Playful Research Fiction: a Fictional Conference

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fiction has long been important to Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) research and practice. Through familiar tools such as personas, scenarios and role-play, fictions can support the exploration and communication of complex psychological, social and technical requirements between diverse collections of designers, developers and end-users. More recently, HCI and design research has embraced the development and evaluation of make-believe technologies as a way to speculate and study the possible future effects of technological innovation, since it enables us to unpack and understand the implications of technology that does not yet exist. In this chapter we explore the weird relationship between fiction and technology research through the lens of a fictional conference, a playful project that gathered ideas about fiction in research *through* fictional research, and explore the fluid relationship between the real and unreal in HCI.

In terms of practical fictions, there is growing use of fiction to explore implications of emergent technologies. For example, Lawson et al's (2015) speculative prototypes of wearable technologies for cats and dogs give insight into unforeseen ramifications of this technology on both pets and their owners. The real-yet-fictional objects are known as "diegetic prototypes", in that they belong to a larger imagined story world, as part of what science-fiction author Bruce Sterling (2005) terms "Design Fiction". They are fictional objects that "make sense on the page" and help suspend disbelief about the world in which they exist. Although this includes fantastic visions of phasers and space battles, in HCI, these story worlds are usually around plausible near-future scenarios, such as those where drones enforce parking restrictions (Lindley et al, 2015) or dogs can access the internet (Kirman et al, 2017). Design Fiction remains a contested space, including among the authors of this chapter: Blythe (2017) notes that despite often being seen as isolated "objects", they implicitly follow traditional plot patterns, where they don't already explicitly exist as part of wider performances, such as Buttrick's (2014) erotic stories about modems or Elsden's (2017) "speculative enactment" of a fictional datagraphic wedding service. Meanwhile, Coulton et al (2017) explicitly reject the notion that narrative and plot is central to Design Fiction and instead cast them as groups of speculative artefacts that, when viewed together, have the ability to invoke and define the properties of artificially constructed worlds.

These fictional prototypes, and the story worlds they represent, carry persuasive, and therefore critical, powers. Just as design fiction is exploited by corporations to sell slick visions of the future, where Iron Man's suit always works and Siri understands even the thickest Scottish accent, it is also used to imagine critical (Dunne & Raby, 2013) and adversarial (DiSalvo, 2011) futures based on different value structures. Although the term "design fiction" seems to be extremely broad, Lindley and Coulton (2015) argue for embracing the ambiguity of the term as a core feature, in that it defines fiction as provocation for discourse around the desirability of imagined interactions rather than an evaluation of the interaction itself.

It is clear why design fiction is of such great interest to technology researchers in particular, as a field seemingly obsessed with defining proximal techno-utopian futures through idealized gadgetry, from Google Glass to robots in nursing homes. Along with the proliferation of academic papers concerned with reporting studies based on fictional prototypes, two major HCI conferences, ACM GROUP 2016 and NordiCHI'16 both explicitly solicited fictional submissions in tracks dedicated to design fiction research and practice.

2. PLAY IN RESEARCH FICTION

Writing stories, building worlds and telling tales are rewarding pastimes, and the "play" of creating fictions gives a special freedom to authors to push boundaries and experiment with unusual scenarios. The fun of world-building has naturally informed the work of design fiction creators, who use this freedom to explore the edges of both what is possible in this form, but also how it is understood as a research method.

For example, Blythe et al (2016) report on a series of workshops where participants created a range of "silly" prototypes, explicitly in reaction against the perceived "solutionist" (Morozov, 2013) stance implicit in much HCI research. Encinas's (2016) "author eraser" is described as a tool that removes the names of the authors that made only minor contributions to research papers, a function that only makes sense to an academic audience. Buttrick's (2014) "50 Shades of CHI" is a series of erotic vignettes that are critical of how the HCI research community

describes relationships between humans and technology. Baumer et al. (2014) collected a series of vignettes describing fictional futures of HCI, and similarly, Kirman et al (2013) gave an in-character performance at an academic conference, where they claimed to be robots from the future sent back through time to congratulate HCI researchers on hastening the enslavement of humankind by machines. In a bizarre turn of events, this performance inspired the creation of a young adult science fiction novel that has since been read over a million times (Adams & Moreau, 2015; Dalton, et al., 2016). All of these examples are interesting in their use of humour, particularly through irony (Blythe & Encinas, 2016), to critique the culture and practice of technology research. Rather than aiming outward at a wider audience, these playful "research fictions" use the forms typical of this kind of research - prototypes, papers and presentations – to build fictions that critique values of academic research directly.

Of particular note is the paper "Game of Drones" (Lindley & Coulton, 2015), since, in contrast to the previous examples, a deliberate pursuit of plausibility ultimately lead to a deceptive amount of ambiguity (Coulton et al., 2016). The project consisted of a paper and poster, describing an entirely fictional project, submitted to a real conference (ACM SIGCHI Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play, 2015). Although papers with unreal content are not uncommon (both in the examples above, and e.g. Lem, 1973, Zongker, 2006, Mazières & Kohler, 2005), this was unique in how it was presented as a real project. The authors have since discussed both the idea of fictional research papers and the reviewer response to the same (Lindley & Coulton, 2016a, 2016b).

3. A FICTIONAL CONFERENCE

This trajectory of fictional abstracts (Blythe, 2014) through fictional papers (Lindley & Coulton, 2016a), led the authors of the current chapter to consider the natural next step – a fictional conference containing only fictional research.

Apart from the humour inherent in such an endeavour, which was a prime motivator, it also provided a playful way to collect thoughts and reflections on the fluid understanding of design fiction research from a broad audience who might not be already involved in this kind of work. To this end, we built a conference committee (the current authors) and circulated a Call for Papers soliciting submissions for the Fictional Conference on Design Fiction's Futures (FCDFF).

Throughout the conception and development of the conference, it was important to the committee that this example of design fiction was coherent, rather than a simple joke. As experienced design fiction creators, we were concerned with the texture of the 'diegetic landscape' of the project. Although meaningless due to the conference not existing, committee members took on specific roles typical of conferences (e.g. Workshop chair, Industry Liaison) in HCI, a website (www.fictionalconference.com) was built and Twitter account (@fictionalconf) created to represent the conference. Although only existing in the virtual world, these two digital artefacts gave the otherwise entirely fictional conference a sense of tangibility in that it involved the same work as organising a real event. In a similar way as the appointment of a committee, one role the online presence played in creating the research fiction was to underwrite the "reality" of the conference to the public.

The Call for Papers (CfP) was designed to follow the style and format typical of HCI conferences. This includes a short description of the conference aims and a list of suggested topics. The call invited submissions for paper or workshop titles. The CfP stipulated that submissions should be accompanied by a list of authors and a list of keywords to help understand the contribution. The decision was made to limit the requirement to submit to titles, author names, and keywords to keep the work required to make a submission minimal, thereby making participation in the project as simple as possible for as wide an audience as possible. There was some discussion amongst the committee about the potential to ask authors to submit an abstract, to help give context for ideas that might not fit in a short title. However, since the typical HCI conference programme only includes a title for each paper, it would be hard to include abstracts inside the programme without undermining the fictional frame of a conference. The restriction to titles also attempted to force the authors to be brief and concise, with mixed success.

The CfP was distributed via several popular HCI mailing lists, including ACM CHI, NordiCHI, CSCW and BCS-HCI. All of these lists receive multiple CFP notifications for a range of conferences and journals each day, so the request sat naturally among the other, presumably real, calls. The CfP was also advertised on social media by members of the conference committee.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We are inviting real submissions that describe fictional papers and workshops. Practically speaking, we would like you to submit a title of a fictional paper or workshop, along with a list of authors (authors may be real or fictional), and a set of up to 4 keywords.

We are primarily interested in fictional papers and workshops that reflect on the future of Design Fiction research. From a future perspective, what will the impact of the current increase of interest in fictional research be in the long term? How will it change the research landscape, if at all?

Paper concepts could include (but are not limited to) ideas on:

- Arguments on how to evaluate the quality of Design Fiction
- Reports of Lost Futures and Counterfactual Histories
- Analyses of the relative importance of data and narrative
- Analyses of how fiction is used instrumentally in scientific papers
- Accounts of interaction with fictional systems (fictional user research)

Figure 1 – Extract from FCDFF Call for Papers

The following pages contain the final programme for FCDFF, built from submissions from research active members of the HCI community and the public. The sections following the programme discuss the response to the call, and the themes emerging from the submissions.

international fictional conference on design fiction's futures

Venue: Tlön, Uqbar | Dates: Irrelevant

Day 0

08:30 – 17:30	Registration Desk Open (Foyer)	Workshop (Room α)		Workshop (Room ω)	
		Lickable City Workshop: an exploration of the current and future flavours of our urban environments	Ding Wang & Vanessa Thomas	*Utopian design methods for lost futures and imaginary pasts*	Ding Wang, Louise Mullagh, Serena Pollastri, Vanessa Thomas

Day 1

09:00 - 09:15	Welcome to FCDFF – [Conference Chairs]

09:15 - 10:00	Opening Keynote - The @_CHINOSAUR: “They’re Made Out of Meat: the CHI Community and Me”			
10:00 - 10:30	Coffee Break			
10:30 - 12:00	Session: Temporal Insecurities (Room α)		Session: (Room ω) Evaluation	
	Future of Non-Standard Design: A Philo-Design Fiction	Fictilis Ensemble	*Evaluating Design Fictions: From minimal departures to engagement*	Tau Lenskjold, Eva Knutz & Thomas Markussen
	Same Old Design Fictions: Rehashing Tomorrows for Today	Tom More	*All quiet on the western future, designing non-colonialist fictions for and with the rest of the world*	Dounia Ben Hassen & Alessandra Renzi
	The Challenges of Time Travel: Loss of Granularity with Artifacts From the Future	Leo Frishberg & Charles Lambdin	*The downsides of world-building approaches: excluding diegesis from design fiction*	Sandy Brown & Mikhail Markovsky
	Almost there: an analysis of phenomena perpetually “increasing,” “emerging” and “becoming” in HCI papers over the past 20 years	Conor Linehan	*All fiction is fact in the making, if you try hard enough: Deconstructing design fiction to reconstruct design fact.*	Dhruv Sharma
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch and Networking (Note: Lunch is not provided)			
13:00 - 15:00	Session: Applications		Session: ???	
	Designing better privacy controls: Implications for the fictional world where personal data preferences matter	Jen Golbeck	*It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times, We Had Everything Before Us, We Had Nothing Before Us*	P. Iglesias
	Haptic Communication in Virtual Reality English Education: 3D Creative Writing	Josh T. Jordan,		Benjamin Durr
	The art of creating fictional cases for experiencing realistic organisational design: a research study on case writer skillsets	Clive Holtham & Charles Mill	*Afterfutures and Restructured Temporalities: Serresian Fold as Worldbuilding Design Paradigm for Augmented Immersive Fictions (AIF)*	Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, Josh Tanenbaum, John S. Seberger, Caitlin Lustig & Anita Marie Tsaasan

	Participatory design of military attack drones with stakeholders in developing countries	Conor Linehan	*The Rise of San Leodis and Silicon Shore*	Imran Ali
15:00 - 15:30	Coffee Break			
15:30 - 17:30	Session: Autonomous Fictions		Session: Ethics	
	Lessons from the field of robotics on how to use fiction to sell childish, fantastical, impractical and reckless research agendas	Brian Cox	*Ethics for the confrontation of design fictions, when fictitious products meet real people.*	Gedebor Houston, Amara Mital & Christian Blach
	When bots generate their own speculations: what is left for designers?	Estelle Kery	*Celebrity Design Fictioneers: The Chosen Few*	Noah Bodie
	I wrote this! Copyright issues of autonomous AI academic papers	Ben Griffin	*Blasphemy or prophecy, how design fictions might engage inter-religious dialog to discuss societal futures?*	Rasmus Rasmussen & Marcel Picoli-Picolo
	A Study of Users Experience of AI Controlled Sex Toys	Aldridge Prior & Finbarr Saunders	*Dr Strangefutures or: How I learned to stopped worrying about ethics committees and love Design Fictions*	Alan Hook
18:30 - 22:00	Drinks Reception: Macondo Lounge			

Day 2

09:00 - 10:30	Session: Virtual Futures		Session: Reflecting	
	A risk assessment of deep augmented reality	Ben Griffin	*On hope, nostalgia, determinism, and modernity in post-modern design fictions*	Susann Wagenknecht, Siri Hustvedt, Bjarne Mädel, Suzanne Treister & Fred Turner
	A headset for every child: How virtual reality will transform education	Lawrence Angelo	*Is Design Fiction only available in vanilla?*	Steve Todd & Marc Harry

	Using human-generated design and speculative fiction as training data to synthesize criteria (or, in the case of dystopian fiction, counter-criteria) for the automatic generation and evaluation of useful algorithms.	Yana Malysheva	*The verdict is in: Gamification always works. Looking back at fifty years of unquotable empirical evidence for psychological, behavioral and economic gamification effects*	Andreas Lieberoth & Juho Hamari
	Refunghi: An Internet Platform to Monitor Refugee Growth in Europe	Enrique Encinas	*[Footprints: Breaking Distributed Data Displays To Experience Understanding And Method]*	Jon Hook & Marian Ursu
10:30 - 11:00	Coffee Break			
11:00 - 13:00	Session: Methods		Session: Outsider Design Fiction	
	Using the Anatidae/Non-Anatidae Algorithm to Quantify the Plausability of Design Fictions	Paul Coulton, Joseph Lindley, & Emmett L Brown	*A Survey of Design Fiction in Comics and Graphic Novels*	Aaron Kashtan, Winsor McCay, Jack Kirby, Will Eisner, George Herriman, Osamu Tezuka, Hergé & Tove Jansson
	Speculative Identities: Fictional characters as diegetic prototypes	Mark Dudlik	*On Anticipatory Ethnomethodology: Foundational Relationships Between Ethnomethodology and Design Fiction*	Chris Elsden, David Kirk, & Garold Harfinkel
	Design as Science. A Complete Mathematical Formulation of Design Theory.	Enrique Encinas	*Nail Bombs, Pipe Bombs, and Sawn-off Shotguns: the DIY-maker culture, community participation and security*	G. Adams & M. McGuinness
	Fiction pieces for real species: design fiction as a posture to involve non-humans in discussing near-nature scenarios.	Georges Abitbol, Maurice Vian	*Vernacular Design Fiction: Case Study of the Speculative Practices of Nordic Larpers*	Jaakko Stenros
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch and Networking (Note: Lunch is not provided)			
14:00 - 16:00	Session: Looking Forward		Session: Bad Fiction	
	Design Fiction and Its Discontents: The Future of an Illusion	Chris Elsden & Sigmund Fraud	*Design Fiction Considered Harmful*	Mark Blythe
	While Magic is Symbolism Weaponized, Design Fiction is Merely a	Koli Löyly	*Shit just got real: designer as dystopian soothsayer or that time I designed that horrible thing that was deemed commercially viable.*	Alan Hook

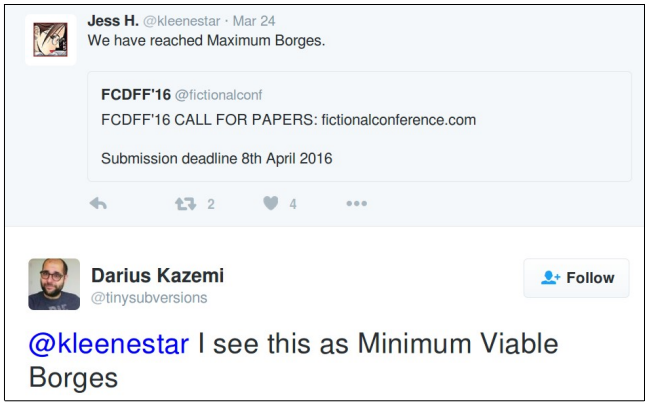
	Doomed Occupation of Storytelling			
	Where the Fiction Is: is Bruce Sterling HCI's latest Heidegger?	Conor Linehan	*The Death of Design Fiction – The Definition Deficit in Practice*	Allison Dunne
16:15 - 16:45	Coffee Break			
16:45 - 17:15	Closing Panel: *Fictional Fictions and Futuristic Futures*, with Ariadne Oliver, Kilgore Trout, Harriet Vane and Garth Marenghi			
17:15 - 17:30	Prizegiving and Conference Close. Introduction to FCFCDFF - the fictional conference on fictional conferences on design fictions futures			
19:30 - end	Conference Banquet: Milliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe			

www.fictionalconference.com | @fictionalconf

4. RESPONSE

The conference call received a good amount of attention on social media, being shared dozens of times and generating some lively discussion around the unusual concept. In terms of formal submissions, the conference received 56 paper submissions and 2 proposals for workshops. Submitters had a wide variety of backgrounds. Many were from researchers active in the areas of research fiction and HCI, however, pleasingly, we also received submissions from freelance designers, artists and high school teachers.

In addition to these formal responses to the call, we also received other kinds of submissions including suggestions for fictional locations, as well as logos, typography and suggestions for keynotes and other speakers. This suggests that the 'world building' component of design fiction was seen as an important part of the practice of creating a fictional conference for contributors as much as it was for the committee members.



5. BUILDING THE PROGRAMME

Faced with a diverse selection of submissions, and their universally "unreal" nature, the task of translating those into a design fiction artefact – the conference programme – seemed to be a significant challenge for the committee. During a discussion about how to deal with this issue, the concept of a 'Nolan Number' emerged. This was in reference to Christopher Nolan's (2010) film *Inception*, and the multiple 'levels of dream world' in the film. The multiplicity of levels in Nolan's film was reminiscent of research fictions, which sometimes become 'levels deep' in a similar way due to inevitably becoming meta-commentaries upon themselves (e.g. Lindley & Coulton, 2016). Some submissions clearly interpreted the FCDFF CfP as an invitation to showcase examples of how Design Fiction could be applied in the future, e.g. *Haptic Communication in Virtual Reality English Education: 3D Creative Writing*. In contrast, some other submissions were applying design fiction to itself, e.g. *Design Fiction Considered Harmful*. The Nolan Number that we started referring to was a subjective measure of 'how much' a particular title was in fact a design fiction referring to itself. This resurfaced when discussing the closing plenary, a fictional event in a fictional conference, which features a collection of fictional characters noted for creating their own fictions, talking about fiction.

The discussion about Nolan Numbers then lead on to considering a range of other subjective properties that we could attempt to quantify. The conference chairs asked the committee members to rate each paper according to each of a number of emergent characteristics:

- Funniness – a measure of how humorous the intent of the paper, if not the success!
- Plausibility – on a scale between fantastical and realistic/likely

Figure 2 Commentators reflect on how the conference reminds them of the work of magical realist author Jorge Luis Borges

- Enticement – how interesting or compelling the subject to the reader (i.e. would you read this paper?)
- Transparency – How clear the submission topic was to understand
- Nolan Number – how much of a comment on design fiction and FCDFF the submission was

The categories were chosen because they allowed distinction between papers across broad themes based on the approach they took to using design fiction. This was necessary because the actual topics of the fictitious papers were so diverse.

Sessions were built based on similarity along one or more scales, and also similarity in content. For example, there are sessions on evaluation, methods, meta-commentaries and also a session titled "???" for submissions which shared low scores for transparency, in that even the committee could not discern what the papers were about.

6. DISCUSSION

The aim of FCDFF was to playfully explore perceptions of how design fiction may be used, and how it may evolve, within the context of research. The framing of a fictional conference provides a familiar structure for contributions and makes the work itself an example of research fiction. Through the process of collecting, analysing and grouping submissions we have observed a number of broad themes that can help us reflect on issues and opportunities around design fiction in HCI through the practice of research fiction.

6.1 Humour

As discussed earlier in the current chapter, humour is a common aspect of design fiction work in HCI. Although the method is serious, arguably humour makes it more accessible and signifies its queerness (Light, 2011) in contrast to mainstream work. Blythe et al's (2016) "Silly" prototypes, Encinas's (2016) "author eraser", Buttrick's (2014) erotic BDSM fictions about wifi routers and Kirman's (2013) tale of robot enslavement all use humour as a tool, and this is reflected in the submissions to FCDFF. For example, the workshop on the "Lickable City", or the dark humour of the "pipe bomb" paper that frames terrorists as part of the DIY-maker movement. Other submissions use the opportunity to present sarcastic visions of impossible futures where (e.g.) gamification is proven to "always work" and jab at the positivist bias of HCI through submission of a "mathematical model" of design. Indeed the conference itself was read as a "joke" by enough people on Twitter to warrant an official statement from the conference Twitter account to clarify that the CfP was real.

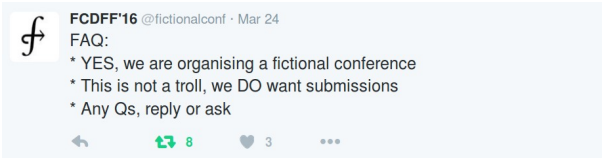


Figure 3 - The "official" Twitter account clarifies the fictional nature of the conference

The question of why so much design fiction is humorous is interesting. GK Chesterton pointed out that the opposite of funny is not "serious", the opposite of funny is "not funny". Similarly much non-fictional design work is presented in a very grave and somber manner, but as critics including Evgeny Morozov point out, this does not necessarily make it serious. Morozov (2013) popularized the term "solutionism" which he defines as either solving problems that do not exist, or presenting quick technological fixes for complex social, political or environmental problems. For Morozov much of the new and emerging technology produced in Silicon Valley, and some academic HCI labs, is

deeply solutionist. Although solutionist technologies are presented with gravity this does not mean that they are not inadvertently funny. Much design fiction uses irony as a defence against solutionism to signal the limits of technological interventions in complex social and political problems.

6.2 Form

Some submissions experimented with format, and some disregarded it altogether. The most obvious is perhaps the paper of emojis attributed to a fictional character from British adult comic *Viz*. One unusual submission from Hook & Ursu took the form of a data feed from a specially built tool that generates a constant stream of fictional paper titles. Although it does not work in print it is available online (http://jonhook.co.uk/titler). Other submissions suggested alternative logos and graphic design, and one suggested the conference location to be moved to Tlön, Uqbar, suggested by contributor Michael Muller, an extremely fitting reference to Borges's (1940) tale of a group of intellectuals who build a fictitious world through reference in books and academic papers (such as this one).

In addition, in thinking of fictional characters to serve as keynotes, we followed a suggestion to contact a "living" fictional character, and were privileged to secure the services of notable figure @_CHINOSAUR, a Twitter character known for its biting commentary on contemporary HCI research and insatiable appetite for meat.

6.3 Confusion

Related to the confusion around the actual reality of the conference was confusion as to what to submit. Although the CfP is clear that the conference was fictional and about how and what should be submitted (a title, list of authors, list of keywords), some contributors had the perception that it was a real conference with a multi-stage submission process. Others submitted abstracts rather than just titles. The committee was contacted by more than one contributor asking if they would need to attend the conference, and if so, what the cost of registration would be. Within the gamut of interpretations of the CfP we saw, occasionally submissions were ambiguous and we too were confused as to whether the contributors had submitted something they thought was real, or whether it was simply dressed up to appear real.

This tendency towards confusion is congruent with Lindley & Coulton's (2016a) assertion that reviewers struggle with papers including elements of Design Fiction, and is perhaps indicative of a wider issue to do with research fictions. We suggest that the community is not yet entirely comfortable with what research fictions mean or how they should be interpreted.

6.4 Authors

One unexpected aspect was the choice of authors. Although we have seen the inclusion of fictionalized versions of authors in papers (e.g. Kirman, et al., 2013) and authors from popular culture fictions (e.g. Lindley & Coulton, 2015b; Linehan & Kirman, 2017) in design fiction in HCI, we were surprised by the range of approaches taken by contributors. In particular, many papers did not include the name of their creator anywhere in the author lists, and also many papers included real but unaware people as authors of fictional papers. In most cases these people were public figures, however not exclusively. Given this, there is a disclaimer attached to the programme that stated authors, where real, may not in actual fact have any connection to the submission made in their name.

This very inconsistent use of identity created unanticipated problems in terms of attribution. As well as real people wishing to use their real name, we also had authors who wished to have their real name attributed as a contributor, but not linked to their specific contribution, and also several authors who absolutely insisted on not being attributed at all at any point. This messiness has led to a complicated arrangement of authors and acknowledgements in this chapter and in the online programme, which is our best attempt at meeting the various wishes of the individuals who supported this work.

7. CONCLUSION

In 1968 JG Ballard argued that science had become the largest producer of fiction (Sellars & O'Hara, 2012):

> *"A hundred years ago or even fifty years ago, science took its raw material from nature. [..] nowadays, particularly in the social, psychological science, the raw material of science is a fiction invented by the scientists. You know, they work out why people chew gum or something."*

There is a sense in which much social science is speculative in ways that are analogous to fiction. In HCI there is a much more direct use of fiction. Mark Weiser's (1991) Sal Scenarios, produced over twenty-five years ago, were plausible fictions that fairly accurately predicted the world we live in today. The production of scenarios, personas, concept design has been

standard practice for HCI since its inception. Why then the current interest in Design Fiction and Research Fiction? Again, research fiction is nothing new and has its antecedent's in the nineteen seventies. In 'Imaginary Magnitude', Stanisław Lem wrote fictional reviews of books and conference proceedings about academic fields that do not yet exist (Lem, 1973). The conceit is powerful because it is economical, science fiction is a literature of ideas and the review of a book that hasn't been written allows for great economy in storytelling: a synopsis of a plot, an elevator pitch of an idea. The form also allows for a degree of plausibility, pastiching academic house styles, publishing conventions and controversies. The fictional conference proceedings here demonstrate the entangled feedback loop between science fiction and actual real world developments.

The term "design fiction" is resonant, playful and ambiguous in ways that "scenarios" or "concept designs" are not. The difference between a design fiction and a scenario is the potential for rich insights to emerge from possible conflicts. Whether viewed in terms of narrative or world building, the titles and author lists which make up these design fictions certainly evoke conflict. Although the titles here do not have a beginning, middle or end they do suggest conflict. Beneath the strongly playful and humorous tones of the submissions, the very form is agonistic: all academic work is contested whether through verification and falsification as the traditions of scientific method or argument and agonism as in the traditions of social science. The playfulness of the fictitious titles and the fictional conference itself is a vehicle for serious discourse on the futures of design fiction within HCI.

Sterling (2013) points out that there is going to be a lot more design fiction regardless of what anybody thinks of it, simply because it is quick and cheap. But there is also going to be a lot more real prototype development because that too is increasingly quick and cheap. Design Fiction allows us to pause before we make and ask why we are doing it and what the consequences of making might be, either intended or unintended.

As Research Fiction, FCDFF asks us to reflect on our playful journey through the use of fiction in research, to consider how it fits within the ever-growing corpus of HCI work. Indeed, now the conference has published its programme online, it has become as real as the thousands of other conferences who have left the same digital traces - echoes of research that may or may not exist. To paraphrase Encinas's (2016) comment on the similarly unclear realness of HCI publications, the FCDFF programme is now just as real as the programme of any other HCI conference.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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