"Avenues of Access"
Exhibit of Electronic Literature at MLA 2013
Curated by Drs. Dene Grigar and Kathi Inman Berens

IMPACT REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Many visitors to the "Avenues of Access" exhibit at the Hynes Convention Center actively sought it because the 2012 e-literature exhibit positively affected their scholarship
- Visitors lingered for upwards of an hour, even two, immersing themselves in the various generic stations and talking with curators and other scholars about connections between their own research and the exhibited e-lit

- The natural affinity between e-literature and digital humanities manifested itself in conversations that are sparking scholarly collaboration on projects, speaking invitations and publications
- Young scholars tell us they are revising their courses of study and dissertation plans to account for electronic works they encounter at MLA e-lit exhibits
- Because e-lit is emergent and dynamic, scholars discovered new paradigms within primary source materials
- E-lit's platform and thematic diversity made it amenable to many traditional scholarly fields and encourages transdisciplinary collaboration
- A number of visitors remarked that they now expect to encounter an e-lit exhibit at MLA. E-lit at MLA is another demonstration of how MLA leadership embraces new technologies and scholarly developments in the field

EXHIBIT OVERVIEW

The Modern Language Association's 2013 Convention in Boston, MA featured MLA's second annual exhibit of electronic literature. "Avenues of Access" presented 31 new works by 32 internationally recognized artists. These works, exhibited January 3-5, were classed in five categories:

- Multimodal Poetry
- Multimodal Narrative
- E-Essay
- Literary Games
- Mobile and Locative Works

An evening reading on Friday, January 4th at Emerson College's Bordy Theater featured fourteen artists reading from works featured at "Avenues of Access."

An on-site "Antecedant" Station allowed exhibit guests to modify a BASIC program that outputs mazes on a Commodore 64 (circa 1982) and to play Ian Bogost's literary game "A Slow Year" (2010) designed to be played on an Atari Video Computing System (circa 1977). At the "Creation" Station, guests could add their own words to fields in a JavaScript poetry generator and watch their poems instantly render on-screen.

INTRODUCTION: THE ON-SITE EXPERIENCE

If the object of 2012's "Electronic Literature Exhibit" was to introduce MLA scholars to a broad historical and international cross-section of born-digital literary writing, in 2013 we curators intended our "Avenues of Access" guests to go deep into the 30 works to forge their own associations between the featured electronic literature and the texts, scholarly practices and pedagogies of their own fields.

Toward that end, we designed a physical space that was hospitable to lingering,

reading and talking. Works were housed elegantly on screens with identical custom "Avenues of Access" wallpaper; the Mac-minis that housed the works were hidden from view beneath gray table skirts.

Tables were rounds such as one encounters at events or dinner parties; tables were designed in an X-pattern across the large, quiet room lit by large windows looking out into Boylston and Newbery Streets.

Large posters announcing the works hung on the walls near their respective table stations, as did smaller posters created by locative artist Laura Zaylea (Asst. Prof., Temple U.) whose work "Speak2MeInCode" was commissioned by the curators for "Avenues of Access.

Six undergraduate docents from Grigar's Creative Media and Digital Culture program and specially trained in curation were available to greet guests and answer basic questions about the works; curators spoke to the works' the literary, historical and theoretical elements and introduced guests to each other when common interests arose.

Artists visited the exhibit and were available to answer questions, talk about the composition process and inquire after guests' own literary fields.

EXHIBIT MISSION AND GOALS
Our mission was to introduce scholars of language and literature to electronic literature being produced right now around the world in multiple languages and for scholars to apprehend the historical and material antecedents of this emergent work.

These goals helped us achieve our mission:

- Create a physical setting in which scholars new to electronic literature could "learn" how to engage it and share their experiences with expert readers, scholars, artists and enthusiasts
- Provide scholarship and online resources to scholars for the purpose of further study of electronic literature
- Encourage those interested in the creative arts to produce electronic literature
- Demonstrate in the hands-on Antecedent and Creation Stations how one "makes" electronic literature
- Raise awareness of electronic literature as a field with defined parameters so that scholars can assimilate it into the broader scholarly discourse about canonicity & periodization

ASSESSMENT METRICS

Assessment of success in attaining these goals is derived from information in six areas:

1. References to the exhibit by humanities scholars and artists
2. Reviews by humanities scholars and artists of works featured in the exhibit
3. Reviews by humanities scholars and artists of the exhibit
4. Inclusion of the web archive in scholarly databases
5. New scholarship and creative output generating from it
6. Physical and virtual engagement of visitors with the Exhibit and its online archive

Print-based data is not yet available for inclusion. As it becomes available, we will edit online versions of this report to reflect that information. This initial phase of our report includes data stemming from electronic publications and media; they serve as the first step in the process of analysis and evaluation of the success of the Exhibit. The data mostly covers mid-December 2012 when the web archive was launched to mid-February 2013.

ASSESSMENT-1. REFERENCES TO EXHIBIT

"Avenues of Access: An Exhibit & Online Archive of New 'Born Digital' Literature at the MLA 2013 Convention." *Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice (ELMCIP)*. Accessed 23 February 2013. http://www.elmcip.net/node/5749

Borsuk, Amaranth. "Readings and Performances/January 2013." Accessed 23 February 2013. http://www.amaranthborsuk.com/readings/

Carpenter, J.R. "Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl." *Lucky Soap*. 8 January, 2013. http://luckysoap.com/webprojects.html

Croxall, Brian. "Teaching Creativity through Code." *A Digital Pedagogy Unconference*. 29 Dec. 2012. http://www.briancroxall.net/digitalpedagogy/2012/12/29/teaching-creativity-through-code/

"Electronic Literature at the MLA 2013." *Electronic Literature Organization*. 25 Dec. 2012. http://eliterature.org/2012/12/electronic-literature-at-the-mla-2013/

"Electronic Literature / ENG 355." Instructors: Aurelea Mahood & Brian Ganter, English Department, Capilano University (BC province, Canada). Spring

2013. http://gantercourses.net/spr13engl335/

Games and Playable Media. "Almost Goodbye Featured at 'Avenues of Access'
MLA13" Accessed 23 February 2013. http://games.soe.ucsc.edu/project/almost-
goodbye

Hayward, Megan. "of day, of night at MLA13." Accessed 23 February 2013.
http://www.creativecultural.com/meganheyward/?p=1012

Liszkiewicz, A.J. Patrick. "New and Upcoming Events." Accessed 23 February
2013. http://ludipo.com/news

Montfort, Nick. "The Tale of the MLA E-Lit Exhibit, Reading." 14 January 2013.
http://nickm.com/post/2013/01/the-tale-of-the-mla-e-lit-exhibit-reading/

Reed, Aaron. ""Almost Goodbye: Minimalist Procedural Content Generation in
Interactive Storytelling." 4 May 2012. http://eis-blog.ucsc.edu/2012/05/almost-
goodbye-minimalist-procedural-content-generation-in-interactive-storytelling/

Sample, Mark. "Digital Humanities at the MLA 2013." *Sample Reality*. 17 Oct.
2012. http://www.samplereality.com/2012/10/17/digital-humanities-at-mla-2013/

Tomasula, Steve. "Readings: *TOC* at MLA 13." Accessed 23 February
2013. http://www.stevetomasula.com/readings.htm

Zaylea, Laura. "Video -- Friday Night's Reading [at "Avenues of Access,"
MLA13]. 18 January 2013. http://speak2meincode.com/2013/01/18/video-friday-
nights-reading/

ASSESSMENT-2: REVIEWS OF WORKS FEATURED IN EXHIBIT
Flores, Leonardo. "'217 Views of the Tokaido Line' by Will Luers." I ♥ E-Poetry. 21
Feb. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Afeeld' by A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz." I ♥ E-Poetry. 20 May 2012.
http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Aleph Null,' by Jim Andrews." I ♥ E-Poetry. 5 April 2012.
http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Between Page and Screen' by Amaranth Borsuk and Brad
Bouse" by J.R. Carpenter." I ♥ E-Poetry. 5 Jan. 2013.
http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

> **Dana Solomon**
> @danasolomon
>
> @kathiiberens #elit show was great! Especially liked Saemmer piece. Thinking about writing on it now.
>
> 2 MONTHS AGO   REPLY   RETWEET   FAVORITE

Flores, Leonardo. "'Böhmische Dörfer' by Alexandra Saemmer." I ♥ E-Poetry. 11 June 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Google Earth: A Poem for Voice and Internet' by Manuel Portela." I ♥ E-Poetry. 9 Jan. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Konsonant' by Jörg Piringer." I ♥ E-Poetry. 16 June 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Living Will' by Mark C. Marino." I ♥ E-Poetry. 5 Dec. 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'MUPS' by David Jhave Johnston." I ♥ E-Poetry. 1 Jan. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Of Day, Of Night' by Megan Hayward." I ♥ E-Poetry. 4 Jan. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Opacity,' by Serge Bouchardon, i-Trace Collective and Léonard Dumas." I ♥ E-Poetry 15 May 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Rememori' by Christine Wilks." I ♥ E-Poetry. 13 June 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Sea and Spar Between' by Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland." I ♥ E-Poetry. 2 Jan. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'Spine Sonnet' by Jody Zellen." I ♥ E-Poetry. 14 June 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "Uncontrollable Semantics (2012 edition)' by Jason Nelson." I ♥ E-Poetry. 8 Jan. 2013. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

Flores, Leonardo. "'What They Speak When They Speak to Me,' by Jason Lewis." I ♥ E-Poetry. 27 May 2012. http://leonardoflores.net/tagged/Avenues-of-Access

ASSESSMENT-3: REVIEWS OF EXHIBIT

Bigelow, Alan. "Ten (Or More) Misconceptions About Electronic Literature." 5 January 2013. Accessed 26 February 2013.

Malloy, Judy. "With a Theme of "Avenues of Access", MLA2013 to Include an Exhibition of Electronic Literature and over 60 Digital Humanities Panels." 1 January 2013. Accessed 26 February 2013.
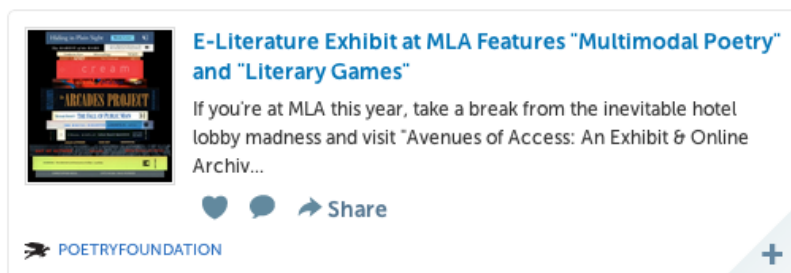
Materialidades da Literatura. "Literatura Eletrónica no Congresso da MLA 2013." 5 January 2013. Accessed 26 February 2013.

Poetry Foundation. "E-Literature Exhibit at MLA Features 'Multimodal Poetry' and 'Literary Games.'" January, 2013. Accessed 26 February 2013.

Reviews of the exhibit began to come in from around the world. This from Portugal's Materialidades da Literatura.

Literatura Eletrónica no Congresso da MLA 2013

Pela segunda vez consecutiva, o congresso anual da Modern Language Association integra uma exposição de literatura eletrónica: "Avenues o...

MATERIALIDADES DA LITERATURA

And the Poetry Foundation in the United States....

E-Literature Exhibit at MLA Features "Multimodal Poetry" and "Literary Games"

If you're at MLA this year, take a break from the inevitable hotel lobby madness and visit "Avenues of Access: An Exhibit & Online Archiv...

POETRYFOUNDATION

ASSESSMENT-4: INCLUSION OF EXHIBIT IN SCHOLARLY DATABASES

Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in Practice (ELMCIP) Knowledge Base: http://www.elmcip.net/event/avenues-access-exhibit-online-archive-new-born-digital-literature-mla-2013-convention.

Electronic Literature Organization Directory http://directory.eliterature.org/.

ASSESSMENT-5: NEW SCHOLARSHIP

Berens, Kathi Inman. "Aura in iOS: Ian Bogost's 'Simony.'" Electronic Literature
Organization's 2013 Conference at Paris VIII "Chercher Le Texte." 24-27
September 2013.

---. "A One-Line Program As a Book: *10PRINT*." Review in Prof. Hacker blog of the
Chronicle of Higher Education. 3 Dec.
2012. http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/a-one-line-program-as-book-
10print/44727

---. "Racism Is Always-On: *L.A. Flood*'s Procedural Rhetorics." Forthcoming in *ebr:
electronic book review*. Spring 2013.

---. "Rare Books, Aura and Electronic Literature." Talk to be delivered at "Electronic
Literature and Its Emergent Forms" at the Library of Congress. 5 April 2013.

---. "*Uncle Roger*'s Grandmother: Feminist Reception History and Early
Hypertext." Talk to be delivered at the Digital Humanities
Conference. Lincoln, Nebraska, July 16-19 2013. http://dh2013.unl.edu/

Berens, Kathi Inman and Davin Heckman. Review essay of electronic literature to
be published in *L.A. Review of Books*. Spring 2013.

Berens, Kathi Inman and Leonardo Flores. "Aura in the Age of Computational
Production." Forthcoming in *Performance Research Journal* 18.5 (October
2013).

Grigar, Dene. <<Chercher l'exhibition>>. Forthcoming at the Electronic Literature
Organization Paris. September 2013; Paris, France.

---. "Curating Born Digital Literature." Featured Presenter at Digital Cultures In The
Age Of Big Data, The Institute for the Study of Culture and Society, Bowling
Green State University. Bowling Green, OH; May 2013.

---. "Digital Writing: Performances and Readings of Electronic Literature."
Forthcoming at the Association of Writers & Writing Programs 2013
Conference and Book Fair. April 2013; Boston, MA.

---. "Exhibiting and Curating Electronic Literature." Featured Presenter at The
University of Bergen (Norway). Tuesday, October 30th, 2012, funded
by ELMCIP ("Electronic Literature as a Model of Creativity and Innovation in
Practice").

---. "Fallow Field." Republished in *Authoring Software*. July 2012, with

"Reflecting on Fallow Field: An Artist's Paper."
http://www.narrabase.net/dene_grigar_ff.html. Reviewed by Leonardo Flores,
"I Love e-Poetry." 4 Aug. 2012.
http://leonardoflores.net/post/28711395312/fallow-field-by-dene-grigar.

---. "Medium Translation Theory for *TOC* and Its name was Penelope." Forthcoming
at the Electronic Literature Organization Paris. September 2013; Paris,
France.

---. "Literary Artists of the United Kingdom." Forthcoming at Illuminations, the gallery
for the School of English, Media, and Theatre Studies at the National
University of Ireland. Maynooth, Ireland; March 2014.

---. "New Literary Experiences for the Digital Humanities." Forthcoming at the 2013
Digital Humanities Summer Institute. Victoria, Canada; June 6, 2013. The
show moves for a month-long showing at G++ gallery following this event,
also located in Victoria, Canada.

---. "Why Curating? A Curatorial Statement about Electronic Literature and Works
on Desktop." *Rhizomes* (24) 2012.
http://www.rhizomes.net/issue24/grigar.html.

ASSESSMENT-6: ENGAGEMENT WITH EXHIBIT
A. Physical Visitors at Hynes Convention Center
"Avenues of Access" Exhibit at the MLA 2013
Visitors: 150; average duration of visit: 60 minutes.
Guests at Readings and Performances event held offsite Friday evening, January 4,
2013: 80.

B. Virtual Visitors to "Avenues of Access" Main Archival Site
Electronic Literature (Main Archival Site). http://dtc-wsuv.org/mla2012.
1673 total visits from 10 Nov. 2012-18 Jan. 2013; 2037 total visits as of 23 Feb.
2013.
Visitors to the site came from 30 countries including Albania, Algeria, Argentina,
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic,
Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Ireland, Luxemburg, New Zealand,
Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Viet
Nam, the UK, and the US.

C. "Avenues of Access" Facebook Page
The site reached 50,033 Friends of Fans and had a total of 193 Likes, with the
largest age group being 25-34 year olds, with close to an equal amount of women
and men.

D. Blog Site: Berens, Kathi Inman. "Curation is Convergence." Curatorial
Statement for "Avenues of Access" Electronic Literature Exhibit. 29 Dec.

2012. http://kathiiberens.com/2012/12/29/curation/
320 page visits; 29 Dec. 2012 – 11 Jan. 2013.

E. Electronic Literature Readings and Performances" Poster.
http://twitpic.com/81ek4y.
440 total visits.

F. *Storify* archive of the event. http://storify.com/kathiiberens/e-literature-exhibit-at-mla12/. 223 views 14Jan. 2013-22 Feb. 2013.

TESTIMONIALS: EXHIBIT GUESTS ON E-LIT AS A SCHOLARLY RESOURCE

BEN RAILTON, Asst. Prof. of American Studies at Fitchburg State Univ
My encounter with "The Knotted Line" was not only made possible, but greatly amplified, by the "Avenues of Access" exhibit at the MLA Convention. It's true, and significant, that I would not have known about the project at all without the exhibit and its guides. But the chance to experiment with the project at the exhibit, to chat with the guides and my peers there about such projects and our possible work with them, and to return to the project in that setting on multiple occasions have all been vital to my developing perspective on the project's relevance, usefulness, and meanings in my teaching and scholarship.

See also Prof. Railton's blog post on why "Avenues of Access" was "the most interesting digital aspect" of MLA13 and "The Knotted Line" as a pedagogical resource.

Robin Wharton
@rswharton

Headed home from #mla13. Great time! One of the highlights, the #elit ex. Went for a quick look, stayed for two hours.

2 MONTHS AGO   REPLY   RETWEET   FAVORITE

Roger Whitson
@rogerwhitson

E-Lit: I came for @dgrigar and @kathiiberens, I stayed for the awesome augmented-reality, random-generated, and QR poems. #mla13 #elit

2 MONTHS AGO   REPLY   RETWEET   FAVORITE