</sup> Anon. 'New Media Writing Prize at the Poole Literary Festival'. (2010). Available at: <[poolelitfest.com/](http://poolelitfest.com/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>43</sup> Anon. 'New Media Writing and the Mainstream'. (undated). Available at: <[theliteraryplatform.com/news/2010/11/new-media-writing-and-the-mainstream/](http://theliteraryplatform.com/news/2010/11/new-media-writing-and-the-mainstream/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>44</sup> New Media Writing Prize archive. Available at: <[newmediawritingprize.co.uk/archive/?prize-year=2021](http://newmediawritingprize.co.uk/archive/?prize-year=2021)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>45</sup> Christine Wilks, *Underbelly* (2001). Available at: <[crisscross.net/elit/underbelly](http://crisscross.net/elit/underbelly)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>46</sup> Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London, 2001).

### *The rise of the app*

Academic debate continues, and no doubt will always continue, over the extent to which technology drives change in the arts; but in the case of new media writing, it is clear that technology and creativity have run hand-in-hand since the NMWP began in 2010. One of the guest speakers at the first event was Chris Stevens, who had recently released *Alice for the iPad*, one of the first app adaptations of classic print literature. Stevens and his team had used the original text and John Tenniel's illustrations, alongside all the iPad facilities available to make the character of Alice come alive via animations. The iPad's technological features, alongside its portability, allowed for a new reading experience, as the user was able to shake or turn the tablet and make words and objects fly around the screen. The importance of the iPad at that stage of development in new media writing can also be seen in the fact that iPads were given as prizes in that first year.

Twelve years on, those enhancements might now seem less striking than they did in 2010. The form and functionality of interactivity has improved as the technology and the state of the art has developed. Nonetheless, Chris Stevens's work on *Alice* heralded a near-revolution in interactive storytelling: this was the first piece which used the possibilities of the mobile tablet to enhance stories made for print; since then other iPad adaptations have appeared, such as Inkle's *Frankenstein*,<sup>47</sup> and further innovative app-delivered pieces. For example, Samantha Gorman and Danny Canizzaro (Tender Claws) won the 2014 Main Prize with their app, *PRY*.<sup>48</sup> A piece which asks the reader to 'open' pages of text with their fingers via iPad pinches and spreads, it combines words with video and hallucinatory animation, telling the story of a returning Gulf War veteran.

When *PRY* won, if:book UK director and main NMWP sponsor Chris Meade hoped this piece would be a breakthrough for pushing interactive storytelling into the mainstream. It isn't clear whether the breakthrough has happened yet (although *PRY* was a best seller on the App Store in 2015), as several apps that have featured in the NMWP shortlists have now become non-functioning as the developers have not updated them – another form of digital obsolescence. An example of this from the 2017 shortlist is *Hilda Bewildered*,<sup>49</sup> by Slap Happy Larry – a modern fairy tale, with text, graphic-novel style visuals, and intuitive interactions that advance the story, which is sadly now no longer working.

However, the smartphone, tablet and the app continue to offer authors tools for new and engaging reader-interactions, as well as multimedia elements. Perhaps the 'story-app' could be the way a 'general' readership can be attracted to spend money on digital stories, and that in turn might encourage more investment from artists and commercial publishers. But, as has been mentioned above, apps currently cannot be successfully captured using web archiving tools, providing another challenge for archivists.

### *The Student Award*

From the start the NMWP has been eager to promote young writers. The contention has been that if the form does not grow at grass roots level, it may continue to operate in a specialized and somewhat inaccessible space. For this reason, the NMWP has always had a student award. Students from across the world have submitted to the prize, but further work is needed to

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<sup>47</sup> Dave Morris, *Frankenstein: Interactive* (2012). Available at: <[apps.apple.com/app/frankenstein-interactive/id516047066](https://apps.apple.com/app/frankenstein-interactive/id516047066)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>48</sup> Tender Claws LLC, *PRY* (2015). Available at: <[apps.apple.com/us/app/pry/id846195114](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/pry/id846195114)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>49</sup> Slap Happy Larry, *Hilda Bewildered* (2015). Available at: <[slaphappylarry.com/story-apps/in-progress/](https://slaphappylarry.com/story-apps/in-progress/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].



encourage more students to enter their work. The two pieces below were created by previous winners and in their innovative forms show the importance of highlighting work by students:

- Shaun Hickman's *Kindred*,<sup>50</sup> an adaptation of music and video by the band Iamamiwhoami.<sup>51</sup>
- Natasha Nunn's *Mary Rose*,<sup>52</sup> a ghost story.



Fig. 4. Student Award winner Shaun Hickman with Unicorn Training (student prize sponsor) CEO Peter Phillips at the 2015 awards evening.

### **Journalism**

Prior to awarding specifically to journalists, work was being submitted that bridged the fact/fiction divide, such as *We Are Angry*<sup>53</sup> by Lyndee Prickitt, and *What I'm Wearing*<sup>54</sup> by Amira Hanafi. As the NMWP reach expanded, and without ever specifying the kinds of narrative sought (the aim was always to encourage diverse entries), submissions began to arrive from journalists, and in 2016 the NMWP introduced the Digital Journalism Award (it should be noted that all of the awards have been sponsored by businesses who have wanted to support innovative creativity in this field). This award has attracted work from across the world, especially from journalists working in Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, that might not have gained exposure in the UK without the award. For example *The Gorani*,<sup>55</sup> by Jakub Górnicki and his team, which is about the Slavic Muslims who live in the Goran region, between Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia. This award has highlighted how well journalism lends itself to multimedia and interactive approaches and the 2020 winner, *Black Beaches*<sup>56</sup> by Eman Mounir, is another example of this fact.

<sup>50</sup> Shaun Hickman, *Kindred* (2015). Available at: <[shaunhickman333.wixsite.com/kindred](http://shaunhickman333.wixsite.com/kindred)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>51</sup> Iamamiwhoami. Available at: <[www.youtube.com/iamamiwhoami](http://www.youtube.com/iamamiwhoami)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>52</sup> Natasha Nunn, *Mary Rose* (2017). Available at: <[mary-rose.ca/](http://mary-rose.ca/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>53</sup> Lyndee Prickitt, *We Are Angry* (2014). Available at: <[weareangry.net/](http://weareangry.net/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>54</sup> Amira Hanafi, *What I'm Wearing* (undated). Available at: <[whatimwearing.amiraha.com/](http://whatimwearing.amiraha.com/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>55</sup> Jakub Górnicki, et al., *The Gorani* (2018). Available at: <[outride.rs/en/gorani/](http://outride.rs/en/gorani/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>56</sup> Eman Mounir, *Black Beaches* (2020). Available at: <[arij.net/investigations/black-beaches-en/](http://arij.net/investigations/black-beaches-en/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].



### ***Futures for the New Media Writing Prize***

In 2021, Lyle Skains joined James Pope as co-organizer, and took over the lead role from 2022. Skains had previously created a separate prize, the Opening Up Digital Fiction Writing Competition, in 2017 and 2018. Opening Up was an ‘impact’ activity arising from the AHRC-funded (AH/K004174/1) ‘Reading Digital Fiction’ project; the main aim of the project was to introduce digital fiction to more people and to open up the field. The competition, therefore, focused on works that appeal to mainstream audiences, regardless of whether they were commercial apps or student assignments. The event included a Judges’ Prize, Student Prize, Children’s, and ‘People’s Choice’, which was awarded by public vote. The competition was popular, with entries from all over the world (very similar to the entries received for NMWP), but it was a struggle to fund it after the end of the AHRC project.

Upon joining the NMWP, Skains wanted to include the Opening Up ethos: a relatively straightforward aim, as the two competitions’ approaches are very similar. Furthermore, finding funding for one category of prize was much easier to do than to fund an entire competition. The voting option for the Opening Up category has been incorporated into the NMWP, and the 2021 prize was won by Nivritti Khurana for *Manzil*.<sup>57</sup>

In the future, the NMWP plans to include additional categories. The first will be a Children’s Digital Fiction award, as there is a wealth of new media writing being created for children, which is often overlooked as ‘just for kids’. The NMWP organizers view work for children as incredibly important in the opportunities it offers to engage young people in digital literature, and teach them valuable lessons while developing reading, writing, and digital literacy skills.

The second category is related to the topics Skains is exploring as part of her own research: public communication, and how entertainment media can be used ‘for good’. Many works of digital fiction are created as passion projects, on contemporary issues. For example, one of the works shortlisted in the NMWP last year was aimed at sharing the plight of the ‘hidden’ unemployed in Portugal. Many games built using the open-source tool Twine are created by people from historically marginalized communities, sharing their experiences and personal stories in a new way. Skains is researching how these works, created for personal and entertainment purposes, can be used to educate audiences on various topics, and the NMWP hopes that a prize category can help to add exposure to these works of interactive fiction.

In time, with the continued support of sponsors, and the work the British Library is doing to archive these works, it is hoped that the NMWP will continue to respond to the field in new and evolving ways. The competition will continue to be inclusive and to look for opportunities to celebrate the different genres of writing that use digital media in interesting ways, as it continues its aims to bring new writers and designers, as well as new readers and players, into the quickly developing area of new media writing.

### ***The bigger picture***

The future for digital/interactive/hyper-writing has been debated since the late 1980s, when Michael Joyce released *afternoon, a story*.<sup>58</sup> The early form was called ‘hypertext’ because it was just that, hyper-active text. But of course, we have seen huge leaps towards a multi-media form of storytelling in which all the elements on screen can be hyper-active. We can expect boundaries to continue to blur: we’ve seen text blend more and more with visuals and sound. We’ve seen games enter a domain that we might once have called ‘digital literature’,

<sup>57</sup> Nivritti Khurana, *Manzil* (undated). Available at: <[nivryz.itch.io/manzil](http://nivryz.itch.io/manzil)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>58</sup> Michael Joyce, *afternoon, a story* (1987). Available at: <[www.norton.com/college/english/pmaf/hypertext/aft/](http://www.norton.com/college/english/pmaf/hypertext/aft/)> [accessed 01 June 2022].

for example Jason Nelson's work: see *The Bafflement Fires*.<sup>59</sup> Several 'locative' stories have been entered, stories which are accessed by physically visiting real-world places. James Attlee's ambient literature creation, *The Cartographer's Confession*,<sup>60</sup> won the 2017 if:book New Media Writing Prize.



Fig. 5. James Attlee (left) and Emma Whittaker (far right) accepting their if:book UK NMWP award for *The Cartographer's Confession* (with the British Library's Stella Wisdom second from the right) in 2017.

Perhaps virtual reality will be the next big shift in the ways stories can be told and experienced, with the possibility of a VR category being added to the NMWP in the future. Andy Campbell, one of the UK's most prolific and innovative artists, is experimenting with VR with his own work, and in the *Inanimate Alice*<sup>61</sup> series. Both the locative and VR examples indicate how the NMWP collection could itself evolve as it seeks to accommodate the changing forms of digital storytelling included in the prize.

After the NMWP fifth year, James Pope interviewed some of the authors he'd come into contact with, and asked them for their thoughts on the prospects for new-media writing. Here is the future summed up by Samantha Gorman:

The future doesn't necessarily change the impulses or inspirations at the core of storytelling, rather it adds an additional tool set for expression. It is easy to overemphasize the technological revolution, but the future lies in approaches to storytelling rather than core judgements about how stories will irrevocably alter. *Pry* was written with new tool sets, but it is still a very human story.<sup>62</sup>

Regarding the NMWP collection, the NMWP organizers believe that one of the great values of the British Library archive is that it documents and makes accessible part of the greater history of storytelling, which is always about being human, one way or another.

<sup>59</sup> Jason Nelson, *The Bafflement Fires* (2015). Available at: <<https://dpoetry.com/fires/#sthash.skczJQUx.dpuF>> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>60</sup> James Attlee, *The Cartographer's Confession* (2017). Available at: <[apps.apple.com/gb/app/the-cartographers-confession/id1263461799](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/the-cartographers-confession/id1263461799)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>61</sup> Ian Harper et al., *Inanimate Alice* (undated). Available at: <[inanimatealice.com/](http://inanimatealice.com/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

<sup>62</sup> Samantha Gorman, in James Pope, 'The New Media Writing Prize: The Interviews' (2015). Available at: <[thewritingplatform.com/2015/07/the-new-media-writing-prize-the-interviews/](http://thewritingplatform.com/2015/07/the-new-media-writing-prize-the-interviews/)> [accessed 18 May 2022].

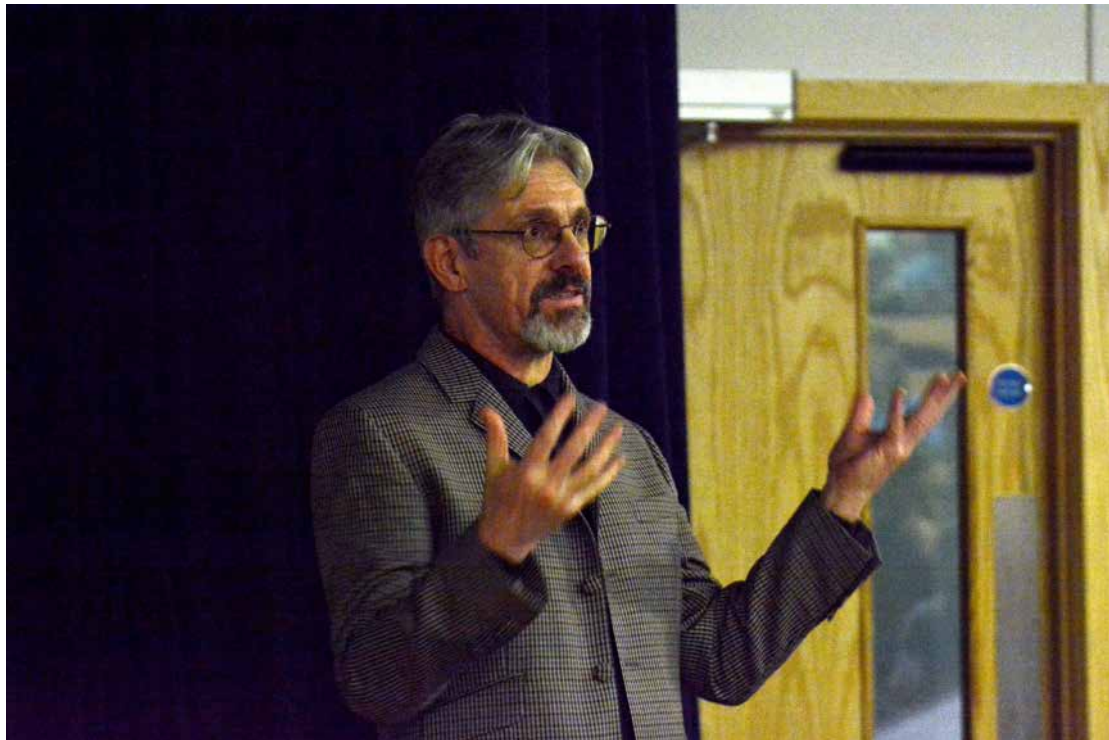


Fig 6. James Pope talking at the 2017 awards evening.



Fig 7. Lyle Skains at the Library of Congress.

## Conclusions

This article offers an overview of the processes, tools and workflows involved in building a collection of interactive digital narratives in the context of a UK Legal Deposit Library, in the hope that a transparent account will provide a context for researchers in the field to understand curatorial decisions. Furthermore, the lessons learnt from creating this collection have the potential to be applied more widely to other areas of digital collecting. In particular, employing quality assurance criteria that combine literary theory with considerations for

technical requirements reinforces the idea that digital publications are more than just the sum of their parts and shift the focus from only preserving the code and technical components, to also preserving the experience. This approach foregrounds the Library's focus on users' needs that is at the centre of its collecting practices, ensuring that the meaning and value of its collection items are maintained and documented for present and future usage.

This article also highlights the importance of engaging with and learning from the community of digital writers that both produces and consumes the items that make up this collection. As the section on the history of the NMWP outlines, the trends and technical developments the prize has witnessed through the years suggests a rich and ever changing field of creativity, although one at constant risk of rapid obsolescence. The importance of preserving these publications in their variety of content and formats is underlined by the fact that some of these works have already become obsolete and unavailable to the general public. As mentioned in 'Futures for the New Media Writing Prize', preserving these formats often becomes preserving parts of the social history of marginalized communities that would otherwise be lost.

### **Acknowledgments**

Building the NMWP special collection was an incredible team effort and the result of a long-standing collaboration between the British Library and Bournemouth University and a special acknowledgment should be made to all the individuals that made this possible. In particular, Nicola Bingham, Pete Hebden, Carlos Lelkes-Rarugal, Joan Francis and Storm Greenwood all contributed to the success of the NMWP collection and of this article.

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James Pope

Dr James Pope (ORCID 0000-0002-5453-4281) has a continuing interest in fiction across the media, particularly looking at how digital media may be changing narrative forms and reading and writing practices. He has specific interests in the teaching of creative writing in digital media environments, and children's literature, especially YA fiction. As well as academic publications around digital interactive fiction, and children's literature, James has also published six novels for children and teenagers, including *Spin The*

*Bottle* (Penguin) which was listed as one of the best teenage novels of 1998 by the Federation of Children's Book Groups. He created a dedicated software platform for interactive storytelling: [Genarrator](#). He is also the co-founder, and organizer from 2010 to 2022, of the annual New Media Writing Prize, which celebrates and promotes digital writing around the world. He organizes and runs community-based digital writing projects, to help young writers approach digital media in storytelling.

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