

# Preface

The 5th Games and Learning Alliance (GALA) Conference was held in Utrecht, The Netherlands, December 5–7, 2016. It was organized by the Serious Games Society and the Center for Game Research at Utrecht University.

The GALA series of conferences provides an excellent opportunity to discuss important themes and emergent topics within the growing field of serious games. The meeting involves academic researchers, industrial developers, teachers, and corporate decision makers.

GALA 2016 received 55 submissions. Each paper was reviewed by at least three Program Committee members. The Program Committee selected 27 of these papers for presentation at the conference, and 14 for presentation at a poster session at the conference. The majority of the authors are based in Europe, but all continents except for Australia were represented at the conference.

The conference started with a day of tutorials, at which various topics such as learner models, interactive virtual characters, addressing learners with different backgrounds, and gamification were discussed. European projects such as WATCHME, RAGE, and BODEGA contributed significantly to these tutorials.

It was an honor to have Jean-Marc Labat, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, France, and Yasmin B. Kafai, University of Pennsylvania, USA, as keynote speakers at GALA 2016. Jean-Marc Labat presented a meta-design perspective on enhancing the usage of educational games by teachers, and Yasmin Kafai spoke about connected gaming: what making video games can teach us about learning and literacy.

The conference featured eight paper presentation sessions. A number of paper presentation sessions discussed the relation between serious games and particular domains, namely, health, sustainability, management, maths and programming, and soft skills. Other sessions discussed game development and the assessment of games, the relation between games and learning, and mobile games.

As in previous years, selected best papers of the GALA Conference will be published in a dedicated special issue of the *International Journal of Serious Games*, the scientific journal managed by the Serious Games Society, which is a great reference point for academicians and practitioners to publish original research work on serious games and be informed about the latest developments in the field.

We thank the authors for submitting many interesting papers, the Program Committee members for reviewing these papers, and the Serious Games Society and the Center for Game Research at Utrecht University for organizing the conference.

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Rosa Bottino  
Johan Jeuring  
Remco C. Veltkamp



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