

Faculty Development Grant Report  
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**I. Non-stipend budget expenditures**

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This grant awarded an additional expense budget of \$300 for the purchase of equipment. I did not, however, spend this budget as I found I could complete the project without it.

**II. Review of Results**

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**A. Summary of the project**

My grant project, “The Videogame Text: Material Typography and Electronic Textuality,” consisted of work completed toward publishing my grant project. Specifically, I endeavored to design and build a website<sup>i</sup> that comprises my book proposal. Since this book project is the continuation of my dissertation, the core of the website is my dissertation, published serially in small sections, and advertised through social networks with the dual intent of attracting an audience for the book while simultaneously subjecting its contents to open review. The open review concept has precedent in the work of the Institute for the Future of the Book, and several recent works in the Digital Humanities field have been reviewed in this manner, most notably, Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence*<sup>ii</sup>, Noah Wardrip-Fruin's *Expressive Processing*<sup>iii</sup> McKenzie Wark's *Gamer Theory*<sup>iv</sup>. This movement, which embraces the social ethic of open source software, has also led the founding of a publisher, MediaCommons Press,<sup>v</sup> and a widely disseminated software plugin (CommentPress) for the WordPress blogging platform.<sup>vi</sup> Since most works subjected to open review are mostly-complete drafts of monographs, one of my motivations in this project was to introduce the concept at an earlier stage. I also wanted to experiment with open review on a different content platform, Drupal.

**B. Goals**

My application for this grant includes the following goals:

1. Conduct further primary research in text-generating systems within videogames.
2. Investigate relevant current scholarship on videogames, particularly with regard to the emerging themes focusing on materiality.
3. Conduct research on the current marketability of books on videogame topics.
4. Publicize the book and the proposal-in-progress by assembling material on a website and blog established for this purpose: [www.thevideogametext.com](http://www.thevideogametext.com). This will be ongoing throughout the award period.
5. Prepare and submit a book proposal to a leading press publishing in this area.

Results:

1. Completed. This work went well, and actually resulted in the completion of a book chapter on the Channel F gaming system that submitted to an edited collection, due to be published next year.
2. Completed. This consisted of reading widely in emerging publications in the field. Indeed, current scholarship in my sub field tends toward issues surrounding digital materiality.

3. Completed. Though books in the subject area do remain popular and marketable, the evident marketability of my own book is somewhat less clear, unfortunately, as my primary gauge for this data – the amount of traffic to the website I created – was a bit disappointing.
4. Completed. The website went live in the Fall of 2009 and continues to draw traffic. In total, it has been seen by approximately 1000 unique visitors.
5. In progress. Given the mixed results of the website, the proposal itself is in a state of reassessment as I consider how best to find and address the right audience for this book.

### III. Adequacy of procedures and approaches

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The open review approach formed the core ethic of my project, and a website is the best way to achieve that outcome. The most successful aspect of this approach was that I could leverage my professional and social networks (especially through Twitter) to find an audience for the book. The fact that the site ultimately did not perform as well as I had hoped may be attributed to a couple of factors. First, the difficulty I had in producing the website caught me a bit off guard, given my prior experience with the Drupal platform, and I spent a disproportionate amount of time in solving technical problems in the infrastructure and not enough time polishing and publicizing the content. Second, publicizing the project proved to be more difficult emotionally than I expected it to be. In fact, my content that attracted the most readers was a blog entry about how humbling it is to confront one's own dissertation in all of its limitations and awkwardness. Going forward, I plan to continue polishing and publishing content as I try and broaden its audience.

### IV. Dissemination

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As I mentioned above, research into this project led to an essay on the Channel F gaming system. This essay, “Channel F for Forgotten: The Fairchild Video Entertainment System” will appear in *Before the Crash*, an anthology being published by Wayne State University Press. In Spring 2010, I gave an invited lecture at Virginia Tech on my ongoing research in videogame typography, and I presented a related conference paper at the Futures of Digital Studies, a national conference held in Gainesville, FL.

- i <http://www.thevideogametext.com>
- ii <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/mcpress/plannedobsolescence/>
- iii <http://grandtextauto.org/2008/01/22/ep-11-media-machines/>
- iv <http://www.futureofthebook.org/gametheory/>
- v <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/mcpress/>
- vi <http://docs.plannedobsolescence.net/cpdraft/>