AISB Members Workshop VII: Serendipity Symposium, Opening Remarks

Joseph Corneli (University of Edinburgh), Christian Guckelsberger (Goldsmiths, University of London), Anna Jordanous (University of Kent), Alison Pease (University of Dundee), Simon Colton (Falmouth University / Goldsmiths, University of London), Yasemin J. Erden (St Mary's University)

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Background on the symposium

- researching serendipity in the context of computational creativity for some years[1]
- serendipity was one of the research themes in the recently completed COINVENT project[2]
  - (WP5 "Serendipity and evaluation")
- "Modelling serendipity in a computational context"[3]

[1] Alison Pease et al. "A Discussion on Serendipity in Creative Systems". In: *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Computational Creativity, ICCC 2013*. Ed. by Mary Lou Maher et al. ACC, 2013

[2] http://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/109898_en.html

[3] Joseph Corneli et al. *Modelling serendipity in a computational context.* 2016. arXiv: 1411.0440 [cs.AI]. **Google Scholar citations: 11**

(un)planned serendipity?

- Anna met Pek van Andel in person in Korea[4]
- Christian noticed that Horace Walpole's gothic castle Strawberry Hill is located in southwest London and suggested that we might include a tour in the programme.

  "I once read a silly fairy tale, called The Three Princes of Serendip: as their Highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents & sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of"

- Anna suggested the AISB Members Workshop series as a possible venue and source of support
- Yasemin coordinates the Members Workshops – and works at St Mary's which owns Strawberry Hill House

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[4] https://smartconnected.world/2016/06/28/keynote-speeches/

keynote speakers

Pek van Andel - published extensively on serendipity, most recently, *C'est quoi la sérendipité? 80 décovertes due au hasard qui ont bouleversé le course de l'histoire*

- ▶ "Anatomy of the Unsought Finding. Serendipity: Origin, History, Domains, Traditions, Appearances, Patterns and Programmability"

Jasia Reichardt - coordinated the landmark ICA exhibition on "Cybernetic Serendipity" in 1968.

- ▶ "In anticipation of the sixties"

our model
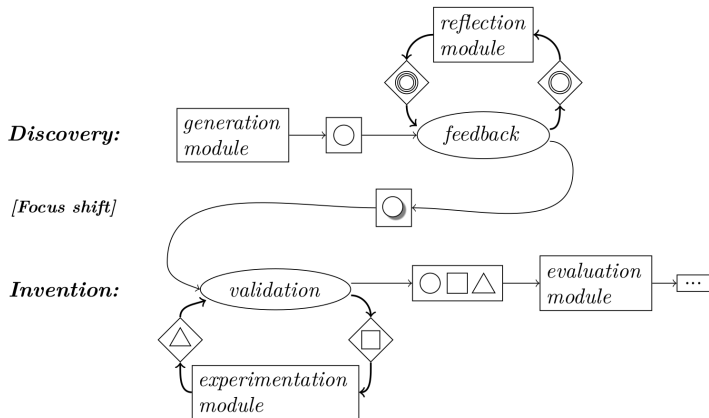
For example:

- *generation*: "a tour of Strawberry Hill House would be nice"

- *reflection*: "the AISB Member Workshop series might help us get there"

- *focus shift*: "the coordinator of the workshop series, Yasemin J. Erden, is based at St Mary's University, and they own Strawberry Hill House!"

- *experimentation*: "Pek van Andel and Jasia Reichardt both accepted our invitations!"

- *evaluation*: today

Programme

AM

9:00 Meet Waldegrave Drawing Room
9:00 Coffee on arrival

9:15 Opening remarks
9:30 Writers Workshop: Modelling Serendipity in Computational Systems (preprint)
10:20 Short break (10 min)
10:30 Short talk 1 - Mark Nelson, "Planning failures, planning successes, unexpected outcomes"
10:50 Short talk 2 - Claudia Chirita, "Modelling Serendipity in a Service-Oriented Context"
11:10 Short talk 3 - Diarmuid O'Donoghue, "The Persistence of Serendipity in the face of Computational Co-Creativity"
11:30 Short break (10 min)
11:40 Morning keynote - Jasia Reichardt

PM

12:20 Walk to lunch
12:30 Lunch in St Mary's refectory - voucher provided (60min)
13:30 Reconvene Waldegrave Drawing Room
13:40 Afternoon keynote - Pek van Andel

14:20 Short break (10 min)
14:30 Short talk 4 - Colin Johnson, "Search, Shoddyness, and Serendipity"
14:50 Open discussion and brainstorming

15:15 Tour of Strawberry Hill House (60min)

16:15 Reconvene Waldegrave Drawing Room
16:20 Short talk 5 - Elaine Ohanrahan, "The role of chance in the machine-generated art of Computer Art pioneer, Desmond Paul Henry"
16:40 Short talk 6 - Eilidh McKay, "A sweeping exploration of the role of serendipity as a tool in artistic and creative practice"
17:00 Short talk 7 - Abigail McBirnie, "Engineered serendipity in modern bibliometric tools"
17:20 Short talk 8 - Stephann Makri, "Serendipity and Information Encountering"
17:40 Short talk 9 - Lorenzo Lane, "Flâneurs, finitism and the field of mathematics: Exploring the role of chance encounters in the crafting of mathematical perception"
18:00 Closing and retire to local hostelry for drinks.

Writers Workshop

We will invite participants to comment on our preprint, mentioned above, using a standard method for improving draft writing.[5]

Goals:

- ▶ To establish some common ground for the symposium discussions.
- ▶ To use participants' insights on the preprint in a subsequent revision.

Method:

Author: presentation
Critic: listening
Critic: feedback
Author: questions
Critic: replies
Author: reflections

Interesting idea

Surprise birthday party

I heard you say:

"surprise"

Feedback:

I don't like surprises

Question

Not even a little bit. . .?

Note to self:

(Try smaller surprises next time.)

[5]Richard P Gabriel. *Writer's Workshops and the Work of Making Things: Patterns, Poetry....* Addison-Wesley Longman Publishing Co., Inc., 2002

Overview of our paper

We see two main parts coming into focus:

(I) a survey of the literature on serendipity;

(II) a survey of systems that implement some or all of the ideas from this literature.

Specific questions on which we would like your feedback

- *(I.a)* We think it wise to remove the section that gives a theoretical/cognitive grounding to our model, rather than to try and improve it. Do you agree?

- *(I.b)* People have found "serendipity potential" confusing. Arguments against consistent functioning countervail against the role played by intelligence and skill. How to proceed here?

- *(II.a)* we are not aware of strictly computational systems that do all of the steps outlined above. Have we missed something?

- *(II.b)* If we consider systems that distribute some of the workload to the user, we find more examples. Perhaps this is a better way to begin the survey of systems?

Also