ELMCIP ANTHOLOGY OF EUROPEAN ELECTRONIC LITERATURE

MARIA ENGBERG, TALAN MEMMOTT

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

*T*he *ELMCIP group* at Blekinge Institute of Technology (BTH) in Sweden was in charge of producing an anthology of European electronic literature, a key outcome in the ELMCIP project: ELMCIP Anthology of European Electronic Literature.[1] By providing an anthology with creative works and relevant pedagogical material, ELMCIP extends its work into European classrooms, providing teachers and students with an educational experience of network culture. The works are written in a number of different languages and thus reflect the diversity of European electronic literature while also foregrounding how electronic literature represents a uniquely twenty-first century networked, globalized culture that uses communication patterns, aesthetic registers, and literary voices that transcend national boundaries.

The ELMCIP project was partly designed to bring together the disparate groups of writers, teachers, and researchers that were active in clusters throughout Europe. From 2005 onward, during, for instance, important gatherings in London (E-poetry festival 2005) and Paris (E-poetry festival 2007), European and American writers and researchers began to meet more frequently and were able to share their experiences with colleagues outside of their immediate cluster or country. Still, the North American dominance in the field with established organizations—like the Electronic Literature Organization and the Electronic Poetry Center—and main international conferences was evident in 2009 when the ELMCIP project began to be articulated. A key concern for ELMCIP was to address this lacuna regarding supportive structures for electronic literature research and teaching in the European cultural landscape, a need that was clearly observed at the time of the project's start in 2010. The anthology was thus designed to be a gathering of important European literature as well as a pedagogical resource.

In addition, the project sought to extend, within the multicultural and multilinguistic context of Europe, practices and theories in electronic literature

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1 <http://anthology.elmcip.net/>.

to study how electronic literature manifests in conventional cultural contexts, such as exhibition, theater, and publishing, as well as across language groups: evaluating what effects result from situating electronic literature in these contexts.

Works were selected based on four pre-established criteria:

1. European diversity: to represent a broad cross-section of authors and artists from different European cultures.
2. Formal diversity: to represent a broad sampling of approaches to electronic literature, demonstrating the influence of multiple modes of practice and different types of interdisciplinary art practice.
3. Historical relevance: preference will be given to submitted works deemed historically important to the development of electronic literature communities in Europe.
4. Pedagogical relevance: as part of the selection would be works appropriate for teaching in secondary and university classroom settings.

BACKGROUND

The selection criteria of the anthology along with other outcomes prompted intense discussions at the early stage among the project members. The overarching question was how we would delineate and define *European*. We saw a need to address the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe as not only defined officially through national languages; rather, we sought to address the countries in Europe with immigrant communities, residents who live and work in Europe but are citizens of non-European nations and so forth. The inclination was, therefore, to be inclusive rather than exclusionary. The discussion prompted reflection about the innate international property of electronic literature as clusters of networked communities across the globe with certain regions or centers of higher density of artists and scholars. In addition, we wanted to open up for links in the project itself through the ELMCIP Knowledge Base, beyond Europe's boundaries, to more accurately reflect the nature of these networks.

The BTH project members, Principal Investigator Maria Engberg, Co-investigator Talan Memmott, and postdoctoral researcher David Prater all had prior experience collecting, editing, and publishing collections of literary works. Talan Memmott was coeditor (with Laura Borrás, Rita Raley, and Brian Kim Stefans) of the second volume of the *Electronic Literature Collection* (2011) and was editor

of the online literary journal *Beehive* from 1998-2003; David Prater was Managing Editor at the Australian-based online *Cordite Poetry Review* (2001-2012); and Maria Engberg worked as contributing editor to ELINOR (elektronisk litteratur i Norden) and the US-based Electronic Literature Directory (2009-2012).

An integral part of the anthology is the inclusion of pedagogical resources. This makes the ELMCIP anthology different from other anthologies or collections in the field. The decision to include teaching material, such as syllabi, exercises, and presentations about educational projects and experiences, was grounded in the need to introduce electronic literature to educators as an aesthetic and media practice. As digital literacy becomes a crucial skill in contemporary society, electronic literature in secondary and tertiary education can provide insights into the operations of digital multimodality and textuality. Furthermore, there is a need for analytic skills that take into account the affordances of computational media. These dimensions of digital culture are addressed in the material included with the anthology.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESSES

STRUCTURE: OPEN CALL, SELECTION COMMITTEE

The works were selected via a peer review process with an open call. The open call was disseminated internationally via mailing lists, websites, and social media sites and was open between April 12 and September 30, 2011. When the submission period closed, the works were reviewed by a committee consisting of all members of the consortium and advised by the ELMCIP Advisory Board, with the final selection being made by the editorial team.

As mentioned, the committee based their selections on primarily three criteria that we articulated from the original selection criteria. A work was chosen for further consideration once we determined that it satisfied the European qualification (by author's nationality or country of activity). The three criteria were literary quality (concerning the various literary forms and genres of the field as well as the quality or relevance of the writing in the work); aesthetic considerations (works that represented sophisticated, interesting, and engaged aesthetic forms); and, finally, pedagogical relevance (striving toward diversity in terms of genres and style of work for pedagogical purposes).

We received fifty-eight submissions in total. They represented the following European countries: Switzerland, France, Italy, UK, Greece, Sweden, Nether-

lands, Spain, Norway, and Slovakia, and ten languages: Catalan, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. Media formats for the submitted work included scripted HTML, interactive applications for the screen and for mobile device, audio, and video. From the fifty-eight submitted works, the editors removed work that did not fit the submission criteria or was non-functional, reducing the considered works to twenty-nine. These were then forwarded to the consortium and advisory board for consideration.

Alongside the editorial process with the anthology, the team also worked on researching the pedagogical experiences, primarily within Europe, that in some way included electronic literature. The postdoctoral researcher David Prater assisted in the initial research into the major places in Europe where electronic literature is taught. As Engberg writes elsewhere in this volume, there is evidence of various disciplinary contexts for the teaching of e-lit at various levels of education. Reaching out to the ELMCIP partners and their extended networks, we gathered a set of representative educational assets that we deemed would enhance the collection's value as a teaching resource and introduce teachers new to the field to some of the methods and approaches already used in schools and universities. The pedagogical dimension of the project continues in the ELMCIP Knowledge Base, where teaching resources are referenced as well as archived. Although the pedagogical material is not directly linked to the works chosen (primarily because many of the works submitted were unpublished and new works that at the time had yet to be included into syllabi), the works referenced in the teaching material share common main aesthetic, rhetoric, and literary strategies with the works in the anthology.

The final selection of works for inclusion was made by the editorial team, with consideration for how the consortium ranked the work and further assessment based on the selection criteria. In the end, the anthology includes eighteen creative works in ten European languages, from nine different countries.

Languages represented in the Anthology
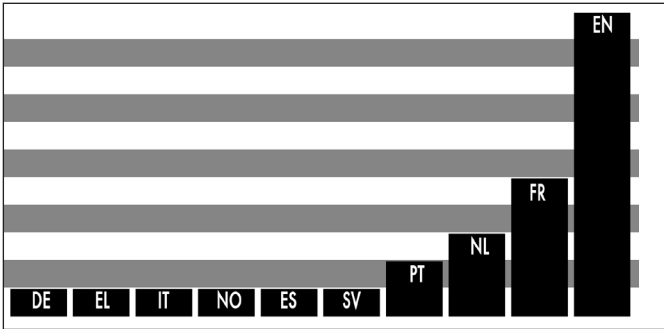
Languages represented in the Anthology: German 1, Greek 1, Italian 1, Norwegian 1, Spanish 1, Swedish 1, Portuguese 2, Dutch 3, French 5, English 11

Countries represented in the Anthology

Countries represented in the Anthology: (Clockwise from top) Norway 1, Sweden 1, Slovakia 1, Austria 1, Switzerland 1, France 3, Portugal 1, United Kingdom 5, Netherlands 4

As the reader will note in the charts above, English is the dominant language within the anthology despite the fact that the origins of the works are distributed across Europe. In addition, some European languages are included in the anthology (Greek, Italian, Spanish, and German) though there is no representative work from the countries associated with these languages. Some of the languages indicated above are evident in one individual work—Andreas Maria

Jacobs' *La Resocialista Internacional*, which includes Dutch, English, Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish. English is used not only in works from the United Kingdom, but also in the works from Austria, France, the Netherlands, and Slovakia.

The works in the anthology represent various aesthetic, poetic, and narrative strategies. Technically, the works range from HTML and Flash to movies. One of electronic literature's earliest and most resilient forms is the hypertext. Several works in the anthology, such as *Tramway* (Saemmer), *Underbelly* (Wilks), and *Väljarna* (Heldén), build on and expand the hypertextual arrangement of textual nodes that the reader peruses and explores. Spatial properties of electronic literature allow the reader to engage in a reading process that foregrounds participation, exploration, and, to paraphrase well-known hypertext author Michael Joyce, a rereading akin to inhabiting a map (*Othermindedness* 2001). Equally important and intertwined with spatiality is temporality. J.R. Carpenter's *Along the Briny Beach* and J. Piringer's *RepeatAfterMe* both invoke the temporality of code-based works that foreground processes of text generation that in turn produce new reading experiences each time.

Animation and movement have been a key concern for electronic literature since early visual poems were generated by computers from the 1950s and 60s onward. In the anthology, some works emphasize animation as a crucial component of meaning-making: Bootz's *Retournement* is described as a "syntactic animation" whereas O. Ormstad's *Svevedikt* couples the aesthetics of Concrete poetry of the 1960s with a visuo-temporal process of signification. Finally, interaction and reader/user participation are vital components of several of the anthology's works, e.g. Suter's and Bauer's locative smartphone poem *AndOrDada*, Husárová's and Panák's *BA-Tale*, Bouchardon's and Volckaert's *Loss of Grasp*, and Mencía's *Connected Memories*. Each in their own way, they rely on, push against, and play with the user's interactions.

Pedagogical material has been included with the works, as well as video documentation of the talks from the Karlskrona 2011 workshop focused on electronic literature and pedagogy. The materials reflect the range of approaches to teaching electronic literature that teachers currently use in European and American universities and high schools, and these materials offer educators models to follow in their own pedagogical endeavors. The anthology thus becomes not just a collection of European literature but an important resource for teachers and students, as well as casual readers. The pedagogical material was collected from

teachers that work in different milieus, ranging from research universities, to life-long learning centers, to high schools; from humanities departments and arts programs, to engineering-focused programs. The aim is to provide both insight and inspiration to how electronic literature can be taught in its own right and to foster digital multimodal literacy for wider purposes. Therefore, the pedagogical material includes syllabi, technical and literary exercises, assignments based on particular kinds of works, and essays discussing pedagogical concerns for the field at large.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The design and development of the anthology was conducted by Patrik Thorsson (as lead programmer and web designer), Talan Memmott, and Maria Engberg. Carefully researching the collections and anthologies already published in the field as well as other relevant materials, we set up a series of criteria for design and development.

Since one of the primary agendas for the anthology was to supply a catalog of creative works and pedagogical materials for educators, the design and functionality for the anthology had to be clean, easy to use, and as free of unnecessary embellishment as possible. The interface had to provide direct access to the collected works and materials while also providing viewing options and information that would be of interest to educators and students alike. To these ends, the structure of the anthology is easy to navigate, requiring just two clicks to reach a page for an individual work, and each individual work page includes an author statement, an editorial statement, and relevant technical information. In addition, the works included in the anthology can be searched, sorted, and viewed by language.

PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

The anthology was released during the final ELMCIP conference *Remediating the Social* November 1-3 in Edinburgh, UK. During this event the anthology was distributed in its USB form to the participants alongside the conference catalog. On December 17, the anthology was released online on the ELMCIP website.[1] As part of the ongoing distribution plan, the anthology is and will be continuously distributed to national and university libraries, schools, universities, archives,

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individual researchers, and other interested parties in Europe and elsewhere. The National Library of Sweden (Kungliga Biblioteket) has received the anthology and plans to incorporate it into their collections. We are in contact with several national libraries about including the USB version of the anthology as a publication, the prospect of which requires that the library in question address a different publication medium than they normally deal with.

During the spring 2013, we were producing the second printing of the USB version to distribute further to European archives, libraries, and universities. In addition, we are sending copies to North and South American libraries and archives, such as the Library of Congress (US), as well as to research labs for archiving. Our aim is to distribute it as widely as possible in order to highlight the ELMCIP project and the ongoing ELMCIP Knowledge Base, which continues to be a research and teaching resource.