INTERACTIVE FICTION TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION 2017 TRANSPARENCY REPORT

In 2017, IFTF achieved some goals, made progress on others, and had to push a couple to next year. We're happy to share our financial status, our strengths, and our weaknesses with you in this transparency report, which covers our programs, the money we've received, and how we've allocated it. We hope that it will help the community understand what we're working on and how we're funding these endeavors.

PROGRAMS

This year, we've maintained two projects and taken on two more. As well as working on a project to improve the accessibility of interactive fiction, we are now stewards of the Interactive Fiction Competition and the Interactive Fiction Archive, and provide significant support to the authoring system Twine.

Interactive Fiction Competition

The Interactive Fiction Competition has one of our largest committees, consisting of Jason McIntosh, Jacqueline Ashwell, Sam Ashwell, Stephen Granade, Joe Johnston, Flourish Klink, Nick Montfort, Mark Musante, Andrew Plotkin, Aaron Reed, Dan Shiovitz, Emily Short, and Carolyn VanEseltine. In 2017, IFComp was chaired by Jason McIntosh; in 2018 the organizing role will pass to Jacqueline Ashwell.

2017 was the 23rd annual IFComp. The event was a great success, drawing a record-breaking 79 entries and distributing $5600 and 38 other prizes between 49 prize-qualifying entrants.[1] It also garnered press coverage in places like Atlas Obscura.[2]

To provide for IFComp's activities and especially the large prize pool, we embarked on our first major fundraising effort: the Colossal Fund. This initiative invited the IF community to donate money towards the IFComp cash prize pool. Between the Colossal Fund and other earmarked donations, IFComp was the single project that brought in the most funds, receiving $8217.64 in donations.

IFComp also benefited from the volunteer labor of many people—in total, 130 person-hours. Jason McIntosh and Jacqueline Ashwell provided the most labor, as organizers; other volunteers were Line Hollis (pre-screening entries), Carolyn VanEseltine (verifying votes), Amy Swartz (prize distribution), Adam Herzog (software development), Nick Montfort (planning and rules consultation), and Andrew Plotkin (website maintenance and prize distribution).

Accessibility Testing Committee

When we launched the Accessibility Testing Committee in 2016, we hoped to have completed a "Testathon" project by the end of 2017. That project would invite volunteers to test a range of IF development tools, interpreters, and games for accessibility, then share the results, the goal being to identify ways IFTF and others could make IF a more accessible pastime for all.

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1   In actuality, $5052 ended up in prizewinners' pockets. The difference is accounted for by financial institutions' fees and by the fact that some winners declined or failed to collect their prizes. Uncollected money was rolled back into the IFTF general fund.
2   https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/welcome-interactive-fiction-wizard-sniffing-pig-controversy-video-games

While the committee did make some progress towards its goal, it did not meet it by year's end. We've considered how to best jump start the project, and (after resigning from his role as IFComp organizer) Jason McIntosh will be taking over the chairship. The committee will continue to consist of furkle, Mark Barlet, Dan Fabulich, Deborah Kaplan, Zack Kline, Andrew Plotkin and Austin Seraphin. We hope that 2018 will be a more productive year for this long-time IFTF project!

Twine

Chaired by Chris Klimas, the Twine committee consists of Colin Marc, Dan Cox, Greyelf, Leon Arnott, Liz England, and Thomas Michael Edwards. It's important to note that this committee isn't a steering committee for the development of the Twine application, which is an open-source software project allied with but independent of IFTF. Rather, it assists with the maintenance, preservation, and improvement of the Twine project's intellectual property, infrastructure and community.

In the past year, the Twine committee got a lot done. Twinery.org was moved to an IFTF-funded server, a necessary step in IFTF's stewardship. The committee set up monthly backups of philome.la, the free Twine hosting service, ensuring that should anything happen to philome.la the games hosted there won't be lost. They made progress towards Twine trademark registration, an important part of protecting Twine in years to come. Finally, they published Version 1 of the Twine Cookbook (https://www.twinery.org/cookbook), a first step towards developing the how-to re-sources Twine desperately needs.

As a group, the committee spent 130 hours working on the Twine cookbook and backing up Philomela. This year, no donations were specifically earmarked for Twine.

Interactive Fiction Archive

In 2017 IFTF became the steward of the Interactive Fiction Archive, and the volunteers who have maintained the archive for the past several years became the new IF Archive Committee: Andrew Plotkin, Doug Orleans, David Kinder, Paul Mazaitis, Stephen Granade, and Jason McIntosh.

In addition to the not-insignificant work of forming and transitioning the IF Archive over to IFTF management, the IF Archive committee also updated the internal software that runs the site itself—an unglamorous but necessary task. On a more entertaining note, because it is the 25th anniversary of the IF Archive, they commissioned artist Maia Kobabe to draw some gorgeous celebratory art, now available on mugs, T-shirts and stickers at the IFTF Gift Shop.[3]

Volunteers for the IF Archive included Andrew Plotkin and Paul Mazaitis (server and site maintenance) and Doug Orleans and David Kinder (filing). Donations earmarked for the archive totaled $281.70.

Other Activities

While individual projects are important, we also had a great deal to do in the day-to-day runnings of IFTF. While donations made to IFTF as a whole will be covered in the next section, we want to note the 18 hours of volunteer work put in by David Streever, who provides publishing and promotion support. Flourish Klink, Jason McIntosh and Judith Pintar were the other major volunteers who worked for IFTF as a whole.

Judith's volunteer work in particular deserves note. After Andrew Plotkin spearheaded a 90+ respondent survey of IFDB users as a service to IFTF and to the IFDB (which is not an IFTF project); Judith coded the open-ended responses, then analyzed

3   https://www.zazzle.com/iftf_gift_shop

and wrote up the results, a painstaking task. The results were passed on to Michael J. Roberts, IFDB's administrator, and will also be used to help IFTF plan future initiatives.

DONATIONS

In 2017, we received a total of $14583.83 in donations, all from individual donors. There were 79 named donors and many others who chose to remain anonymous. Since last year, we have transitioned from being primarily funded by our founders to being entirely funded by the community. We did not receive any institutional donations (donations from corporations) in 2017, but we hope to pursue this funding route in years to come.

Our strategy for soliciting donations this year relied largely on our individual projects. For example, donations to IFComp's Colossal Fund were largely earmarked to become prizes for IFComp winners, but a percentage of each donation went to defray IFTF costs. Other donations were earmarked for particular projects. In general, we prefer to receive un-earmarked donations, so that we can decide what projects need the most funding. However, fundraising is much easier on a project-by-project basis. We continue to develop our strategy on this front and will have more to say in our 2018 transparency report.

Of course, IFTF would not function without in-kind donations and donations of time and professional expertise. These have been enumerated in the "projects" section earlier. In total, volunteers reported that they spent 539 hours working for IFTF, exclusive of committee and board meetings.

GRANTS

In IFTF's 2016 transparency report, we named grants as a central part of our funding strategy, stating our hope to soon see all of our projects at least partially grant-funded. In 2017, we did research grant opportunties, but did not end up applying to any.

Our research made it clear to us that the complex task of grant application works best with a specific project in mind, rather than as a means of general-purpose organizational funding. None of IFTF's programs at the start of 2017 offered a clear path to this.
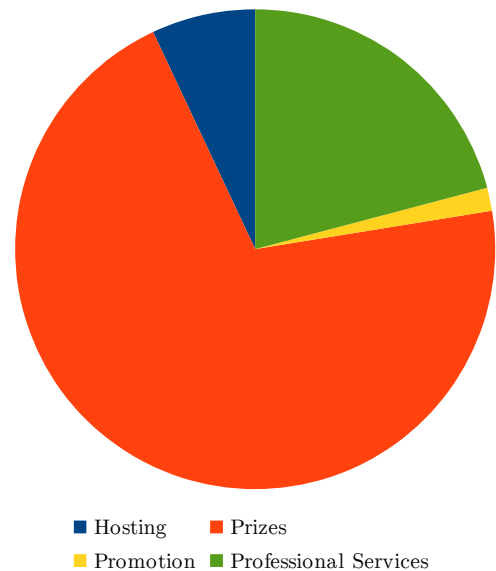
As such, IFTF's fundraising energy for 2017 instead went largely into Colossal Fund, our first (and successful) program-specific funding drive. IFTF continues to consider grants a powerful potential route for future fund-raising, and will keep seeking opportunities from this angle.

OUTGOING FUNDS

In 2017, our outgoing funds fell into four categories: professional services, IFComp prizes, promotion, and hosting.

70% of our outgoing funds went to IFComp prizes. This should be no surprise, as the Colossal Fund truly was colossal.

"Professional services," which comprised 20% of our outgoing funds, include legal advice and filing fees associated with launching the Twine and IF Archive committees as well as other sundry IFTF business. It also includes hiring the services of an artist, Maia Kobabe, to draw a logo for the IF Archive 25th anniversary merchandise.

■ Hosting   ■ Prizes
■ Promotion   ■ Professional Services

"Promotion" covered the purchase of 200 stickers to distribute at conventions and other similar gatherings. It accounted for just 1% of our outgoing funds.

Finally, "hosting" as a cost is self-explanatory. We spent more money in total on hosting this year than last year because we now operate more sites with correspondingly greater amounts of traffic, but it was still only 6% of our outgo.

Of course, much of our work this year has come about as a result of volunteer work. If we were to put monetary value to those volunteer hours, this chart would look quite different.

OVERALL FINANCIAL HEALTH

While we didn't have the 2017 we predicted, the year still generally went well for IFTF.

At the end of 2016, we were worried that our annual burn rate was around $890, and that we would need to engage in some serious fundraising to expand into more projects. In 2017 we did take on more projects, for an annual burn rate around $1450. We had projected that we'd need to turn to institutional giving and grants to meet this high need—but actually, in 2017 we achieved our goals with individual donations alone.

Hopefully, we can keep this up as we move into 2018, and now that we feel confident we'll be able to cover our current needs from the generosity of the community, we look forward to reaching higher and farther than before.

IFTF BUDGET, 2017

Donations

Founder	$0.00
Individual	$14583.83
Institutional	$0.00
Total income	$14583.83

Payments

Prizes	$5108.20
Professional Services	$1511.00
Promotion	$112.00
Hosting	$505.02
Total expenditures	$7236.22
Net total	$8868.64