

Creating the *Goodies* and *Baddies* of the Story: Specification of an Interoperable and Reusable Avatar Identity

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Abstract. This paper presents a workshop of ICIDS 2009. The purpose of this workshop is to discuss and define the specification of an interoperable virtual character identity that can be used in the storytelling field. The workshop expects to gather researchers and students from different storytelling fields to work together in the definition of this identity. As result, a high level XML-based specification draft of the virtual character identity is expected.

Key words: Virtual characters, virtual identity, standardization.

1 Motivation

Specification of an interoperable avatar identity is currently an open issue. It has become important overall after the boom of virtual worlds. In that case, the main reason is that in each virtual world where users go into, they have to configure their avatar from scratch. No high-level standard language exists that allows the migration of an avatar among virtual worlds.

This problem is up-to-date; in fact there are just now some emergent initiatives like the new MPEG-V standard that try to solve these limitations.

The same situation can be thought in the case of storytelling systems. Related to the virtual world's problem, reusing an existing character and being able to load it onto different storytelling tools could be very useful, overall taking into account aspects like its personality.

On the other hand, if it were possible to define in a high-level way not only the appearance of a character but its personality and other identity related features too, it would facilitate the creation of stories. For example, if the character's personality is defined independently of the story itself, its reactions to the real time story events and interactions could be automatically processed in a coherent way with its personality.

2 Aims

The starting tool for the workshop is a high-level XML-based language called ADML – Avatar Definition Markup Language – and created by the workshop organizers. It defines communication skills, appearance and personality features for an avatar. The result of the workshop could be modifications in the language or a complete new specification; or the conclusion could just be that it is not necessary to create a high-level identity.

So, the main objective of this workshop is triple:

- On the one hand the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of having a high-level identity for virtual characters.
- On the other hand, uncovering the minimum set of features that would be necessary for the specification of the identity. In order to be interoperable and reusable, these features should be independent of concrete application events or story interactions.
- Finally, the best way for coding the decided features in a high-level language should be discussed and specified.

The result of this workshop is a draft document defining the specific language for creating avatar identity.

3 Workshop Format

The workshop is presented as a half day session. During the first hour, the organizers will explain their specific ideas about the identity, and they will present an XML-based language, called ADML, which is designed for specifying avatar identity.

The explanation will include the justification of why some identity characteristics have been included in the language and why others not.

The rest of the half day is presented as a round table where experts and students interested in this field can discuss openly their thinking about avatar identity and features, both giving opinions about the ideas presented and putting forward new ones.