Preface

Welcome to the Proceedings of the First International Conference in Serious Games and Virtual Worlds which was held on 23-24th March 2009 in Coventry, United Kingdom. Serious Games are non-leisure applications of games technologies and virtual worlds are three dimensional immersive environments allowing for social interactions. The recent use of these previously leisure and entertainment- based technologies in new application areas, such as for education, for training, for health and environmental purposes, present the academic and industrial communities with new opportunities and challenges that are both technological and social.

In particular, these technologies are leading to the design, development and participation with immersive experiences informed by social interactions within 3D virtual environments. As these proceedings attest, the applications of these technologies are diverse and the conference has attracted contributions from artificial intelligence to educational research and from clinical education to major incident training to take a few examples.

The conference offered an opportunity for the international scientific community to come together for the first time to consider the main opportunities, challenges and scope of this genuinely cross-disciplinary field of study. The aim of the conference was to propose and investigate new methodologies, frameworks and theories that can be best used to support the development and to analyse the efficacy of Serious Games and Virtual Worlds.

Here at the conference, there was an imperative to provide rigorous and innovative evaluation, assessment and validation methodologies that could begin to demonstrate the efficacy of these environments for supporting real quantifiable benefits in the areas of education, health and the environment. These real benefits for example may consist of providing more engaging immersive experiences, support new scope for clinical therapies and lead to enriching and supporting better interactions within our environments, be they real, hybrid or virtual.

With its ambition to commence the debate around how the newly emerging cross-disciplinary field of study might be best supported through ongoing inputs from a range of related disciplines from computer science to psychology, from social science to health education, the conference ignited an exciting ongoing debate about the key issues and themes emerging. The ambition of the conference to trigger debate and discussion around these key issues and themes arising from new research will continue to frame the future conferences, including the 2nd International Conference in Serious Games and Virtual Worlds which will be held in Braga University, Portugal in 2010.

We were pleased to have received so many high quality international submissions. We received in total of 48 submissions, 34 were finally accepted including 1 keynote paper. From the submissions, 19 full papers were accepted, of which 6 were in education, 5 in Environment and Smart Buildings, 4 in Health and 4 in Other topics. There were 12 accepted short papers of these 10 were in Education and 2 were in health and cultural heritage. We accepted 3 posters. One additional published paper was provided by Prof. Alan Chalmers as a keynote paper.
The conference was hosted by the UK Serious Games Institute, University of Coventry, a hub of excellence in the development and research into Serious Games and Virtual Worlds as a distinct cross-disciplinary field of study. Special thanks go to the Program Committee for its role in providing insightful reviews for the submitted papers. Special thanks also to the organising committee and in particular the work of Drs Genaro Rebolledo-Mendez and Fotis Liarokapis for their role in the organisation of the conference, and to Kate Pallister who has organised much of the administration of the conference. An important thanks also goes to Professor Ian Marshall who has provided financial support for the conference and provided an inspiration for the formation of the area through his long association with games-based education.

In addition, the sponsors of the conference: Becta, ALT and the GBL conference, have made valuable contributions to the conference. Lastly, we thank the IEEE for their technical sponsorship of the conference, and Bob Werner, Editor, Conference Publishing Services, IEEE Computer Society for his work with supporting the publication of this book of Proceedings.

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