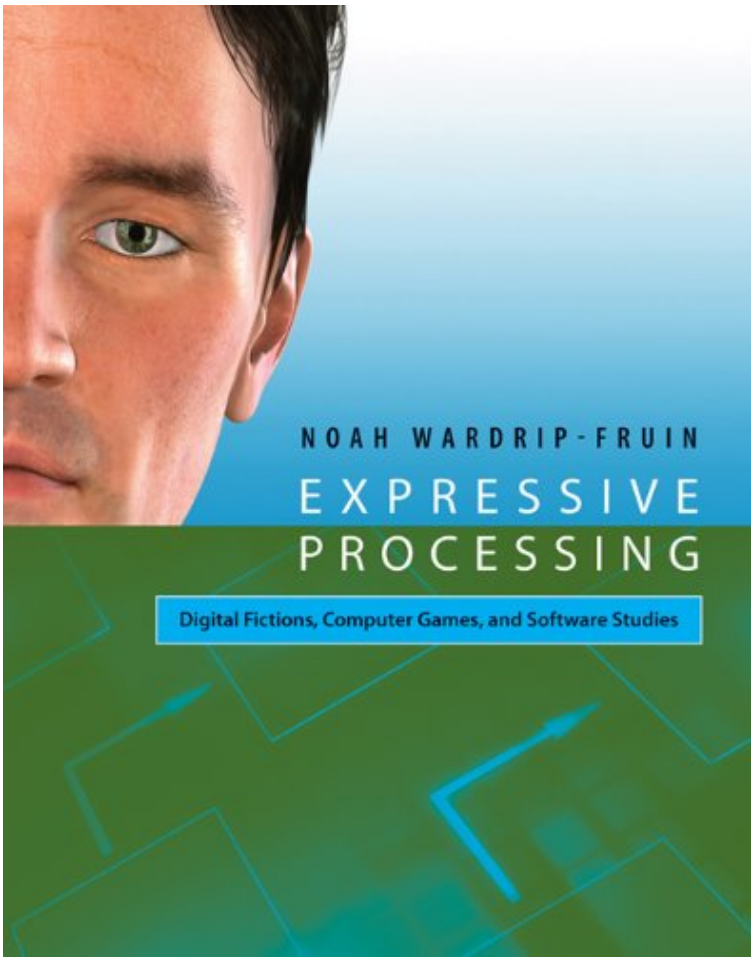
Expressive Processing: Digital Fictions, Computer Games, and Software Studies

Noah Wardrip-Fruin



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Noah Wardrip-Fruin : Expressive Processing: Digital Fictions, Computer Games, and Software Studies before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Expressive Processing: Digital Fictions, Computer Games, and Software Studies:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Eliza Fooled Me At FirstBy Neilah DesireeI have a background in Psychology and Computer Science and this is a good look at the human capacity for imagination and virtual immersion. I want to take advantage of these insights and build more positive experiences for my users. This book is fun and informative. I am learning and I can relate at the same time. I have 'played' with lots of expert systems and especially the 'therapic' are most interesting. I can imagine the face of pets, those wide-eyed looks when you tell them your secrets and they never say a word. I hope to finish this book in the next week. I may want to read it again. This book has a new perspective on game playing.9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. How to use processes

to create experiencesBy M. NelsonThis book is a great read, highly recommended for anyone interested in how to use computers for expressive purposes, whether in artificial intelligence systems, videogames, or electronic literature.Wardrip-Fruin's basic point is that processes are the mechanism by which computers function as "media machines", and we should analyze expressive/aesthetic computational works by looking at what processes they use, how they use them, and what the effects are. This avoids either treating them as black-boxes to be understood only by looking at effects on audiences, or as technical artifacts to be understood by looking at literal lines of C++ or Lisp.But, refreshingly, the vast majority of a book is not a theoretical argument for that point. Instead, it gets its hands dirty analyzing a number of specific pieces, to understand how each one works: what processes does the system use, for what purposes, and how does that contribute to its goals and experience? How visible or hidden are the processes from the user/player? If we trace what can actually happen in a system, how does this match up with what processes it nominally claims to be using?Much of the tension the book identifies is between the internal processes of a system, and what users/players think is going on. The well-known "Eliza effect" takes place when a system appears to have more processing going on than it actually does. The canonical example is the classic chatbot Eliza, which users often think is doing complex internal AI to respond to their queries, while in reality it uses extremely simple logic. To this effect, Wardrip-Fruin adds the opposite: in the "Tale-Spin effect", a system is doing a bunch of complex internal processing, but in an invisible way, so that users think that a system is actually fairly simple. The book's analyses of Universe, Minstrel, Terminal Time, F.E.A.R., and BRUTUS along this axis should be of particular interest to anyone wanting to make entertainment or artistic use of AI systems.There are many more specific insights as well; among too many to list, the section on dialogue trees (starting on p. 51) is probably the most thorough analysis of different kinds of dialogue trees, and how and when to use them, that I've seen in print. Since the book has something of a case-study format, these can profitably be read in isolation for someone who doesn't want to read the entire book. Some of the works profiled at length include: the videogames Sim City, F.E.A.R., Knights of the Old Republic, and Faade; the story-generation systems Minstrel, BRUTUS, Tale-Spin, and Universe; the chatbot Eliza; and the satirical AI systems The Goldwater Machine and Terminal Time.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Essential contribution to understanding games as processesBy Harviainen Jussi TIn Expressive Processing, Noah Wardrip-Fruin utilizes several very interesting examples from over the last few decades to illustrate how digital games are processes of expression and processes that can express. The examples (e.g. Eliza/Doctor, TaleSpin, SimCity and so forth) are well chosen, thoroughly discussed and used to point out not only the underlying processes they contain, but also their reception and the way those two can be strongly dissonant. The author then describes these as useful phenomenon templates, named after each program.Wardrip-Fruin furthermore demonstrates the rare ability draw in ideas from non-digital sources to discuss digital games, the text flows well, and it is obvious that the text engages in dicourse both other scholars and many of the creators of the programs that are analyzed. My sole problem with this book was that here and there, the author drops debated concepts without sufficiently explaining what he means with them, but this is quite rare.While Expressive Processing maybe isn't something that is directly userful to many game designers or scholars, it is definitely good in something else: this is an exceptionally inspiring volume that gives its reader a multitude of new ideas, ideas they'll want to develop into games and articles as soon as possible. That is a very valuable contribution to the field - and there's some damn fine analysis included in the book, too.

From the complex city-planning game SimCity to the virtual therapist Eliza: how computational processes open possibilities for understanding and creating digital media.What matters in understanding digital media? Is looking at the external appearance and audience experience of software enough -- or should we look further? In Expressive Processing, Noah Wardrip-Fruin argues that understanding what goes on beneath the surface, the computational processes that make digital media function, is essential. Wardrip-Fruin looks at "expressive processing" by examining specific works of digital media ranging from the simulated therapist Eliza to the complex city-planning game SimCity. Digital media, he contends, offer particularly intelligible examples of things we need to understand about software in general; if we understand, for instance, the capabilities and histories of artificial intelligence techniques in the context of a computer game, we can use that understanding to judge the use of similar techniques in such higher-stakes social contexts as surveillance.

Expressive Processing has the perfect combination of technical expertise, historical rigor, and dogged determination to get inside of the black box to make it a kind of primer on what Henry Lowood once called 'the hard work of software history.' It is, therefore, a model of a new critical approach. This is a must read for anyone working in fields such as new media, game studies, software studies, and AI. Because Wardrip-Fruin writes so confidently and clearly about complex systems, this will be a powerfully enabling book for graduate students, and advanced undergraduates as well. (Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, Associate Professor of English, University of Maryland, author of Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination)At last, an analysis by somebody who truly 'gets it!' We have seen plenty of first-generation books on interactive entertainment, in which an author with expertise in another field presents a bystander's perceptions on the subject. But this is a second-generation book, written by an author whose background is entirely

within the field. Wardrip-Fruin was brought up on computer games and educated in the thoughts of the first generation thinkers. Now he has integrated them into a new perspective that builds on those ideas at higher levels of abstraction. Looking back at my own ideas from Noah's new vantage point was an educational experience for me. (Chris Crawford, former head of Atari's Games Research Group, and co-founder of Storytron)The perfect volume to begin the new publication series in software studies.... Inspiring. (Game Studies)I highly recommend this book to digital media -- games, movies, and fiction -- creators, AI students, and engineers. (Computing s)In Wardrip-Fruin''s Expressive Processing, the field of 'interactive entertainment' comes of age; its theories and methods are native to its medium, rather than borrowed from literature, film, or history....Required reading. (JAC)Through insightful examinations of media ranging from simulations to computer games, the author presents an intriguing and cogent argument.... Recommended. (Choice)Wardrip-Fruin has given us an arsenal of rhetorical firepower and a powerful set of examples for how one might teach algorithmic literacy across the curriculum without delving into the syntax of any particular programming language. (Digital Humanities Quarterly)About the AuthorNoah Wardrip-Fruin is Associate Professor in the Department of Computer Science at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is the coeditor of four collections published by the MIT Press: with Nick Montfort, The New Media Reader (2003); with Pat Harrigan, First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game (2004), Second Person: Role-Playing and Story in Games and Playable Media (2007), and Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives (2009).