USC Institute for Creative Technologies

ARL

Narrative

The Narrative Group at ICT investigates storytelling and the human mind, exploring how people experience, interpret, and narrate the events in their lives. We pursue this research goal using diverse interdisciplinary methods, including the large-scale analysis of narrative in social media, the logical formalization of commonsense knowledge, and the creation of story-based learning environments.

Narrative analysis

The rise of social media has created new opportunities for an empirical science of storytelling. Over the last few years, we have collected tens of millions of personal stories from Internet weblogs for use in a wide variety of analyses. We have studies the health information needs expressed by parents of children with cancer, the gender differences in the way that people describe strokes and heart attacks, and cross-cultural differences in the way that people frame the events in their lives in terms of sacred values.

Narrative intelligence

A central engineering challenge in the creation of human-like artificial intelligence is to enable commonsense reasoning about the everyday world. At ICT, we pursue two opposite approaches to the problem of acquiring commonsense knowledge. On one hand, we employ traditional knowledge engineering methods to author formal commonsense content theories in first-order predicate logic. On the other hand, we attempt to harvest commonsense knowledge directly from the millions of personal stories that people post to their Internet weblogs.

Story-based learning environments

Immersive training simulations provide environments where learners can acquire and practice cognitive skills through guided, interactive experiences. Crafting effective simulations is still more of an art than a science, requiring the collaborative efforts of writers, experts, instructors, technologists, and learning science researchers. We support these creative efforts through the development of authoring tools and methodologies, helping teams articulate instructional objectives and construct scenario content through the analysis of the real-world experiences narrated by practitioners.

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6/2012