

# Dust or Magic

Provisional programme and speaker list - Thursday, March 18, 2004

## Day 1: Thursday 25th March

"Does it have to be like this?"

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*08:30-09:30 Arrivals, registration, tea and coffee.*

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09:30-10:00 Welcome, introductions, and "**What is 'good stuff' and how is it done?**" - BOB HUGHES, Oxford Brookes University; author of "Dust or Magic".

10:00-11:00 "**Getting by in the corporate workplace**"  
LOUISE FERGUSON - usability consultant; author of the "CityOfBits" blog; iSociety research associate.

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*11:00-11:30 Morning coffee*

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11:30-12:15 "**A journey through cyberspace: how we thought it would be in 1968, and how it looks now**" - WILLIAM DONELSON, founder member of the Architecture Machine Group at MIT, now of the Armchair Travel Company.

12:15-1:00 "**Programming for the rest of us? From Hypercard to Runtime Revolution**" - KEVIN MILLER, ceo of Runtime Revolution.

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*01:00-01:45 Lunch in hall*

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01:45-03:00 Demos and posters in Old Refectory including:  
OLAF SCHNEIDER, "Learn\_Web" and the "Theme park nutrition" CD-ROM. AMMMa AG, Bielefeld. <http://www.amma.de>  
BALDUR BJARNASSON: "**Applying the Bog-Standard**". The use of proven methodologies and traditional narrative theories on standard practice in interactive media.  
TOM ABBA: "**Narrative Rambling**". Applying "landscape

thinking” to narrative creation.

BECKY FAITH. Fahamu: a distance learning project for human rights organisations. <http://www.fahamu.org.uk>

03:00-03:45 ***Making all text hypertext*** - The Cynapse project, and Douglas Engelbart’s Bootstrap Institute. FRODE HEGLAND, Liquid Media.

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03:45-04:15 *Tea*

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04:15-05:45 ***“It Doesn’t Have To Be This Way: Ending Today’s Computer Nightmare.”*** -- THEODOR HOLM NELSON, Xanadu Foundation and Oxford Internet Institute; introduced by BOB STEIN, Night Kitchen Inc, NY.

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*Thursday evening: dine independently in Oxford; late bar (till 12:00) at Wadham*

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## **DAY 2: Friday 26th March**

“Creating creative communities”

09:00-09:15 ***Introduction***  
BOB HUGHES

09:15-10:15 ***“Creating a creative community.”***  
ALEEN STEIN - Organa Inc and Scholastic, NY.

10:15-11:00 ***“Creating the experiences children need”***  
MARK SCHLICHTING - Noodleworks, San Francisco.

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*11:00-11:30 Morning coffee*

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11:30-12:15 ***The making of “Croatian Tales from Long Ago”: a global collaboration.***  
HELENA AND ZVONIMIR BULAJA - Bulaja Publishing, Zagreb.

12:30-01:00 Panel and discussion: ***How does anybody ever do “good stuff”?*** What are the criteria for creative work - with

computers, or with anything? - TIM WRIGHT (XPT AND TRACE),  
ALEEN STEIN, MARK SCHLICHTING.

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*01:00-01:45 Lunch in hall*

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01:45-02:15 Demos and posters in Old Refectory

02:15-04:00 ***A Sociable Session On Social Software***

- will Blogs save the world? Is a virtual community any use?  
Assessments and demonstrations by LEE BRYANT (Headshift)  
MARK GATEHOUSE (West Thames College) and LLEWELLYN THOMAS  
(Kent Institute of Art and Design)

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*04:00-04:30 Tea*

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04:30-05:45 ***Here Be Monsters:*** the large, hairy consequences of having an  
idea. ALAN SNOW - illustrator, animator, programmer, and  
author of "Here be Monsters".

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*Friday evening: Conference dinner in Wadham Hall at 07:30; late  
bar (till 12:00)*

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## **DAY 3: Saturday 27th March**

Theme-"Making a living in the weightless economy."

09:30-10:15 ***The cost of virtual living: the money isn't real either.***  
SUE THOMAS - Author, and artistic director of the trAce online  
writing centre.

10:15-11:00 ***"The Making of a Cybertariat? Virtual Work in a Real  
World"***  
URSULA HUWS - author of the book "Making of a Cybertariat";  
Professor of International Labour Studies, London Metropolitan  
University and Director of the Analytica research consultancy.

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*11:00-11:30 Morning coffee*

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11:30-01:00 Closing forum: ***Working, playing and paying the mortgage in  
new media.*** - Sue Thomas, Aleen Stein, Ursula Huws, Chris  
Jennings.

*Final pre-lunch demo to be announced.*

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*01:00-02:00 Lunch in hall and depart unless an afternoon activity is arranged (still under discussion).*

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## Who's speaking at DorM04?

**Baldur Bjarnasson: "Applying the Bog-Standard".**

Baldur, from Reykjavik, is a PhD candidate at the University of the West of England. <http://www.unishade.com>

**Lee Bryant: "Sociable session on social software".**

Lee is a member of Headshift, the internet consultancy that "specialise in the research and development of innovative web-based applications that build lasting value through online social interaction". Lee's background is in International Politics, including a period working for the Bosnian government. He "will be talking about and showcasing practical examples of informal bottom-up knowledge sharing using social software", including a ground-breaking project in progress for the National Health Service. <http://www.headshift.com>

**Helena and Zvonimir Bulaja: The making of "Croatian Tales from Long Ago"**



"Croatian Tales from Long Ago", written in 1916, is Croatia's most famous work of literature. But the outside world knew little about it till last year, when the Bulajas released the first of 2 CD-ROMs based on the classic, created by a team of animators and programmers they'd recruited via the internet from from all over the world: a globally-collaborative creative product of the internet age. More at <http://www.bulaja.com> and in Edward Picot's trAce review: <http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/Review/index.cfm?article=81>

**William Donelson: TRAVELS IN CYBERSPACE, 1968-2004.**

William Donelson was a founder member of the legendary Architecture Machine Group at MIT (precursor of MIT's Media Lab). The AMG produced a string of landmark applications including the "Aspen Movie



Map” and the project Donelson led, the Spatial Data Management System (SDMS): the first truly multimedia computer system. It used a Starship Enterprise-style 11-foot diagonal rear-projection display, "continuous" speech recognition (still unsurpassed), octo-phonic sound, telephone integration, touch- and pressure- sensitive display screens, the "Captain Kirk" Eames chair, pressure sensitive joysticks, interactive videodisc control, etc etc. Donelson also worked on spline-based fonts with Bob Sproull - work that led to the creation of Adobe.

William hopes to be able to show us at least a few glimpses of what was accomplished in those days - as well as subsequent work with videodisc, and at his present company:

<http://www.Armchair-Travel.com>

### **Louise Ferguson: Getting by in the corporate workplace**



Louise Ferguson is a technologist interested in how ethnographic approaches to researching the experiences of individuals and groups can help us in the design of products, systems and environments. She is also a Research Associate with the iSociety project of The Work Foundation.

<http://www.louiseferguson.com/cityofbits.htm>

Talk details: *“Three-quarters of British workers now use a PC or other ICT at work. How new technologies are implemented in the workplace can have far-reaching consequences for both the organisation and those who work in it: they can be used to promote creativity or to administer control, to encourage expertise sharing or to create a service equivalent of Adam Smith’s pin factory. Louise Ferguson will discuss some of the findings from the iSociety’s ‘Getting By, Not Getting On’ project, which undertook ethnographic research in a range of old and new economy organisations to discover what’s really going on behind the scenes in corporate Britain.”*

### **Mark Gatehouse A Sociable Session On Social Software**

Mark teaches at West Thames College - see his pages at <http://www.d73.co.uk> “I am going to look at 3 sites under current development and try to engender debate about the nature of internet communities, also about the structure of such events i.e. Blogg, wiki, straight email. The sites currently in the firing line are <http://www.ndart.co.uk> , <http://www.stlukes.sch.kingston.gov.uk> , and <http://www.thewilloughbyarms.com> ”

**Frode Hegland: *Cynapse: making all text hypertext***

Frode, an information environment designer, is developing web-based techniques that build on the principles developed by Ted Nelson, and by Douglas Engelbart (whose "Augment" system presaged modern desktop systems in the 1960s but had far wider ambitions). Indeed, Frode was an associate of Engelbart's Bootstrap Institute 1999-2001, creating the acclaimed Doug Engelbart Audio Glossary (see <http://www.bootstrap.org> ). He will speak about this involvement and demonstrate his own contribution to the field: Cynapse (see <http://www.cynapse.org> ).

**Bob Hughes: *What do we know about how people do good stuff?***



After more than a century of steady progress in understanding human creativity, people are increasingly subject to work-regimes that stifle it. No realm of creative work illustrates this more vividly than computer work. Why? What are the lessons for people who want to do good stuff?

**Ursula Huws - *"The Making of a Cybertariat. Virtual work in a real world."***



Ursula Huws is a professor at the London Metropolitan University and a consultant specialising in the effects of technological change on workers; especially women workers. Her new book "The Making of a Cybertariat" demolishes the accepted wisdom that computer technology has utterly changed the nature of work and even the laws that govern it. This will be a salutary (and probably hilarious) talk for all of us who labour in the "weightless economy". For more about Ursula see <http://www.analytica.dial.pipex.com/>

**Dr Theodor Holm (Ted) Nelson - *"It Doesn't Have To Be This Way: Ending Today's Computer Nightmare."***



Today's global MacWindows orthodoxy creates a persuasive illusion that for computing (and any technology) there is "one true path", preordained and unchallengeable. Ted dispels that illusion; technology is infinitely better and richer than that; we could have infinitely better systems than the ones we have; and he even shows us

what those systems might be like. Ted Nelson is surely one of the most inspiring and influential figures in world computer culture. He coined the word "hypertext" way back in 1963, when the mere thought of using a computer for something as trivial as writing seemed an outrage to all right-minded people. Since then, with typical cack-handedness and to Ted's utter exasperation, the world has turned the computer into a turbocharged typewriter. Ted has continued to build, write and agitate for something better, and we will see some of the astonishing results of this 40+ year labour. These will include the Zig-Zag system (see <http://www.xanadu.net>). Ted will also speak about his vision of computer design and use, and the deep principles he has identified over the years, and is committed to. Ted has just arrived in Oxford, where he has accepted a fellowship at the Oxford Internet Institute.

Mark Schlichting: *Creating the experiences children need*



Mark Schlichting created the famous "Living Books" series of children's CD-ROMs published by Brøderbund in the early 1990s. These interactive versions of kids' best-sellers by the likes of Mercer Mayer and Dr Seuss were a sensation. Their quality never lapsed. How was it done, and why, despite massive investment, did no other publisher achieve anything comparable? Mark will show some of the work he and his team produced in those days - and reveal the personal story and philosophy behind it. <http://www.noodleworks.com>

Olaf Schneider, CEO, AMMMa AG, Bielefeld.

Demo: "Learn\_Web" and the "Theme park nutrition" CD-ROM  
<http://www.amma.de>

Alan Snow *Here Be Monsters: the large, scary consequences of having an idea.*



Alan Snow's Here Be Monsters project really has encountered monsters: corporate as well as technical. It started as a computer game (huge, amazing sections of which were built in 1996, before the project was canned) then became an animated/live-action TV film (ditto) and is now, finally, a book: a 3-volume Gothic novel, for boys. It took 7 years and 41 different software packages to get there. [No url: Alan is too cool to have one]

***Aleen Stein: Creating a creative community***



Aleen and Bob Stein founded the Voyager Company in 1985. Although never a large company, or even financially secure, it set and maintained for 12 years a “gold standard” for multimedia publishing, producing hundreds of CD-ROM titles, many of which became classics. Aleen will re-examine this experience, and her subsequent work at Organa and Scholastic, to argue that community is the vital precondition for creative work.

***Bob Stein - introduction to Ted Nelson’s talk***



Bob is one of our industry's most valued pioneers. In 1985 he and Aleen founded The Voyager Company, which probably did more to advance awareness of the possibilities of electronic text than any other. The Voyager Expanded Book system (shown at last year’s DorM). Bob was and remains a committed political activist as well as a passionate advocate for books and their new electronic siblings. See <http://www.nightkitchen.com> and (the revived Voyager collection) <http://www.bringyourbrain.com> .

***Llewellyn Thomas A Sociable Session On Social Software***

Llewellyn teaches at Kent Institute of Art and Design, where he is applying “social software” techniques in association with Ultralab.

***Sue Thomas The cost of virtual living: the money isn't real either.***



Sue is the founder and artistic director of the trAce online writing centre. She will give her reflections on “virtuality” (as described in her new book “Hello World”), and its relationship to the intense practicality of making a living as a writer and building and administering an effective, non-virtual online community to support working writers.

Sue adds: “I plan to cover a range of issues from the quota-based economy of LambdaMOO, to the economy of working for free (hand-crafted books and websites), to the grant and service economy which underpins those activities whereby the audience for such works is still so small that one cannot expect to sell product but must instead sell services like teaching and projectwork or obtain blue skies research

money. What we are really looking for is a way to make new media work and sell it to an informed audience so that new media artists can make a living from what they do best.”

<http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/suethomas>

*Tim Wright* Panel leader: “How does anybody ever do good stuff?”



Tim Wright is currently writer in residence at trAce. In the early 1990s he and Rob Bevan built up a successful web design agency called NoHo Digital and then, having earned some financial freedom, moved on to create a succession of famous, beautifully-executed and highly eccentric interactive entertainments that combined real-world elements with the virtual: “Mind Gym”, XPT (the ridiculous internet-based present-giving service), and Online Caroline. At trAce, he is creating a non-existent home-town for himself (with help from trAce members) and toying with the idea of “a faux online fridge who people can ‘talk’ to, or maybe it simply sits on the Web talking to itself”.

<http://timwright.typepad.com/inresidence/> and  
<http://www.xpt.co.uk/timwright/>