

INTERACTIVE FICTION TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION

2020 Transparency Report

This report summarizes the [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#) (IFTF)'s activity from January 2020 through December 2020, including a high-level accounting of the organization's financial income and expenditures. As a public-service organization that many people entrust with their time, attention, and money, IFTF presents this report in an effort to show how it has applied its community's investments over the past calendar year.

IFTF president Jason McIntosh wrote and published this report in April 2021, based on IFTF's internal financial records, [public blog posts](#), and consultations with various other IFTF staff. Jason authored all text except where noted otherwise. All monetary numbers that appear in this report are expressed in U.S. dollars.

Summary: As a small nonprofit of modest goals and thin overhead costs, IFTF spent the world-wide *annus horribilis* of 2020 able to keep all its extant public-service programs running more or less as usual. All the programs found success sticking with their respective missions, though the conference program did face some particularly significant challenges.

IFTF itself didn't grow or change in any obvious fashion, but did use the energy of suddenly ubiquitous global teleconferencing to engage in the most intense long-term planning since the organization's founding four years earlier. These discussions led to some fairly radical decisions about the maturing nonprofit's ideal structure, the effects of which we expect to see unfold in 2021.

Program activity

Each [public-service program](#) within IFTF is steered by an autonomous committee. This section contains summaries of 2020 committee activities, written by each such committee's chairs. It also includes hour-totals of volunteer effort contributed by each committee's membership over the year.

Conference

Reported by Justin Bortnick, Conference Committee co-chair

In 2020, [the NarraScope Committee](#) hosted the second NarraScope Conference, which ran virtually on Twitch with a parallel Discord chat room from May 28 through June 4. There exists a detailed [financial transparency report](#) and [an assessment of problems and solutions](#) that were generated in the aftermath of the conference, and as such this write-up will not reiterate any of the details of those reports.

Planning began in 2019 following the conclusion of the previous NarraScope conference. In an effort to bring NarraScope content to a broader audience, we launched the NarraScope Podcast which was hosted by three committee members and distributed recordings of talks from the prior year's event. The initial plan was to host the event at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, however the global COVID-19 pandemic forced the event to transition, on a

relatively short timeframe, to an all-virtual event, leading to several of the problems outlined in the above Problems report. This did, however, have the advantage of allowing our programming an even broader international reach than would have been possible for an in-person conference.

Following the challenges of NarraScope 2020, the committee opted not to host a conference in 2021 while the organization addresses concerns that arose out of the 2020 event. We are hopeful that a return to full conference activities is on the horizon.

Total volunteer hours: 272

Education

Reported by Judith Pintar, Education Committee chair

The main activity of the Education Committee in 2020 was the educational workshops and bootcamp that were organized for NarraScope 2020. Every member of the Education Committee contributed towards that effort. Matt Farber, Anastasia Salter, Stuart Moulthrop, Brendan Desilets and Chris Klimas gave one-day workshops.

I did the curriculum development and design of the three week Bootcamp Wiki and Slack site, which Brendan Desilets and I facilitated, with extensive and generous help of two non-committee volunteers, Caleb Wilson and Alexis Kim. This team stayed focused for the three weeks of the bootcamp, and it was a tremendous success by any measure. Several of the games that were developed in the bootcamp were submitted to the NarraScope game jam, which was wonderful to see.

Outside of NarraScope, the Education Committee did not have live scheduled meetings, communicating irregularly and only asynchronously. The pandemic year's chaos made IFTF-related coordination very difficult for our committee members, myself included. I also spent much of the year managing family emergencies, exacerbated by COVID-19.

The committee plans to grow in both size and flexibility in 2021.

Total volunteer hours: 85

IF Archive

Reported by Andrew Plotkin, IF Archive Committee chair

The IF Archive had a quiet year, with no major changes to the service. About 370 games and other files were uploaded to the IF Archive in 2020. (That's 103 games in IFComp 2020, and another 270-odd through the rest of the year!)

Graham Nelson and Dan Sanderson have transferred the publishing license of the Inform 6 Designer's Manual to IFTF. This book is available through most print-on-demand book channels, priced at cost. (You can find the digital version for free at <http://inform-fiction.org/manual/>.)

Total volunteer hours: 60

IFComp

Reported by Jacqueline Ashwell, IF Archive Committee chair

The 26th annual IFComp saw the largest number of entries yet, with twenty-one more entries than in 2019. This resulted in a new milestone for IFComp: over one hundred entries, from authors all across the planet. There were 103 entries in all, 68 of which qualified for a cash prize from our Colossal Fund and/or and a tangible gift from our prize pool.

The IFComp Colossal Fund garnered \$8500 in donations, 80% of which supported IFComp, and 20% of which were held to support running the competition and other general IFTF endeavors.

Total volunteer hours: 247

IntFiction Forum

Reported by Dannii Willis, IntFiction Forum Committee chair

In 2020 the IntFiction Community Forum continued to see slow but steady growth. We were happy to add an authoring sub-category for Adventuron this year, as well as to host some discussions, both public and private, for the IFDB adoption and migration committee.

But arguably the biggest change this year was a change to the forum's Code of Conduct. A forum like this is only one part of the all the interconnected parts of the net, and there's no simple or obvious answer to the question of what we should do when people cause offenses somewhere else. Previously we decided that our Code of Conduct would include off-site harassment and doxing, that those who commit such acts would not be welcome at our forum. This year we decided to expand that into including off-site hate speech directed at people in the IF community at-large. We hope that this change will help people feel safer here.

Total volunteer hours: 100

Twine

Reported by Chris Klimas, Twine Committee chair

The Twine committee spent a large amount of time in 2020 crafting a request for proposals for an IFTF-operated replacement for Philomela, the popular free Twine hosting service that went read-only in September 2019. The intent was to solicit proposals that we could use as a fundraising target. We posted the RFP in early March of 2020 and closed the submission period in July 2020; however, the committee did not receive any viable proposals and so had to consider alternative approaches.

In the near term, we concentrated on improving documentation around posting Twine stories to [Itch.io](https://itch.io), as it seemed to be the most promising existing alternative to Philomela. We've also held private discussions about other possible replacements for Philomela, but did not make any commitments.

Version 2.0 of the [Twine Cookbook](#) was published in May 2020, which represented both a large amount of new content and an improved technical underpinning of the site. Because the Cookbook had overlapped so much with the existing official wiki, the committee decided to sunset the wiki in 2021. Dan Cox, who had served as Cookbook editor since its inception, indicated that he would have less availability to work on it, so the committee began onboarding new editors from the Twine community.

The committee formalized three technical specifications in 2020:

- The HTML output of the Twine 2 editor
- Story formats used by the Twine 2 editor
- Twee 3, a plain-text format for Twine stories

With the approval of IFTF's board of directors and the assistance of its legal counsel, the Twine committee contacted another corporation regarding a potential infringement upon the Twine trademark held by IFTF. The situation has not been fully resolved, but the committee expects to do so before the end of 2021. No legal action has been taken in this situation, and the committee expects to bring things to a conclusion without undertaking any.

Finally, the committee provided support for the Twine 10 Year Anniversary Jam. Committee members helped organize the game jam, and IFTF funded a freelancer’s graphic design work on certificates that participants received.

Total volunteer hours: 125

Core personnel changes

IFTF had another static year regarding its leadership roles in 2020.

Changes in board of directors

The board of directors held the same membership all year long. No officer positions changed hands.

Liza Daly, Chris Klimas, and Andrew Plotkin all had their two-year terms on the board expire during 2020, and were each re-elected to remain on the board for an additional two-year term by unanimous vote.

Other personnel changes

The advisory committee’s membership did not change in 2020.

The Conference Committee was led in 2020 co-chairs Adri Mills and Justin Bortnick, the latter of whom replaced Andrew Plotkin from 2019. No other program’s leadership saw personnel changes in 2020.

Financial summary

In 2020, IFTF took in \$17,936.02, and spent \$18,101.27 (with an additional \$100.00 payable but unspent by December 31).

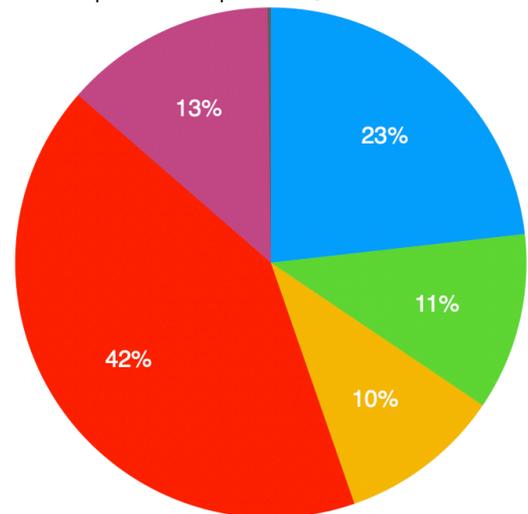
At year’s end, IFTF’s bank accounts held a total of \$10,440.76.

Donations

Modest gifts from individual donors, both one-time and recurring, continue to act as IFTF’s financial backbone.

Individuals and small companies donated \$15,497.63 to IFTF in 2020. Of that total, \$7,481.25 was earmarked for IFComp (see “The Colossal Fund”, below), \$6,178.27 for NarraScope, and \$64.41 for Twine. The remaining \$1,773.70 went into IFTF’s general fund.

Of individual donations, \$102.06 came in via the PayPal Giving Fund, and \$70.08 via the Amazon Smile program. All other donations took the form of direct gifts from donors.



IFTF 2020 income by category

Conference sales and sponsorship

IFTF had taken in \$2,402.31 from sales of NarraScope 2020 registrations before that conference had to change plans, moving to a free-to-attend online format. IFTF refunded all registrants at that time.

After that point, IFTF accepted \$2,015.94 in corporate and institutional sponsorships of the conference, and \$4,162.33 in voluntary donations from individual conference attendees.

Other income

IFTF earned \$36.08 from sales of the *Inform Designer's Manual*, whose publication it adopted in 2020 (as reported in [the IF Archive Program's report](#)).

Expenditures

Between Colossal Fund prize money and NarraScope speaker honoraria, most money donated to IFTF in 2020 cycled back swiftly into the IF and narrative-game community.

About one fifth of IFTF's expenditures went to digital hosting for various programs, as well as fees for various professional services. The remaining 13 percent of 2020 outflow represents refunds for NarraScope registrations purchased before the pandemic forced a change of plans.

- \$12,214.59 (67%) went to grants and awards:
 - \$6,913.59 towards IFCOMP Colossal Fund cash prizes and support. (This includes \$42.03 reimbursement for shipping the physical Golden Banana of Discord trophy.)
 - \$5,301.00 for NarraScope speaker honoraria (of which \$100 remained payable-but-uncollected on December 31).
- \$1,790.38 (10%) covered all our programs' various infrastructure costs. This includes server hosting, domain transfers and renewals, and the use of online services such as Cloudflare and Amazon S3. It also paid for the organization's physical post-office box in Cambridge.
- \$1,684.50 (9%) paid for various professional services:
 - \$687.00 covered the annual premium of IFTF's D&O insurance policy.
 - \$500.50 paid for diversity consulting.
 - \$284.00 went towards commissioned artwork for IFCOMP and Twine Jam.
 - \$100.00 paid a nonprofit-planning consultant.
 - \$103.00 covered other legal-consultation fees.



IFTF 2020 expenses by category

Overall health, and future outlook

A glance at IFTF's finances and personnel listing suggests that the organization merely tread water in 2020, performing its ongoing community functions with no significant growth or structural change. In truth, the organization's leadership did its best to spend the forced global downtime of 2020 engaged in extensive, long-term planning. We expect these efforts to become more visible over the course of 2021 and beyond.

For the first time since its founding in 2016, IFTF in 2020 held organization-wide strategic planning meetings: one right after NarraScope in the summer, and another before winter. Invitees of these half-day online meetings included the board, all current program chairs, the advisory committee, and IFTF's legal counsel.

These meetings—as well as ongoing expertise from hired consultants—helped IFTF's leadership recognize that the time had come to grow past a small, static “working board” that handled all the organization's day-to-day business. IFTF resolved to divide its executive body into two: a significantly larger and more diverse nonprofit board that sets the organization's direction and provides oversight, and a separate steering council of program leaders and others who implement the board's vision through running IFTF's public-service programs, leading fundraising initiatives, and otherwise managing its day-to-day affairs.

Efforts began within the first days of 2021 to realize these goals—but that is a tale for next year's transparency report. Suffice to say for now that IFTF feels optimistic about significant structural changes within organization leadership already underway, and looks forward to reflecting back on them at year's end.