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Interactive Digital Storytelling (video games, web, mobile apps, VR, etc.) needs to be recognized as its own distinct category of creativity, and supported via a cohesive cultural policy that acknowledges its growing role as an essential “pillar” of Canada’s creative ecosystem. Something similar might be said for broader digital art, media and creativity in general.

As a creator and teacher of interactive media, one of the things that strikes me about this ongoing discussion of “Canadian Content in a Digital World” is that it is still so heavily focused on older, non-interactive forms of media (TV, Film, books, music, etc.). And, of course, this whole conversation/consultation has been deeply preoccupied with questions re: how we should manage the production/dissemination of these non-interactive media products (and foster/promote Canadian content) in a world of online distribution and streaming. These are important concerns. What seems to be getting lost, however (at least in what I'm seeing so far), is a truly robust discussion about the emerging role of INTERACTIVE digital media in Canada’s cultural landscape, and how to best support this "new", legitimate and significant genre of storytelling and artistic expression (a now multi-billion-dollar slice of the creative economy that includes video games, VR, AR, mobile apps, social media, and many other interactive sub-genres).

My thoughts on this are informed by my personal experience as a digital media creator, educator and leader. I have been involved with many different types of digital media creativity and storytelling over the past 15 years (for example, I helped create a Heritage-funded online magazine about digital art and culture in Canada at the Banff New Media Institute, directed a media innovation lab at The Banff Centre, serve on the board of a media arts organization in Calgary, and teach classes in “interactive storytelling” at the University of Calgary). I’d also like to cross-reference this article by Owen Brierly (Edmonton Digital Art College), which expresses some very similar sentiments re: Alberta’s gaming industry and recent changes in culture policy at the provincial level: <http://www.digitalalberta.com/4416>

First of all, I’m definitely not dismissing the importance of older forms of media (Film, TV, music, books, etc.) in our cultural “ecosystem”. These media are obviously essential to Canada’s ongoing cultural development and evolution, as are conversations about how to support and manage their production/distribution in a new digital world. The internet is a completely new and different media environment (compared to broadcast and publication), and will require us to evolve whole new models. This is a major challenge, and it is essential for us to have these conversations and come up with innovative responses. But as we wrestle with such questions, we may be forgetting that there is now also a whole new broad genre of cultural expression and production on the scene that wasn’t really around (at least, not to the same degree) last time Canada’s cultural policies were updated. Of course, I’m talking here about “interactive digital storytelling” (a category including games, VR, mobile, etc. - see my brief definition below). And my message here is that perhaps the time has come for us to recognize that “interactive

storytelling” is a distinct and significant category of art, entertainment and cultural/economic activity that doesn’t fully fit with existing policy frameworks, agencies or support models in Canada. Fostering it (and ensuring diversity in terms of content, genre, voices/perspectives, target audiences, and approaches) may therefore necessitate a revamped approach that recognizes its distinctiveness from film, TV, literature, and other, more established genres of media/culture.

Here’s some quick context re: “interactive storytelling” to ground my further comments:

When I mention "interactive digital storytelling", I’m referring to an emerging and commercially important category of content and creativity that includes video games, VR, AR, mobile apps, interactive cinema and documentary, interactive books, social media storytelling and a wide variety of other digital storytelling forms that embrace deep interactivity and audience participation/agency. (In my definition, this category does NOT include things like Netflix-style streaming, ebooks, iTunes, or similar networked media, which are not really “interactive” per se, but merely serve up previous forms of linear content in digital form and distribute them online.) Interactive digital storytelling is an already massive and ever-expanding field of practice, as most people are no doubt already aware. Depending on whose statistics you look at, video games alone are a \$3 Billion dollar industry that is already on par with or surpassing films, TV and other media forms in terms of global economic and cultural impact. And, of course, VR and AR are now poised to surge in a big way. Story-based mobile apps are ubiquitous. Locative media experiences like Pokemon Go and Ingress and Detour are also becoming globally significant. Interactive documentaries are an important emerging form of non-fiction. Interactive books are proliferating, and text-based adventure games and hypertext novels are experiencing a new tablet-driven renaissance. Etc. Etc. However you “slice” it, interactive storytelling has gone mainstream and is here to stay. It is no longer a purely “experimental” category with fringe status and impact. (As Owen Brierly puts it, digital storytelling is now “an integral part of how we consume content in our daily lives for learning, information and entertainment.”) And it can no longer simply be dismissed as “unserious”, “low culture”, “kid’s stuff”, or “not really art”. Indeed, after many years of dismissal by old-guard cultural gatekeepers (who marginalized video games in particular as a banal form of non-art), interactive digital storytelling is finally being recognized as a legitimate artform with enduring cultural value – a unique new model of storytelling with all of the expressive, conceptual and narrative power of film, TV, opera or novels (though interactive narratives are fundamentally different, in terms of how they actually tell their stories).

Furthermore, media experts are now recognizing that (mainly because they are all rooted in computer technology) all of these various emerging categories of interactive digital media (games, VR, apps, interactive docs, interactive cinema, etc.) actually have far more in common with one another than they have with earlier forms of narrative such as film, TV or literature. In other words, they are all really “subcategories” of a single broader genre of media called “interactive storytelling” (sometimes referred to more formally as “interactive digital narrative”). The point I want to make here is that, as a broad category, interactive storytelling is now widely recognized as being fundamentally distinct and separate from other forms of media – a whole new computation-based narrative genre with its own unique expressive properties and characteristics, its own strengths and weaknesses, its own opportunities and challenges - as well as its own models of production, audience experience and dissemination. Interactive storytelling isn’t simply an offshoot or “reboot” of cinema, TV, literature, or any other previous

type of media. Interactive storytelling is really and truly its own "thing" - a new and unique form of art that is quickly becoming one of our dominant modes of cultural expression worldwide. And, importantly, as a distinct category of art-making rooted in digital technologies, interactive storytelling tends to be produced and disseminated according to its own unique models - processes which are sometimes similar to those of older media like film and TV, but which in many ways diverge from these earlier processes, and therefore may require different types of support and cultivation. (Owen Brierly echoes this point, suggesting that the video game sector and other digital industries have their own special production processes, business practices, dissemination strategies and funding needs that don't always line up with policies developed to support other forms of media production.)

So, interactive storytelling is a unique new artistic medium with its own processes and models (and community of practitioners). And it has now reached a status of true cultural and economic importance. Yet it is not yet regarded or managed as a key "pillar" of our cultural ecosystem, and we still seem to be lacking a cohesive strategy for supporting interactive storytelling in Canada. In fact, our cultural agencies still seem to treat interactive storytelling (and interactive digital media in general) largely as an ongoing "innovation experiment" or fringe cultural practice...rather than as an increasingly pervasive medium embraced by millions of Canadians and global citizens who want to experience (and tell) all manner of interactive stories.

Our lack of a cohesive strategy can be seen in the fact that there are still relatively few programs for supporting interactive storytelling in Canada – and the initiative that we do have (though often wonderful, even indispensable) are scattered about in an incomplete patchwork that has arisen as various agencies devoted to older forms of media (NFB, Telefilm, Canada Council, etc.) have gradually begun to experiment with new digital forms guided by their own individual agendas. As Owen Brierly points out in his article, most of the support for digital media production in Canada is currently distributed across a smattering of "experimental" funding streams, R&D-oriented innovation programs, funds for interactive spin-offs to TV or film productions, venture capital models, or other ad-hoc programs with very narrow mandates. Furthermore, most of these ad-hoc programs are tacked onto agencies (like the NFB, Canadian Film Centre, CMF, Telefilm, etc.) that are primarily devoted to non-interactive forms of creativity (film, TV, etc.), rather than digital culture. One exception to this rule is the Canada Council's "media arts" category, which is specifically devoted to digital art. However, this program is primarily a support for contemporary fine artists who incorporate time-based and/or interactive digital media into their work, and who pursue a studio-based/exhibition-driven model of production and dissemination. This media arts program is therefore ill-suited for supporting most interactive story projects (which, like literature or film production, do not really follow a contemporary art model). A few specific types of digital practice (like critical/art games) may indeed be compatible with this fine arts model, but in general the CCA's ability to support interactive storytelling is highly limited.

Overall, then, what we have is NOT a coordinated approach for supporting digital creativity in Canada, but an incomplete "patchwork" of ad-hoc initiatives with limited reach and impact. And, as with any patchwork, there are many gaping holes in this support structure. Certain specific types of interactive storytelling (e.g., VR and interactive documentaries at the NFB) enjoy some form of limited support, but a great many genres of interactive storytelling fall through the

cracks, and a vast number of potential creators and maker communities and regions are left out of the equation.

Of course, given the massive global momentum around interactive storytelling, Canadian makers (be they individual artists/producers, digital businesses, researchers, community groups, or other innovators/risk-takers) have often found ways to work around this patchy lack of support by forging their own “DIY” solutions (e.g., entrepreneurial models, Kickstarter campaigns, grants from non-culture agencies like SSHRC or private foundations, and so on). And the lack of support hasn’t stopped Canada from becoming a major player in the global digital entertainment industry - hosting Triple-A Game Studios in major cities, launching post-secondary programs in game design and interactive media, and so on. Somehow “art always finds a way”. BUT, this scenario (relying mainly on ad-hoc, DIY, self-funded and entrepreneurship solutions) does not necessarily support the full possible diversity of interactive storytelling practices, voices, perspectives, communities, audiences or business models that could potentially exist in an environment blessed with more formal, comprehensive and strategic support for interactive creators. And one theme that has definitely emerged within this ongoing discussion about “Canadian Content in a Digital World” is the clear desire of most participants to see a real diversity of ideas, perspectives, voices, localities and approaches to creation reflected within Canadian content. My sense is that this desire for diversity applies to interactive storytelling content as well. We need an environment for interactive storytelling that doesn’t just support a few experimental producers and students, or a few large video game companies, but a wide variety of genres, voices, and production models that will appeal both to global and local audiences. And my intuition is that a truly diverse digital media ecosystem that cultivates major economic activity as well as things like creative experimentation, cultural and artistic risk-taking, plurality of expression, and local/regional community-focused media, will not emerge from a patchwork system that fails to implement a comprehensive cultural policy for supporting interactive storytelling across multiple platforms, genres and communities.

In conclusion, I’d like to suggest that we need to take a new look at how INTERACTIVE digital storytelling is cultivated, supported and disseminated in Canada. Rather than continuing to approach interactive storytelling as a fringe cultural experiment or afterthought, I think that we need to examine its characteristics and role as a significant player in the cultural ecosystem, and create new policies that adapt accordingly. We need to come to terms with this broad new category of digital entertainment, and develop supports that recognize it for what it is – a whole new segment of the cultural sector (diverse but united via certain innate commonalities) that comes with its own models and practices, challenges and opportunities. As Owen Brierly suggests, it is also important that digital media producers work to help educate policy makers, agencies and funders about their production processes, business practices, dissemination strategies and funding needs. We need to share knowledge about how this new area of cultural production works, so that policies, funding models and other supports can adapt to better serve digital creativity (and – just as importantly - so that digital creativity can better serve Canada and its cultural ecosystem).

My suspicion is that taking a comprehensive look at this area would lead Heritage to consider adopting interactive storytelling (and perhaps digital creativity more broadly) as a key pillar of Canada’s culture sector and creative industries. Such a move would be in line with changes recently implemented in Alberta, where digital media (including the video games industry) is

now regarded as a “fifth” pillar of the creative industries alongside film and television, magazines, music and books (see Brierly’s article). That said, my impulse is to recommend that a nation-wide policy on this should aim to support not just commercial digital “industries”, but also a much wider range of digital creative practices across the cultural sector (including activities positioned well outside purely “entrepreneurial” approaches to interactive storytelling). A truly comprehensive policy on digital culture in Canada would cultivate not only commercial video games and other forms of interactive entrepreneurship, but also individual storytellers and artists, indie producers, local community-based approaches, experimental risk-taking and other pursuits that expand the range and diversity of voices and processes contributing to interactive cultural expression in Canada. If we develop a truly comprehensive strategy for understanding and supporting the emerging interactive ecosystem, I believe that Canada has the potential to build a very diverse and productive community of interactive artists, innovators, businesses, agencies and processes generating digital artworks and products that are desirable to local, national and global audiences.

ADDENDUM:

My comments above have been quite general, by intention. My aim first and foremost has been to draw attention to the fact that we are perhaps not adequately acknowledging the importance of interactive storytelling in our present cultural ecosystem. Only once we fully acknowledge this issue can we have a robust conversation about what types of cultural policy and supports (funding or otherwise) could or should be put in place to cultivate this burgeoning sector in its full breadth and diversity. That said, here are just a few more specific suggestions that might be debated for inclusion in a comprehensive strategy for digital content and culture in Canada:

- Consider founding a new cultural agency devoted to digital arts and culture in Canada (or expanding the mandate of an existing agency to take on this role).
- Create a new category of funding (perhaps delivered via the Canada Council, another existing institution, or even through a newly-formed agency devoted to digital culture) that supports interactive storytelling projects across a wide range of possible genres, platforms and practices. This program should be designed specifically to support digital models of production and dissemination. (NOTE: Currently, Canada Council funding supports only digital projects that qualify as “media art”, as problematized in the text above. And, while the details are still vague, the CCA’s freshly-announced \$88.5 million “digital fund” does not appear to provide project-based funding or otherwise offer much clear support for interactive storytelling activities or models. So this suggestion does not appear to be “redundant” with other initiatives that are currently “in the works”.)
- Implement a “ladder to the sky” model for supporting interactive digital projects and encouraging real creative “risk-taking” and innovation. (*PLEASE NOTE: I HAVE OUTLINED THIS IDEA IN GREATER DETAIL IN A SEPARATE POST.) If we really want to encourage “risk-taking” in the interactive digital arts, then perhaps we need a support/funding model that aligns with digital media production processes and borrows a page from “agile process”, “rapid prototyping”, “iterative design”, and similar practices linked to digital creativity (processes that do not penalize “failure”, but instead recognize it as an essential part of the creative and innovation design process). A “ladder to the sky” model would effectively offer a series of support stages for interactive creators. The

“first rung” would offer small packets of microfunding to creators, allowing them to freely experiment with a new idea, test it, and determine its long-range potential. It would have a low barrier to entry, attract creators at all levels (entry, mid-level and established), and actively encourage risk-taking, innovation and the production of “proof of concept” prototypes. The second rung would offer more significant levels of support for developing and producing projects that have already passed through the first rung and produced a prototype or proof-of-concept with demonstrated potential (it would also be open to projects that have not passed through the first rung, but show similar levels of development and promise). The third rung would help support dissemination/distribution and other activities aimed at getting finished projects to audience/market. Overall, this type of model would reward creative innovation and support what I call “low-risk risk taking” (i.e., experimentation where success is rewarded and failure is not punished but rather accepted and embraced - recognized as a necessary step toward learning, evolution and eventual success). It would also be simple and flexible enough to support a very wide range of interactive projects and genres, using a support model specifically designed to accommodate digital production and dissemination processes and cycles (which are typically iterative).

- Initiate support for community-based interactive media centres across the country that make interactive media training and production resources available to all members of the general public (regardless of previous creative experience) as well as target groups (e.g., indigenous communities). This would help support the development of local, grassroots digital storytelling driven by citizen perspectives. This idea has been advocated by several other contributors to this CanCon consultation (e.g. Catherine Edwards of CACTUS), and would roughly follow the old and now-defunct community-based TV production model. Alliances could be sought with existing institutions and non-profits (e.g., ACAD and EMMEDIA in Calgary) that are already interested or invested in providing media education and production facilities to local communities.
- Consider conducting a broader examination of what is happening right now with digital media in Canada. In her preamble to the Nov. 7 meeting in Edmonton, Minister Joly encouraged “big ideas” and likened this present CanCon consultation to the Massey Commission (which resulted in the formation of cultural agencies like the CBC and Canada Council, as well as decades of cultural policy in Canada). With that in mind, here’s a big idea: I think that this might be a great moment to launch a broader, “big picture” inquiry into the evolving role of digital media and culture in Canada overall (i.e., beyond just the scope of interactive storytelling). As a relatively new medium of communication and expression (but one with worldchanging momentum and impact), I think that there is a great deal that we simply do not yet understand (as a collective society, and as policy-makers) about what digital media (including the internet) is, how it works, how it is being used by Canadians, how it is transforming cultural, social and political practices, where things may be going in the near future, etc. Indeed, if we have not yet realized the emerging importance of interactive storytelling in our cultural ecosystem (and adapted policy accordingly), then perhaps there are many other things that we also do not yet understand about this new digital cultural environment and what it portends. Things that we may need to understand if we are going to answer specific policy questions (like how to adjust CanCon regulations, manage streamed content, etc.)

and design an effective system for supporting Canadian Culture in a Digital World. Indeed, the need to get a better “handle” on digital media has probably never been greater (as the possible role of social media design and “fake news” in the recent US election clearly demonstrates). So, I suppose what I am suggesting is that now might be a good time to launch a broader commission or inquiry that more thoroughly examines the transformational impact of digital media on the Canadian cultural landscape and creative economy in the early 21st century, and identifies multiple priorities for moving forward into the future.

Build a "Ladder to the Sky" model for supporting interactive digital projects - and encouraging real "risk-taking" and innovation.

One problem that interactive/digital media has often faced is that it tends to be cultivated using models and agencies developed to support earlier forms of media (film, TV, etc). (See this recent article from Owen Brierly for some further thoughts on this: <http://www.digitalalberta.com/4416>) However, most funding models developed for earlier forms of media do not easily support the type of risk-taking and innovation associated with digital media development. Basically, while it is now becoming mainstream in a very big way, interactive digital storytelling (including video games, VR, AR, mobile apps and other genres of interactive narrative entertainment) is still very much in its early "formative" stage as a communicative art-form. In other words, it is still in the process of being invented, evolving and refining new forms, and figuring out what it will eventually become (the currently emerging practice of VR storytelling is a great example of this evolutionary process in action). Thus, interactive storytelling is still the locus of a great deal of ongoing experimentation and innovation - be it narrative, artistic, stylistic, interactive, or technical. (Indeed, even more established genres of interactive storytelling, like video games, are expected to constantly innovate and evolve to satisfy novelty-hungry audiences). However, most funding models developed for earlier forms of media (film, TV, etc.) are not adapted to the specific needs of interactive productions (as Brierly mentions in his article re: video games), and do not easily support digital risk-taking or innovation cycles. Furthermore, many existing funding/support models may actually discourage real risk-taking and innovation, because their methods of evaluation (and pathways to future funding) are so focused on successful (i.e., marketable, publishable, exhibitable, etc.) outcomes that they tend to punish artists who "fail" when they take significant risks and then don't quite get the results they were hoping for. In other words, most existing funding/support models are not inherently designed to foster the kind of safe spaces or pathways that lead to real creative experimentation and the development of truly innovative and genre-expanding content in the interactive arts.

That said, if we really want to encourage true "risk-taking" and innovation in interactive storytelling (and I think we do), then perhaps we need a support/funding model that aligns more closely with the production/dissemination models of digital media, and borrows a page from "agile process", "rapid prototyping", "iterative design", and similar practices already linked to digital creativity (processes that do not penalize "mistakes" or "failure", but instead recognize them as an essential part of the creative and innovation process). The aforementioned practices are all based in an "iterative" process or production cycle (basically: come up with an idea, develop an experimental prototype, test the prototype to see how well it works, learn from it, and then either refine the idea further based on what was learned or scrap it and move on). This kind of iterative process effectively builds a "ladder to the sky", because it allows one to try out new ideas, develop and test them as prototypes or proofs of concept, and then gradually improve and evolve them in a step-by-step process that's a bit like climbing a ladder to eventual success. In the context of interactive storytelling and digital arts, I think that this kind of model (which is not entirely dissimilar to certain Canada Council programs that offer both research and

production streams) could be used to encourage creative experimentation - and reward experiments that show real potential – without unduly penalizing failure when some experiments (inevitably) don't work out. In a nutshell, this kind of model would support what I call “low-risk risk taking” (i.e., creative or technical experimentation where success is rewarded and failure is not punished but rather accepted and embraced - recognized as a necessary step toward learning, evolution and eventual success).

To give a simple example: If I am an indie game designer, VR producer, interactive installation artist, mobile app designer, or other creator in the interactive field...and if I have a new but untested idea for a project I'd like to try out (say an innovative concept for a video game or interactive doc)...then I would love to be able to apply for a small microfund grant or other program that helps me to research and develop my experimental concept as a small proof of concept. If my idea turns out to be a great one, and the prototype demonstrates that the project has real “legs” (i.e., potential for further development), then I would love to then be able to apply for further levels of funding (or other supports) that will help me take the project to the “next level” of production. If my idea turns out to be no good and the experiment “fails” (or, as often happens, if the initial idea turns out to be unworthy, but conducting the experiment opens up a whole new exciting creative pathway with even greater future potential), then I'd love to be able to say “fear not”, head back to the drawing board, and apply for more microfunding next year with a new idea informed by past experimental learning (and without worrying that my previous “failure” will disqualify me from future support). What I've just described is the kind of “iterative design process” that defines most interactive storytelling projects. The difference is that, most of the time, the experimental phase is either part of a company's R&D cycle or part of the unpaid sweat equity invested by an indie producer (who may or may not ever actually get their prototype finished, let alone distributed to an audience, financial realities being what they are). The idea here, then – at least in part - is to offer a more stable support system that will provide interactive producers (especially entry-level or mid-level creators with fewer opportunities) with the resources they need to experiment with new ideas, determine if those ideas have real potential, and develop them to the point where they are demonstrable and ready to attract more serious forms of support or financing (etc.).

In practice, this “ladder to the sky” model might look something like this:

- First Rung - small amount of funding (e.g., microfunding) or other support, low barrier for entry, easy to qualify for, earmarked specifically for interactive content creators (all types, including indie artists, teams, entrepreneurs, small companies; perhaps there could be multiple streams for individuals vs. companies and organizations). Open to both “first time” creators and more established artists/companies. Should support any genre of interactive entertainment (games, VR, AR, mobile, web, social media, etc.). Explicitly supports creative experimentation (in terms of form, technology or content), exploration of new ideas, trying out something new, taking a risk, developing something small like a prototype or “proof of concept” to see if the idea has “legs” (e.g., creating a small video game demo, VR doc or other interactive experience). Gives individual creators or small groups/companies a small amount of seed money (or other forms of support) to “play around” with new ideas, take creative risks, and see if they work out, go anywhere, attract interest or further funding, etc. One important proviso is that creators who take a risk and then “fail” (in terms of whether the creative experiment proves its concept

viable, generates a promising prototype for further development, or otherwise bears rich fruit) should not be punished or excluded from future "first rung" funding. Instead, the failed experiment should be recognized and documented (perhaps even shared and deconstructed) as a learning experience that enriches creative practice/understanding and provides the kind of insight that may open new pathways to success. Creators might also be allowed to apply to the first rung program multiple times for the same project. (e.g., if their first "experiment" was not entirely successful, then they might be allowed to propose taking their idea in a new direction that learns from past "mistakes" and has the potential to succeed where the first attempt failed.)

- Second Rung - larger amount of development funding/support available, somewhat higher barrier for entry, more rigorous evaluation criteria. Supports more fully-formed proposals that are ready to move into the next stage of creative development and/or full production – particularly ideas that have already successfully climbed the "first rung" of the ladder and generated "prototypes" with strong demonstrated potential. Having passed through the initial "experimental" stage (allowing the creator to take a risk by trying something new), the idea now exists as a demonstrated "proof of concept" that can be developed further with a reasonable expectation of success. The project is now ready to compete for larger amounts of funding, attract other financing, etc. Overall, the second rung program rewards successful "first rung" projects (especially projects that have significant artistic/cultural, commercial, and/or audience potential), and provides them with the incentive to move beyond the status of mere "experiments" to become full-blown productions. (Possibly, larger projects might be allowed to apply to the second rung program multiple times to support major creative development stages.)
- Third Rung – aimed at supporting projects that have successfully climbed the second rung and produced a fully developed interactive artwork. Facilitates late-stage production, distribution/dissemination, etc. Helps producers get their content to target audiences and markets (e.g., could help support publication/release for a small indie game or mobile project). Potentially supports various activities or processes, depending on the needs of the specific project.

*The above outline is just a "first iteration" – a very roughly articulated suggestion of what such a model might look like in practice. The nice thing about this kind of model is that is extremely simple yet potentially very flexible, and could support many different types of interactive digital project. For example, first rung funding could be used by an indie producer to develop test content for a VR experience, code a prototype game demo or mobile app, set up the first iteration of a social media storytelling experience, or develop a game concept document or interactive script. The second and third rungs could be similarly flexible, supporting a broad range of possible projects and/or activities within a proscribed spectrum. (This kind of genre-agnostic flexibility is almost required with interactive projects, because they come in so many different potential shapes, sizes, genres, etc.)

Overall, this simple yet highly flexible approach would be designed to accommodate the relative uniqueness of digital production/dissemination models (because it emulates the iterative cycle that most interactive digital productions pass through). It would also accommodate the very wide variety of different creative practices and processes associated with interactive expression

(even varieties of interactive storytelling that haven't been invented yet). And it would potentially strike the right kind of balance between the need to support high-quality digital content creation (i.e., just telling a good story and sharing it widely using interactive media) and the need to encourage true innovation and "risk taking" – both are essential elements in a healthy interactive media ecosystem, and both would be supportable using this same model.