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Summary of Background Reading

This is the summary of my background reading.

Project: **Hypertext Game Project**

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Degree Course: **Computer Games BSc**

# The strategy I used for my background reading

This project (To create a hypertext game creation tool, and then to use this tool to create a hypertext game), being a more software-based project, appeared to facilitate an approach focused on researching existing hypertext game creation tools, and then using this insight to guide the design of my hypertext game tool. I spent the first half of August looking at tools, before spending the latter half of August creating a prototype of my tool. Then, during September, I looked at some academic literature on the topic of hypertext games, as well as some examples of hypertext games, to guide the creation of the game, and to guide the refinement of the tool.

# Researching existing hypertext game creation tools

I shall first explain my methodology, before going into the specifics about what I found out about each tool. I decided that I would attempt to answer the questions of ‘How does it work?’, ’How do I use it?’, ‘What options does it give me?’, ‘What features does it have?’, ‘What features is it missing?’, and ‘How does it work?’. I initially found five hypertext game/interactive fiction creation tools to look at: two of which I was aware of already (Twine[1] and Ren’Py[2]), two of which I’ve forgotten how I found out about (Storyspace[3] and TADS [4]), and one which only existed in specification form, which Dr. Bartle sent me a copy of, along with a link to a demo of what it might have produced (eHyperTool [5] [6]). Whilst researching Twine, I also found out about Twee2 [7] and the ‘Treaty of Babel’ standard for archiving works of Interactive Fiction [8]. Once I had finished researching the first five tools, Dr. Bartle also told me that it would be worth investigating Inform [9], Inklewriter [10], ChoiceScript [11], Quest [12], Squiffy [13], and Undum [14].

## Researching Storyspace

I started off by looking at Storyspace [3], mainly because I was not sure if I would be able to get much information about it anyway, as I knew I would not be able to use it myself, considering that it costs $149, and only works on Mac computers (I do not own a Mac). Storyspace appears to have been one of the first hypertext game creation tool to have been made, and is a somewhat complex tool, supporting text, graphics, audio, and video [15], a user interface based on ‘topographic writing’ (presenting the story as a network of linked ‘writing spaces’ to the writer), implementing features such as ‘guard fields’ to impose some limitations on how the reader can traverse the output hypertext, [16] and it has an architecture where the ‘links’ between ‘writing spaces’ are distinct objects themselves instead of being part of the ‘writing spaces’ they are linked to. Storyspace 3 was written in C++, making heavy use of pointers, and the tool has a rather complex syntax for guard conditions for links [17]. However, it does have some significant drawbacks: the complex architecture of the system means that there’s no way for the games it produces to be playable on the web, and the barriers to entry from it being proprietary/unusable on anything but a Mac, has significantly diminished its appeal, especially compared to modern tools which do not have these limitations [16].

I was able to find a guide to using Storyspace, which did allow me to gain some insight about how to use it. In short, you can double-click the ‘map’ view to create ‘writing spaces’, click on those to open the dialog to edit them, and drag your cursor from one ‘writing space’ to another to create a link between them (which can be edited by clicking on the link). Your work-in-progress hypertexts are saved in an XML-based format (.tbx) [18], and it appears that, to play them, you need to open the .tbx file with the Storyspace Reader application (which, unfortunately, also appears to be Mac-only) [3].

## Researching TADS

TADS (Text Adventure Development System)

## Researching eHyperTool

## Researching Twine

## Researching Ren’Py

## Researching Twee2

## Researching the Treaty of Babel

## Researching Inform

## Researching Inklewriter

## Researching ChoiceScript

## Researching Quest

## Researching Squiffy

## Researching Undum

# Creating a prototype version of my tool (HECC-IT)

# Researching literature on the topic of hypertext games

Eventually, I realized that I needed to actually research some academic literature, so I proceeded to start looking at that.

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