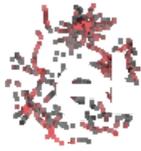


# Electronic Literature Publishing and Distribution in Europe

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**Markku Eskelinen & Giovanna Di Rosario**  
**University of Jyväskylä**  
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## **Electronic literature publishing and distribution in Europe**

by Markku Eskelinen and Giovanna di Rosario

Markku Eskelinen

Ph.D., independent scholar

[markku.eskelinen@kolumbus.fi](mailto:markku.eskelinen@kolumbus.fi)

tel. +358 40 510 3800

Giovanna di Rosario

Ph.D., University of Barcelona

[giodiros@gmail.com](mailto:giodiros@gmail.com)

tel. +39 3339935675

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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

## **ABSTRACT/ THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH PLAN (Raine Koskimaa)**

In this individual project, an investigation into organized European electronic literature publication and distribution will be undertaken. This means that self-publication by authors will be excluded.

However, the investigation will cover all other forms of publication and distribution, including:

- electronic literature magazines and portals online
- electronic literature competitions
- collections
- online art sites including literary digital works
- offline presentations in galleries, museums, etc.

The investigation will begin with a systematic survey of the European publication fora. The initial data will be collected using the expertise within the research project (covering six European countries) and existing resources such as ELiNor – Electronic Literature in Nordic Countries Portal, Hermeneia Research Network of Electronic and Innovative Literature located at the University of Barcelona, the contributors' network of the *Cybertext Yearbook*, and the ELO Literary Advisory Board. Based on this survey, a representative sample of cases will be selected for more thorough investigation. Through interviews with responsible publishers and editors, the following issues will be clarified:

- The beginning and history of the activity
- Institutional background and financing scheme
- Main forms of activity
- Publication criteria
- Intended audience
- Collaboration networks

Alongside the interviews, content analysis will be conducted on selected issues of the publications. As a result, a useful report on European electronic literature publication will be produced. The report will detail the main actors in the field and give a comprehensive view of the state of the art. The main innovations behind the most successful cases will be identified and, on this basis, best practices will be identified and proposed.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION [Markku Eskelinen]

This preliminary survey of European electronic literature publishing and distribution was initially conducted by two scholars over the course of three months in 2010 and 2011, and later supplemented by bits and pieces until October 2012. Given the vastness of the scope of the research and the variety of European languages that are not at our command, reservations concerning the width, depth and representativeness apply, but only to a certain degree. There are essential similarities in the cultural and commercial status of electronic literature in the 30 European countries<sup>1</sup> this survey managed to cover. Therefore, while it is possible we may have missed some major players in the field, it is unlikely that their forms of networked publishing practices would constitute a major counter-example to our findings.

If this were a theoretical paper we could spend several pages trying to define the basic terms used in the survey such as electronic literature, publication, distribution, and Europe. However, we adopted a more pragmatic approach.

Geographically, we did what we could in the given time. The three main borderline areas were Russia, the Ukraine, and some newly independent countries in the Balkans. Although we know that electronic literature exists in Russia (not to mention the fact that the first hypertext fiction published in Estonia was written in Russian), we couldn't establish reliable contacts within Russia and the Ukraine. Moreover, our contacts in the Balkans came up empty-handed when asked about possible occurrences of electronic literature in Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania.

After the first month of research it became evident that one crucial part of the original plan should be modified. Specifically, the exclusion of authors' self-publications would have led to two counterproductive results. First, several European countries would not be present in this survey at all, and second, despite reviews and portals and occasional commercial publications, authors' self-publications dominate the scene of electronic literature in Europe. It also became clear that there are

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<sup>1</sup> The division of labor was as follows: the Nordic (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Swiss e-literature written in German were Markku's responsibility, while France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Benelux countries (Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxemburg), Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Greece were Giovanna's responsibility.

many different types and methods of “self-publication” so the category of self-publication is necessarily imprecise. Pragmatically, the ban was lifted, especially in regard to countries and regions where portals, reviews, and collections do not exist.

As a practical matter, we used the ELO's working definition of electronic literature, while remaining aware of its many problems. Therefore, in this survey, electronic literature refers to “*works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer.*” To us this definition is helpful mostly because of what it excludes: both digitized print literature and print-like digital literature<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, there was a question of genres in electronic literature. For theoretical and practical (i.e. time- and resource-based) reasons we chose to exclude interactive fiction and MUDs from this survey although (practical as we were), when we happened to come across information about the former, it was included in the report. After the emergence of ludology and computer game studies in the 2000s both MUDs and interactive fiction could be researched both as games (and certainly as precursors of MMOGs, online virtual worlds, and adventure games) and as electronic literature, which slightly undermines the idea of treating them as mere or pure e-lit genres.

Having said this, it is also clear that the publication model of interactive fiction closely resembles the publication model of the kind of e-lit we chose to focus on: there is a small but active and internationally networked community accumulating and taking care of resources and making old and new works available and downloadable for free from The Interactive Fiction Database and several other sites. Some Infocom-era classics form the one major exception to this general rule. These communities (in Europe strong IF communities exist in Germany, Spain, France and Italy and presumably in the UK as well) set up regular competitions (centered for example around themes or time-based constraints) and try to attract new audiences. The international community also has a MUD environment that is not used primarily as a MUD but as an environment for real-time communication. (Montfort 2010)

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<sup>2</sup> More precisely, using terms from Espen Aarseth's cybertext theory, we excluded from this survey any digital literature sharing the most common and typical media position, that of books: static, determinate, intransient, random access, impersonal perspective, no links, and interpretative user function. (1997, 62-65)

As the focus of this survey was on publishing and distribution, we excluded MUDs as well. To treat these programmable textual environments that are based on and used for real-time communication and collective improvisation as publications would have been a questionable move, pushing the conceptual envelope of publishing and distribution too far; in the case of MUDs none of the traditional roles (publishers, editors, authors and readers for starters) are applicable. Second, although MUDs in some cases serve as publishing environments, these "publications" are (for the most part) games and quests. Finally, the three month time frame of this project would clearly have been insufficient to conduct a survey on European MUDs or even to separate them from the rest of the MUDs (the Mud Connector lists 1154 and FindMud 624 MUDs). Still, as communities MUDs could in many ways serve as models for the best publishing and distribution practices of electronic literature (once we get that far in our research). Co-incidentally, a publication in progress for the Cybertext Database titled MUDs Revisited (edited by Cynthia Haynes and Jan-Rune Holmevik) will most probably shed some light on this topic as well.

## 2 FINDINGS BY REGION AND COUNTRY (AN OVERVIEW)

### 2.1 The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) [M.E.]

#### 2.1.1 Norway

Each Nordic country except Iceland and Sweden has a major portal publishing electronic literature. These portals are also to some degree networked with each other and with the all-Nordic portal Elinor ([www.elinor.nu](http://www.elinor.nu)) which, however, is far from being comprehensive when compared to local, "national", and transnational portals<sup>3</sup>. According to Hans Rustad's presentation at a seminar in Bergen in September 2010, at its high point (i.e. when the percentage of dead links was close to zero, rather than approximately 50% [as it was in January 2011]) Elinor contained 64 works of electronic literature, of which 19 were Danish, 12 Norwegian, 6 Swedish, and 27 Finnish. These figures are somewhat surprising, but they partly explain why the two major Nordic portals exist in Denmark and Finland. Strictly speaking, Elinor is the only portal in the Nordic countries that exclusively focuses on electronic literature; as we shall see, the scope of the two other major portals is different.

In the same presentation Rustad estimated that all in all approximately 100 works of electronic literature have been written and published in Scandinavia. As Rustad is not familiar with the Finnish scene, and seems to exclude MUDs and interactive fiction as well as early text generators from consideration, his estimate could be correct in its own context.

Generally speaking, it is typical of the Nordic scene that many if not most authors of the most prominent works of electronic literature are also (locally) well-known authors of print literature. This means first of all that their works of electronic literature are situated within an oeuvre that is already recognized and positively evaluated as literature. In Norway such crossover figures and their works include (according to Rustad):

- Tor Åge Bringvaerd's *Faen* (*Damn*, 1998/1971);
- Marte Aas' *Hva sier trærne?* (*What do the trees say?*, 2005-2006); this multimedia work includes poems written by Marte Huke who has published four well-received poetry books;

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<sup>3</sup> In October 2012, Elinor does not exist anymore but its contents will soon be found in the ELMCIP knowledge base.

- Monika Aasprong's *Soldatmarkedet* (*Soldiers' Market*, 2003- 2005); the author is also an artist publishing traditional poetry and conceptual work in print;
- Anne Bang Steinsvik's *I mellom tiden* (*in between time*, 2002): the poems within this work were written by Gøril Gabrielsen, a mainstream author of two or three novels;
- Morten Skogly; several works of his are available through Elinor; and
- Ottar Ormstad, who has presented his digital and digitalized concrete poetry at several festivals and conferences during the last few years.

In 2005 Nrk (Norwegian public broadcasting company) and pnek (production network for electronic art) collaborated on a project called Digitale fortellinger (Digital narratives). It was a competition designated to reward the most interesting works both a prize of 10000 Norwegian crowns and an online publication. The project gave birth to 15 works of electronic literature, but the authors didn't continue their careers in electronic literature. All the works that received awards are still available on pnek's netsite ([http://www.pnek.org/DigiFor/DIG2\\_Trearne.html](http://www.pnek.org/DigiFor/DIG2_Trearne.html))

In addition to these works Bjørn Magnhildøen's *Plaintext Performance* (2006) was published in the second volume of the Electronic Literature Collection in 2011. Collaborative projects of locative literature exist on the fringes of electronic literature and one such work, *Flaneur – let the city speak* (managed by Anders Sundnes Lovlie; see <http://tekstopia.uio.no/flanor/en/>) was presented at the ELMCIP Electronic Literature Communities seminar in Bergen in September 2010 alongside another Norwegian e-lit work, Beathe C. Rønning's *Langweekend* (<http://ulyd.bek.no/beathe/>).

### **2.1.2 Denmark**

In Denmark the most important portal is Afsnit P ([www.afsnitp.dk](http://www.afsnitp.dk)), which defines its focus as follows: "Afsnit P is a Danish virtual exhibition space for visual poetry and intermedia art." It was established in 1998 by Katrin Wagner and Christian Yde Frostholm as a logical continuation of the book shop and art gallery of the same name. Afsnit P includes a gallery section presenting 28 entries not only from Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway, but also from the UK and France. These were added to the database between 1999 and 2008 and approximately one half of the entries are related to e-lit and its predecessors (especially visual and concrete poetry). All in all Afsnit P is a transnational portal covering mainly the Nordic countries (except Iceland), and in that orientation it

is somewhat similar to the Finnish portal Nokturno although the latter focuses solely on literature and not on visual arts. Given the limited number of e-lit works included in the gallery, it is clear that Afsnit P presents only a small fraction of the electronic literature produced in Denmark and other Nordic countries.

In Denmark probably the most well-known "crossover" authors are Morten Søndergaard (a poet who in 2000 remediated his poem "Kompass" into "Landskaber omkring digtet kompas"), Peter Adolphsen, and Christian Yde Frostholm. Moving back in time, Danish electronic literature has its roots in the 1960s text generators of Klaus Høeck and Hans Jørgen Nielsen, although our sources could verify neither their availability nor their existence.

In the early 2000s Danish Radio (DR) provided support for Sonja W. Thomsen's project *ingen else på vejen den dag* (2001), and also had visual poetry as a theme at their website for some time. Thomsen's *ingen else* and her other interactive story projects (such as *love is in the air* and *Skakbraet*) are currently available at <http://www.enbyirusland.com/stories.html>.

### 2.1.3 Sweden

Karl-Erik Tallmo published Sweden's first hypertext fiction *Iakttagarens' förmåga att ingripa* (*Participant's capability to interfere*) in 1992. It was preceded by his two other works of electronic literature, text generators *Hamnen* (*The Bay*, 1988) and *Skriv rätt* (*Write correctly*, 1990). Of these only *Iakttagaren's förmåga* is still available (as files obtainable from the author). The work includes features that were not typical of its genre and time of publication, such as semi-random "associative" links and text generation, but it was not well received in the press; quotes on Tallmo's site from several reviews in major Swedish newspapers show the high degree of ignorance and unprofessionalism involved in the negative evaluations of the work. Tallmo still maintains his web presence (with links summarizing his activities from the late 1960s to the present day), but no new works of electronic literature have been listed since 1992.

Another important figure in Swedish electronic literature is Johannes Helden, a visual artist and an author of the bilingual (Swedish/English) *Primärdirektivet/The Prime Directive* (2006) available at AfsnitP's gallery. Like Tallmo, Helden is a well-known literary figure outside the e-lit scene, with

books published by the respected Swedish publishing house Bonniers that also published his interactive work *Väljarna* (*The Electorate*, 2008) at its poetry related website. Helden's latest digital/interactive publication *Entropi* (2010) is both a book and a digital text (in CD-ROM). Helden therefore confirms the crossover hypothesis, not least because he calls the three works mentioned above his digital/interactive books.

The internationally well-known tradition of Swedish concrete poetry is also alive and continues in digital interpretations and remediations at Afsnit P (<http://www.afsnitp.dk/galleri/konkretpoesi/>). Swedish interactive fiction activity is centered or at least used to center around the Lysator site (<http://www.lysator.liu.se/sak/>).

Possible publishing venues for Swedish electronic literature include OEI (<http://www.oei.nu>), a journal for innovative prose and poetry (digital literature and theory was the theme in issue 22/23 in 2005), and Mejan Labs ([http://www.mejanlabs.se/index2\\_en.asp](http://www.mejanlabs.se/index2_en.asp)). According to Maria Engberg, Mejan Labs functions as an extension of the Royal University College of Fine Arts and aims to establish a platform that combines an innovative exhibition program with education, research and experimentation. Occasionally they include multimedia/digital/performance art that includes literature or literary aspects.

#### **2.1.4 Finland**

In Finland, the main publication forum for electronic poetry is the portal Nokturno (edited by Marko Niemi; [www.nokturno.org](http://www.nokturno.org)), which has been in operation since 2005. At the present time it seems to be the liveliest of the Nordic portals as well, usually updated several times a month. Currently [October 2012] Nokturno includes some 230 entries (some of these contain more than one work), but of these only one fifth are what we call electronic literature. The main focus of Nokturno is experimental poetry, be it concrete, visual, video, sound, kinetic, generative, or interactive.

Nokturno has two additional characteristics that are of interest to this survey. First, its scope is not limited to Finland, the Nordic countries, or even Europe. It includes works from 31 countries in 12 languages, although the scope is considerably narrower when it comes to electronic literature (11

countries and seven languages; as of January 2011). The primary focus of Nokturno's international networking is the English-speaking world, USA, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand. Secondly, some works are also translated into Finnish and several e-literary works therefore exist there both in their original version and in translation. These features are comparatively unusual within the European e-literature scene; usually the geographical scope of portals are limited to one, two or three countries, they contain literature written in only one or two natural languages, and except in Poland and Spain portals do not publish translations.

Beyond Nokturno and its exclusive focus on poetry, Finnish electronic literature consists of authors' self-publications of hypertext fiction. These can be classified in two different groups: pedagogical and educational ones written in Hypercard and later in HTML from the early 1990s to the early 2000s, and the ones written by professional authors (Markku Eskelinen; Riikka Pelo) from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s; most of these works are also available through Elinor. (Locally) well-known print authors who have been active in the realm of electronic literature are also found in Finland; among them are Arto Kytöhönka (d. 1992), Leevi Lehto (famous for his Google Poem Generator), Markku Eskelinen, Cia Rinne (a Finnish-Swedish author who usually writes her electronic literature in English), and Marko Niemi who recently expanded his repertoire from electronic to print poetry.

Journals, competitions and collections of electronic literature do not exist in Finland, and it is likely that the next small wave of electronic literature in Finland (as well as in other Nordic countries) will be or already is taking place in social media. Marko Niemi's *Stud Poetry* (2006), originally written in English, is included in the first volume of *The Electronic Literature Collection* (2006).

In 2004 Elina Saloranta, according to her own description "a visual artist interested in words", wrote and directed a trilingual cine-roman on video based on Marguerite Duras' texts. Called *Le lit des amants* (*The Lover's Bed / Rakastavaisten vuode*), it is a combination of DVD and book published by Taide (the most prestigious publisher of books on visual arts in Finland). The work was exhibited in several art galleries both in Finland and internationally.

### 2.1.5 Iceland

Nokturno also includes *Goggi*, a Google poem from Iceland, written by Jón Örn Loðmfjörð, both in English and in a Finnish translation. Beyond that our sources remained mute, although it is likely that self-published electronic literature exists in Iceland as well.

### 2.2 The Baltic region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) [M.E.]

In the Baltic region the liveliest scene is in Estonia, although the overall picture is similar in all three countries: individual authors with their websites and blogs are to be found, but there are not many of these and only a few authors are still active.

The first hypertext novel in Estonia, *Roman*, was self-published by Roman Leibov from 1995 to 1997. Because *Roman* is written in Russian, Hasso Krull's hypertext poem *Trepp* (*The Stairs*, 1996; its Finnish translation is available at Nokturno) is the first one of its kind written in Estonian. Other Estonian hypertextual works from 1990s include:

Nelli Rothvee's *Net Poetry* (1997), which forms a trilogy with her *altavista words* and *chat poetry* (also from 1997), but only the first and third part of the trilogy are still accessible on the internet; Tambett Tamm's *The Weather Station Never Lies* (1999); and Lemmit Kaplinski and Jaak Tomberg's *Prepare* (1999). Paul-Eerik Rummo, a well-known Estonian poet and politician, is the most important crossover figure in Estonian electronic literature. His only e-lit work is called *The Basho's Expansion* (2000). It is also worth noting that the electronic literary scene in Estonia is trilingual, as the works of Tamm and Rothvee are written in English.

The situation in Latvia and Lithuania was much harder to research although the logic there is pretty much the same as in Estonia. The few publications of electronic literature extant in Latvia and Lithuania are authors' self-publications. Nokturno includes two visual poems from Latvia, Jelana Glazova's *Re-start* and *Meaning*.

### 2.3 Electronic literature written in German (Germany, Austria and Switzerland)<sup>4</sup> [M.E.]

Germany, Austria, and the German-speaking Switzerland constitute one of the three centers of e-lit in Europe. Here we have the first pioneers of the whole field such as Theo Lutz and Max Bense starting their e-literary career in the late 1950s, close encounters between electronic literature and *ars electronica* resulting in the first German hypertext fiction in 1989 and the series of *p0es1s* exhibitions and conferences from the early 1990s, substantial literary output in several if not all electronic literature genres, short-lived attempts at commercial publications (Editions Cyberfiction), well-organized and extensive portals (such as [netzliteratur.de](http://netzliteratur.de) and [cyberfiction.ch](http://cyberfiction.ch)), and several short-lived literary prizes dedicated to electronic literature.

Alongside France and the UK, Germany or more precisely the German speaking region of Europe is the center of European electronic literature. Interestingly, it seems to be more open to the two other European e-lit centers than they are towards the German region or each other. Its networked orientation is towards Anglo-American e-lit and e-lit theory, but until lately this has been a one-sided effort, as the scene in the UK has favored its transatlantic contacts while also establishing some connections with the French e-lit scene. The French scene has opened up to the U.S. scene and the effects of this international networking are still visible in the publications of *alire* and the presentations at the five E-poetry conferences.

#### 2.3.1 Electronic literature competitions and prizes

In a recent paper on the post-processing of electronic literature in Germany, Patricia Tomaszek (2011) has analyzed the function and the consequences of electronic or net literature competitions in Germany. The most important of these was the Pegasus prize (1996-1998), sponsored by *Die Zeit* and IBM, and while subsequently there have been several short-lived prizes and competitions, the Pegasus prize sealed the fate of German net literature for a long period of time. As Tomaszek summarizes: "At an early stage in the 90s, German net literature became a subject of a controversial debate between artists, theorists, and literary critics. A strong community evolved in which net literature was embedded in an infrastructure that made net literature publicly visible. Everything

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<sup>4</sup> For a better-informed and truly magisterial perspective on German electronic literature and electronic literature publishing, see Beat Suter 2012.

started with a call for a competition whose jury hardly defined what it was looking for; consequently, a critical study on terminologies and definitions unfolded. (..) The advents of the German Pegasus-Award that launched in 1996 were of crucial importance for the community and its emerging field. (...) Today, new competitions in Germany commence occasionally but hardly receive an echo in the public. Slowly, German net literature becomes invisible. ” (Tomaszek 2011,1)

As examples, some of the more recent competitions that have taken place in Germany are :

"Ettlinger Internet-Literaturwettbewerb" (Internet-Literature competition of the city of Ettlingen; established in 1999 by Oliver Gassner; discontinued); Net Literature Prize initiated by arte-them and sponsored by Siemens in 2000 (more info at [http://archives.artetv.com/them/@/dtext/wettbewerb/lit\\_wett/lit\\_wett\\_fs.html](http://archives.artetv.com/them/@/dtext/wettbewerb/lit_wett/lit_wett_fs.html)); "Literatur.digital" initiated by the German paperback publisher "Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag (DTV)" and T-Online running from 2001 to 2003; and The Literature House Stuttgart's first Bachelors' Prize for Net Literature ([http://www.junggesellenpreis.de/index\\_engl.html](http://www.junggesellenpreis.de/index_engl.html) ) announced in 2005.

In addition to these competitions, Marianne von Willemer Women's Prize for Digital Arts (<http://www.linz.at/frauen/43733.asp>) has been awarded biannually since 2000 (and annually since 2004) in Linz, Austria. It is organised by the Office of Women's Affairs of the City of Linz in co-operation with the Ars Electronica Center and supported by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation. The goal of the prize is to "encourage and acknowledge women net artists" (writing in German and living in Austria). In the early 2000s several works of electronic literature were either awarded this prize or honorably mentioned.

### 2.3.2 Art venues

In 1992, André Vallias and Friedrich W. Block curated the first international exhibition of digital poetry "p0es1s" in Annaberg-Buchholz ("<http://www.p0es1s.net/p0es1e.htm>). For some time this looked like an one-time event, but in the 2000s five subsequent p0es1s exhibitions and symposia have been organised in Kassel (2000), Erfurt (2001), Berlin (2004 and 2009) and Rio de Janeiro (2007). The bilingual p0es1s website (<http://www.p0es1s.net/>) contains information from all six symposiums and exhibitions, including downloadable conference catalogues and links to artworks and presentations.

The introduction to the p0es1s symposium in Kassel explained, "p0es1s is a platform to explore the characteristics and possibilities of digital texts. p0es1s links two independent projects: the symposia on "the poetics of digital texts" and the exhibition of international digital poetry." The two p0es1s events in Berlin were presented by the literaturWERKstatt Berlin in co-operation with the Brueckner Kuehner Foundation, and the earlier event was also supported by Kunstbibliothek der Staatlichen Museen in Berlin (Art Library of the Berlin State Museums) and funded by kulturstiftung des bundes (Federal Cultral Foundation, Germany).

p0es1s is an international event and by no means limited to German digital poetry. Just to take one example of its scope, the theme of the pOes1s 2009 was sprachspielen (language games) and the featured artists were Johannes Auer, René Bauer, Simon Biggs, Friedrich Block, Anton Bruhin, Florian Cramer, Klaus Peter Dencker, Stefan Freier, Heinz Gappmayr, Eugen Gomringer, Daniel Howe, Steffi Jüngling, Eduardo Kac, Aya Natalia Karpinska, Stephan Krass, Franz Mon, Yoko Ono, Christine Clara Oppel, Oskar Pastior, Jörg Piringer, Julius Popp, Wolfram Spyra, Christian Steinbacher, Beat Suter, Timm Ulrichs, versfabrik, Peter Vogel, and Uli Winters.

Among other events within the museum circuit was the web-project "Liter@tur", initiated by the Museum für Literatur am Oberrhein (Museum of Literature in Oberrhein) in 2000 (more info and many broken links can be found at <http://www.netlit.de/start/>).

The Literaturhaus Stuttgart (House of Literature Stuttgart) has provided a venue to perform, present, and talk about electronic literature (along with non-digital literary practices) on three separate occasions in 2005, 2008 and 2009 (see <http://www.literatur-und-strom.de/3/>). Similarly, the Literaturwerkstatt Berlin offered a venue for electronic literature during its "poesiefestival" (poetry festival) in 2008, 2009, and 2010.

### 2.3.3 Portals and publishers

In addition to occasional publications on CD such as the adaptation of Andreas Okopenko's novel *Lexikonroman – einer sentimentalen Reise zum Exportentreffen in Druden* (Verlag Mediendesign OEG, 1998) and *Hyperfiction, ein hyperliterarisches Lesebuch*, edited by Beat Suter und Michael

Böhler (book and CD, strömfeld verlag, Basel, 1999), a combination of 11 theoretical essays and 24 hyperfiction works, the only publisher operating in the commercial market is update Verlag and its publication series Editions Cyberfiction (the publications can still be purchased from the company's online bookshop).

Four e-lit works on CD were published in the series between 2000 and 2004: *Hilfe* by Susanne Berkenhager (the winner of the Ettlinger prize in 1999); *Kill the Poem* by Johannes Auer and Reinhard Döhl; *tExtra.Tour* by Oliver Gassner, and *spätwinterhitze* by Frank Klötgen. Editions Cyberfiction was based in Zürich, Switzerland and managed by Beat Suter, who has been active in writing, researching, promoting and archiving electronic literature. Suter's portal (<http://www.cyberfiction.ch/>) is the most important e-lit portal in Switzerland, but its scope is wider and covers electronic literature written in German.

In Germany the most important and impressive net literature portal is netzliteratur.net (<http://www.netzliteratur.net>), edited by Johannes Auer, Christine Heibach and Beat Suter. It is a well-organized archive of German net literature and its predecessors from the very beginning in the late 1950s (Theo Lutz, Max Bense, and the Stuttgarter Gruppe), which also contains a collection of important theoretical papers on digital literature written by mainly German scholars and a fairly large section on net art. It also links itself to other portals, projects, exhibitions, and blogs, among them a huge online database on electronic literature maintained by the Université de Québec in Montreal ([http://nt2.uqam.ca/search/nt2\\_repertoire](http://nt2.uqam.ca/search/nt2_repertoire)). Netzliteratur.net is a horn of plenty of German networked and programmable literature, and it is beyond the expertise and resources of the authors of this survey to speculate on what – if anything – of importance the portal potentially excludes, ignores or misrepresents.

Netzliteratur contains a section titled "projects" that is a collection of the most important works of net literature and hyperfiction written in German. The authors featured in it are Johannes Auer, Susanne Berkenhager, Florian Cramer, Reinhard Döhl, Sylvia Egger, and Martina Kieninger. The project section is also interesting in terms of publishing as it confirms the significant role of local and national radio broadcasting companies as vehicles for promoting, publishing, distributing and funding electronic literature.

German electronic literature collections do not exist (with the exception of *Hyperfiction, ein hyperliterarisch lesebuch*, mentioned above), but six German works are included in ELO's two collections. The first volume included Reiner Strasser's two collaborations with Alan Sondheim (*Dawn*, 2005 and *Tao*, 2004) and one with M. D. Coverley (*ii - in the white darkness*, 2004). Christoph Benda's *Senghor on the rocks* (2008), Susane Berkenheger's *The Bubble Bath* (2005) and Jörg Piringer's soundpoems (2002) were published in the second volume.

## 2.4 Poland [M.E.]

Poland definitely has the most active and versatile tradition in electronic literature in the former Eastern Europe. This became clear in Mariusz Pisarski's exemplary answer to my questions. According to Pisarski there are three main portals of electronic literature in Poland:

Techsty - literature and new media (Techsty - literatura i nowe media, <http://techsty.art.pl>) includes “electronic literature overview: news, forum and over 300 interconnected pages of hypertext history and theory compendium, repository of links to authors, institutions and works of digital literature.” The portal promotes young and not-yet-established authors by helping them produce, publish and host their first digital works (works by Marek Oktawian Bulanowski, Nescitus, Witold Mazur).

Korporacja Ha!art (<http://ha.art.pl>). According to Pisarski this portal has a strong emphasis on innovative trends in literary culture, among them electronic literature; it features weekly pieces on new media art and a monthly poetry competition with a separate category of "multimedia poetry". Serial web literary comic art is also regularly featured. Ha!art is the first Polish publisher of hypertext literature (hypertext *Koniec swiata wedlug Emeryka* by Radosław Nowakowski, 2004, forthcoming translation of *afternoon, a story* by Michael Joyce, 2011).

Perfokarta (<http://perfokarta.net>) is described by Pisarski as follows: “A website of Perfokarta, group of poets, musicians and performers involved in experiments with generative possibilities of digital text, music, graphics and installations. The effects of the experiments are promoted under a term "cyberpoetry". The website is an online publishing platform for Perfokarta group. Generative, digital objects, manifests of "cyberpoetry" as well as videos from live performances of the members of the group can be accessed online there.“

One e-lit journal also exists in Poland. It is *Techsty* magazine (<http://techsty.art.pl/magazyn.htm>), a periodical part of "Techsty - literature and new media portal." It publishes electronic literature works by Polish authors as well as translated fictions (works by Mark Amerika, Judy Malloy, Stuart Moulthrop, and Stefan Maskiewicz) and according to Pisarski it is "the only Polish journal concentrated exclusively on hypertext theory, cybertext perspective and ludological approach to digital arts and literature. Apart from presenting articles by its authors (Emilia Branny, Dorota Sikora, Andrzej Pająk), *Techsty* magazine features translations of seminal works of e-literature theory. It also features an e-PhD series of online, hypertext versions of PhD dissertations on cybertext literature (introduced by Sebastian Strzelecki's *Interface Effects*). Six issues have been published in the series since 2003."

E-lit collections do not exist in Poland, but there is at least one e-lit competition, Intertetowy Turniej Jednego Wiersza (One Poem Internet Competition, <http://www.ha.art.pl/prezentacje/29-projekty/834>), a monthly competition held by Korporacja Ha!art literary portal. As of 2010, eight works of new media poetry have received awards (by Katarzyna Giełżyńska, Paulina Danecka, Kamil Zając, Katarzyna Janota, Aneta Kamińska, Mirosław Marcol, Jonas Gruska and Katarzyna Giełżyńska).

Finally, electronic literature is also well alive in the Polish art world. Pisarski gives three main examples and describes them as follows:

"*Bluzgator Bis* by Paweł Koziół, a text generator based on the web distributed *Bluzgator* application, popular among teenagers, which functions as a generator of random swear words. Koziół uses the mechanism of the prototype but changes its content. The database of words, phrases and sentences in *Bis* version comes from *Textylia bis* – an anthology of young literature, from the Polish weekly "Polityka" and from the "Ha!art" magazine. Users of *Bluzgator Bis* can choose the recipient of the text (woman, man or group of people), its style (proper, full sentences or internet slang), the size of the output (from one to 200 sentences) and its visual appearance. *Bluzgator Bis* is available as an executive file (.exe) from "Techsty" magazine (<http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn3/Bluzgator%20Bis.zip>)."

"*The Book Of All Words* by Józef Zuk Piwkowski (first version 1975, on Mera 300 office computer, in collaboration with Mieczysław Gryglik). Piwkowski's work is an algorithm that generates (and

prints) pages of an infinite book. The inexhaustible book is a collection of all possible combinations of 26 letters of Latin alphabet. User can only see the on-demand page that is a result of his own word query. The *Book of All Words* has been presented in galleries (Art & Communication, 1987). Piwkowski's work has also its online version (<http://2b.art.pl/ksw/ksw.php?>). "

“*Meditation no 4*, by Tomasz Wilmański, an animated alphabet poem in Adobe Flash, shown as a one-off installation in a gallery space where it was projected on a screen (AT Gallery, Poznań 2004). As a tribute to Kenneth Williams and his series of concrete poems, *Meditation no 4* relied not only on its visual but also aural aspect. The sound, embedded in a Flash file, played crucial role. Online version (without sound) is available at <http://www.techsty.art.pl/magazyn/magazyn5/start.html>. ”

## 2.5 Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania [M.E.]

The first Hungarian hypertext novel, *GOLEM*, written by Peter Farkas, dates from the late 1990s (1997-2005 according to its website) and is still available at <http://www.interment.de/golem/>. There is also an early dictionary-novel written by many Hungarian intellectuals, but it was abandoned a long time ago. It is a part of the site of the biggest Hungarian online dictionary project: <http://www.sztaki.hu/providers/nightwatch/interakt/szotarnaplo/>.

In addition to these two works, the Magyar Nemzet Online, an electronic edition of one of the leading newspapers in Hungary, recently sponsored a collaborative novel project. Finally, there is a site for fostering collaborative novel writing and publishing the results in a mysterious business system (<http://regenytar.hu/index.php>). In addition to Hungarian works published in Hungary or Germany (as was the case with *GOLEM*), the Nokturno portal presents three flash poems written by Márton Koppány and Juha-Pekka Kervinen (a Finnish e-poetry author), and Tom Konyves' classic videopoem *Sympathies of War* (1978) with its postscript, *Mummypoem*. Tibor Papp (working in France and French since 1961) is originally from Hungary and according to Philippe Bootz (2010) he is the only digital poet in Hungary.

In Slovakia, Zuzana Husarova has collaborated with another artist to create and publish an e-lit piece called *Pulz* (2009) (<http://projekty.delezu.net/electroniccka-literatura/pulz/>) that she describes as ”poetry combined with generated music and also open for reader’s creativity”. It is in Slovak but

will be translated into English in the future. Another work by Husarova and Lubomir Panak, 4079, was recently published in the ELO directory (<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1305>).

In addition to a generated text in Morse called *Vetrni hodiny (Wind Clock)* there are at least two hypertext fictions written by a Czech author, Marketa Bankova. One of them, *New York City Map* (2000, <http://www.nycmap.com/index.html>) is written in English and the other, *Mesto*, also exists in English translation (*The City*, <http://www.city.je/>).

Our four contacts in the Czech Republic and Slovakia could not come up with any other Czech examples of electronic literature. Given the Czech traditions in experimental literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this non-existence is probably a testament to the material, temporal and linguistic limitations of this survey; i.e. such literature most probably does exist, but we just don't know where to find it.

In Romania, the non-existence of electronic literature seems to be a well verified fact.

## 2.6 Slovenia [M.E.]

In the timeline for Slovenian literature provided by Jaka Zeleznikar (2011), the first wave of electronic literature that emerged in Slovenian consisted of text adventures written for the ZX Spectrum 48K computer. These include the following five works<sup>5</sup>:

Žiga Turk, Matevž Kmet: *Kontrabant* and *Kontrabant 2* (Smuggler, 1984),

<http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0006546>

<http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0021603>

Žiga Turk, Matevž Kmet, Barbara Železnik, Igor Bizjak, Samo Fosnarič: *Eurorun* (1985)

<http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0021828>

Aleš Jaklič, Matej Gašperič, Aleš B. Ivanko: *Smrkci (Smurfs)*, 1985)

<http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0006987>

Žiga Turk, Barbara Železnik, Igor Bizjak: *Bajke (Tales)*, 1986), based on the book by Janez Trdina

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<sup>5</sup> The URLs contain detailed information as well as versions of the games that can be run in an appropriate emulator.

(1830-1905) entitled *Bajke in povesti o Gorjancih* (*Tales from the Gorjanci Hills*, first published in 1882) <http://www.worldofspectrum.org/infoseekid.cgi?id=0005987>

In the same paper Zeleznikar also discusses works by five Slovenian artists and authors that combine electronic literature and net art. He describes them as follows (Zeleznikar 2011, 10-11): Marko Košnik, *Brzinski spomeniki* (1994, live radio broadcast on Radio Študent, 33 minutes; <http://web.mac.com/marchegon/radioArchive/brzinskiSpomeniki.html>). "The essay that was read and improvised live (with collaborators) includes elaborate prior text manipulation using printing, fax and OCR software that distorted the text through a repetitive process. The live manipulation included the manipulation of the author's reading overlaid by a loop of analogue tapes by Borut Savski and the re-mix by Miran Kajin. The manipulated source essay and audio archive of the broadcast is available."

Marko Košnik: "*operabilVienna* (2005, multimedia performance; <http://web.mac.com/marchegon/movies/operabilVienna.html>) and *the missing engine of laputa* (2006, performance lecture; <http://web.mac.com/marchegon/movies/laputaEngine.html>) A video archive of the performance with the text, reading, kinetic text projection and video manipulation (in English)."

Vuk Cosic: "The majority of his work is influenced by mediaeval textual visuals of the Arabic, Jewish and western tradition, literary avant-gardes and related traditions. His entire ASCII art corpus (1998-99, continued to present, but less intensively) might be considered as electronic literature: <http://www.ljudmila.org/~vuk/>. His work *Nacija-kultura* (nation-culture, 2000) is also notable. This project (in a brief outline) consisted of a projection of real time search queries from the main Slovene search engine (at the time) formed in the shape of a sonnet with rich and multilayered references to the Slovene national poet and icon France Prešern and related questions of national identity seen through the crash of a myth of the nation (represented by Prešern) and the nations on-line search reality."

Teo Spiller: "*In SP\_ ^ \_M s.o.n.n.e.t* (2004, <http://www.s-p-i-l-l-e-r.com/spamsonnets/>, in 2008/09 extended with the VRML and slideshow components in Spam Sonnets 2) the author combines texts from spam e-mail messages into personalized sonnet alike poems. In 2010 he developed a new

approach with the News Sonnet that combines different news sources producing unexpected semantic/news collocations.”

Igor Štromajer: ”In accordance with his constant exploration of intimacy and emotions *gsm.art* (1999, <http://www.intima.org/gsm>) explores the SMS/online communication with a distinct combination of visual and text elements in relation to technologically mediated communication. In *wap.sonnet – microbe.4/wap art* (2000; <http://www.intima.org/sonnet.html>) he uses codework type of poetry intended for mobile phones (wap).”

Jaka Železnikar: ”The author’s electronic literature (1997 - present, [http://www.jaka.org/projects.php?tag=e\\_poetry](http://www.jaka.org/projects.php?tag=e_poetry)) is predominantly focused on computational/e-poetry through which he explores a wide variety of approaches from interactive, participatory, generative, kinetic to program based poetic web interventions. His preferred media are web pages and Firefox add-ons. Recently he has focused on exploring the expressive possibilities of Twitter (and its API) with works such as <http://twitter.com/jakaorg/status/1411842446>, <http://twitter.com/jakaorg/status/1695974796> and <http://www.jaka.org/2009/sara/> (all 2009).”

## 2.7 Croatia and Serbia [M.E.]

In Croatia Bulaja naklada, a publisher of electronic books in education and culture, published their most important project, *Croatian Tales of Long Ago I-II* in 2002 and 2006 (both volumes were edited by Helana Bulaja). It was an international and collaborative project of eight teams of animators, illustrators, musicians and programmers, based on a classic Croatian fairytale book written in 1916 by Ivana Brlic Mažuranić. According to the publisher the project was ” a new step towards exploring the relation between digital media and traditional, classic literature.” The two volumes were published on CD-ROMs containing 12 animated interactive stories, cartoons, and games. (For more information, see [www.bulaja.com/price/price\\_eng.htm](http://www.bulaja.com/price/price_eng.htm) ) These works are also on sale at The Hypertextual Exchange accompanied by two reviews of them.

The site <http://www.elektronick knjige.com/dpkm/> promotes digitalised works of Croatian authors, but the only work of electronic literature is Krešimir Pintarić's *Commedia*, an electronic poetry book ([http://www.kresimirpintaric.com/commedia/home\\_flash/commedia\\_flash.php](http://www.kresimirpintaric.com/commedia/home_flash/commedia_flash.php)). Art Gallery

Miroslav Kraljevic (<http://www.g-mk.hr/>), although "dedicated to research, exhibition, documentation and dissemination of information about contemporary visual art practice and its extended field" has exhibited several projects that combine visual arts and literature such as Kata Mijatovic's *Mreža snova (The Dream Net)* and Andreja Kuluncic's *Closed Reality – Embryo and On State of the Nation*. All these projects are available in English.

Libra Libera, "literary magazine for literature and Other" ([www.libralibera.hr](http://www.libralibera.hr); offline in October 2012) launched several projects of interactive writing in 2000 and 2001 while presenting theoretically the concept of hypertext. Some of the resulting works were *Mixal, Wender and I*, the first hypertextual collaborative writing produced by five young Croatian authors; *Introduction to positive geography* in which a hypertextual map of South-Eastern Europe is connected with travel literature, *OHTXT*, a tool for producing hypertextual works, and *Hypertext for mass*, a project relating to the 150 years of history of the Communist Manifesto. Unfortunately these projects are no longer accessible online; only one screen of the first work is online at <http://www.culturenet.hr/default.aspx?id=23036>. The same site also contains Katarina Vukovic's *Panorama of Croatian hypertextual literary works* (2000) and an overview of Croatian media art (in English at <http://www.culturenet.hr/default.aspx?id=23304>).

The only piece of electronic literature written in Serbian we could find was a website of possibly dubious literary value called Bundolo (<http://www.bundolo.org/templates/home.php>). At the other end of the scale, Milorad Pavic's short hypertext *Damascene*, a tale for computer and compasses translated from the Serbian by Sheila Sofrenovic, is available at <http://www.ezone.org/damaskin/>. A CD-rom version of *Dictionary of the Khazars* has been illustrated with Katarina Janjic's hyper-paintings.

## **2.8. Bulgaria [Giovanna Di Rosario]**

According to Daniele Giampà, Bulgaria does not appear to have developed works of digital literature. However, since 2009 a digital art festival has been organized each year in Sofia: the DA Digital Art Festival (<http://2010.da-fest.bg/en/site/workshops/category-go/3>) – the third edition will be held in September 2011. The festival has a website where works and performances presented

during the festival are archived. The festival focuses on digital art (primarily films, there is also a section devoted to them, and acoustic music), however in the past edition works that can be considered digital literature (because of the predominant use of words) have been shown such as *Algorithmic Search for Love* (2010) an interactive installation by Julian Palacz and *...hihi...* (2010) by Evgenia Sarbeva. This work is described as “a conversation with a machine – a computer. The vocabulary of the computer is limited to all those parasite sentences, expressions, words which we use so often because of the non-stop text communication between people nowadays. The aim of the project is not to judge, but to make us think how often we use words and symbols mechanically without really meaning them or charge them with real emotions”.

## **2.9 Greece [G.D.R]**

Electronic literature does not appear to be well known in Greece. However, there has been growing interest in the interaction of literature and cyberspace. In 2004 publishing house Metaichmio published a short story collection touching only fleetingly on the influence of digital technologies on literature.

There are Greek writers who have published novels with an accompanying website and supplementary material online. According to Theodoros Chiotis it is quite interesting to note that despite the lack of a significant number of electronic literature texts in Greek there is a growing number of critical texts on the subject by Greek scholars.

## **2.10 Italy [G.D.R.]**

Although Italy has a long tradition of experimentation in literature, for instance the artist Gianni Toti coined the word “poetronica” in order to highlight both components of that new fusion of the arts: the poetic element and the electronic aspect, and Nanni Balestrini created one of the first generative poems *Tape Mark* (1961), digital literature has not found its place yet in the country.

One of the most significant ongoing events in experimenting with art and informatics in the recent past has been the TEAnO (Telematica, Elettronica, Analisi nell'Opificio). TEAnO is the computerized part of the OpLePo (Opificio di Letteratura Potenziale, <http://oplepo.it/>) which was created in 1990 as an Italian version of the more famous OuLiPo. TEAnO was founded in 1991, a year after the OpLePo. It is thought as a sort of Italian ALAMO. TEAnO is interested in the relationship between what they call “artistic goods” and the computer. According to TEAnO’s members “TEAnO has been involving[sic] in the generation of “artistic goods” in aesthetic domains such as literature, music, theatre and painting”. In 1998 the Opificio di Elaborazione Potenziare (OPELPO) was created. However, neither TEAnO nor OPELPO have been devoted to electronic literature. They have done experimentations with literature and computer, but also music and computer, food and computer, and so on.

During the 90s Italy started to be interested in hypertext. The first Italian hypertext was written by Lorenzo Miglioli in 1993. *Ra-Dio* was presented at a conference in Reggio Emilia organized by Gruppo 63 (an Italian avant-garde movement that had as members several famous author such as Nanni Balestrini, Edoardo Sanguinetti, and Umberto Eco). *Ra-Dio* and was published by Elettro Libri along with the translation of Michael Joyce’s *Afternoon. A story*. Unfortunately, the Elettro Libri Press does not exist anymore so it is almost impossible to find these publications anymore.

Other hypertexts were produced online in the 90s, such as *Red Brick*, a hypertext on and about the city of Bologna. *Nella rete del giovane Holden* (On Young Holden’s Net, 1996) was a writing project of the Municipality of Modena and the art review “Kult Underground” that also involved students of high schools . The result was a patchwork of poems, short fictions, and essays that was published on “Kult Underground” website (now it is accessible via internet archive:

<http://replay.waybackmachine.org/20051104204103/http://www.kultunderground.org/holden/>).

Other similar projects that involved schools were organized particularly in the North of Italy (like *Grafoman*, 1997, still accessible online at: <http://kidslink.bo.cnr.it/irrsaer/calamo/io1.html>) the majority of them are not online anymore.

[Ipertesto Poetico Quadridimensionale](#) created by a group of young writers, “Machina Amniotica” (Amniotic Machine) was also published online, openly allowing the readers to manipulate the hyper-poem.

However, besides these experiments, Italy has appeared not to be so interested in electronic literature. This could be explained by the long tradition of a “high” literature that both schools and universities have emphasised coupled with the sense that electronic literature is not “high” literature.

Very recently a new publishing-house “Quintadecapertina” (2010), a publishing-house only for digital formats, has published 3 new hypertexts in its series “polistorie” (multiple/many stories): Fabrizio Verrandi’s *Chi ha ucciso David Crane?* (Who killed David Crane?), Antonio Koch’s *Verrà H.P. e avrà i tuoi occhi* (H.P. will come and will have your eyes), and Enrico Colombini’s *Locusta Temporis* (*The Age of Locust*).

Normally in Italy dissemination and publication of electronic literature depend on its authors and their personal websites. However, in the past number of years there has been a growing interest in the subject.

“Trovarsi in rete” *let’s meet on the web* (<http://www.trovarsinrete.org/>) has been the first community website devoted to electronic literature in Italy. “Trovarsi in rete” was the website of a workshop focusing on writing and new media that also involved high schools.

The project called “scrittura mutante” (mutant writing) started in 2000 at the Library of Settimo Torinese (Torino) and it was presented at “Il salone internazionale del libro di Torino” in the same year. Besides the Italian digital works archived on the website, there is another section called “mappa” (map) where one can find many links to other e-lit works. This section is divided according to different “forms” of electronic literature: “New Media Poetry”, “Hypertexts”, “Interactive Fiction”, “Generative Writing”, “Collaborative Writing”. In the same archive, however, there is also a link to “e-books” (<http://www.trovarsinrete.org/archivio.htm>).

The website also had a forum which was particularly active from 2002 until 2006. One needed to be registered to be able to access the forum. The project used to be linked to an online review focusing on writing and new media “Meccano”, where digital authors used to write critical articles ([www.meccano.to](http://www.meccano.to)) the link unfortunately does not work anymore). After 2007 the activities of the workshop and of the website stopped but almost all the links of the archive still work.

The OLE Officina di Letteratura Elettronica (Workshop of Electronic Literature <http://www.elettroletteratura.org/>) is a project still under construction but in any case it is the first Italian website devoted to electronic literature. However, the sections devoted to Italian experimental poetry and videopoetry are more accurate than the section concerning electronic literature. This section, actually, is quite small but it provides several links to Italian artists' webpages and there is a section focusing on electronic literature around the world.

### **2.10.1 Prizes and Exhibitions**

Among the activities of “trovarsi in rete” the most interesting was the organization of 6 editions (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2007) of a prize called “scrittura mutante” (“mutant writing”). It was devoted to electronic literature, blog writing, e-mail fiction written in Italian. The website is still accessible and in its archive there are preserved all the works that were submitted to the award since 2003.

In 2011 (January 21st – February 20<sup>th</sup>) the first Italian exhibition fully devoted to electronic literature was organized at the Palazzo delle Arti di Napoli - PAN. Some twenty works were hosted by as many authors coming from Europe, Americas and Australia.

## **2.11 Spain and Portugal [G.D.R.]**

### **2.11.1 Spain**

Electronic literature publication in Spain normally concerns publication of works written in Spanish without distinction between Spain and Spanish speaking areas. What appears to be interesting is that all the websites and projects devoted to electronic literature belong to academic institutions.

Hypertulia (<http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/hipertul/indexeng.htm>) has been one of the first websites devoted to hyperfiction in Spain. It was a project of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid directed by Susana Pajares Tosca and Joaquín M<sup>a</sup> Aguirre. It started as a forum and as an

archive for critical and theoretical essays on hypertexts in 1997. There is a page in English that describes the project. “Hipertulia is a forum whose aim is to introduce hypertext and hyperfiction to the Spanish-speaking public. Most of the literature about hypertext is in English, so we want to help making hypertext better known by translating and commenting on some "classic" papers as well as to publishing new ones”. However, in the section “Creación” two hypertexts have been published: *Desde Aquí (From here)* by Mónica Montes and *Pentagonal* by Carlos Labbé. The website stopped to be active in 2002. In 2008 it re-opened for a while but nowadays it appears to function only as an archive.

Also the University of Navarra opened a website devoted to hyperfiction with links to reviews studying the subject. There is also a short list of links to access works of or about digital literature. The list links to author such as Jim Rosenberg and Stuart Moulthrop, but also Katherine Hayles (and some links are broken: <http://www.unav.es/digilab/ric/textos/ficcion.html>). The website is still accessible but it has not been updated for several years. However, one of its section is the Spanish Hyperfiction Directory (<http://www.unav.es/digilab/hyperfiction/>) which contains 26 works by 26 authors all originally written in Spanish (the majority of the links still works).

The research group Hermeneia created by Laura Borrás Castanyer is housed at the University of Barcelona. Hermeneia website is a rich source for everyone who is interested in electronic literature: it hosts an anthology of more than 150 works of digital literature (in different languages) and 350 critical/theoretical articles on electronic literature (<http://www.hermeneia.net/cat/>). The website is accessible in 4 languages (Catalan, Spanish, English, and French), however, the Catalan and Spanish versions result to be more often updated.

In 2010 as a pedagogical activity of the Màster en Literatura en l'Era digital (University of Barcelona) directed by Laura Borràs two works of digital literature were translated into Catalan by the Master students: Rui Torres’ *Amor de Clarice* and Deena Larsen’s *I’m simply saying*, and then published on Hermeneia website.

Besides the academic institution, a publishing-house Badosa.com (famous online publishing-house offering works in Catalan, Spanish, English, and French) has published three hypertexts. The first one is Edith Checa’s *Como el cielo los ojos (Like the sky the eyes, 1995)* was published in 1998 (<http://www.badosa.com/bin/obra.pl?id=n052>). More recently Badosa.com also published *Pinzas de*

*metal* (*Metal Clamps*, <http://www.badosa.com/bin/obra.pl?id=n175>) by Alma Pérez in 2003 and *Algoritmo* (*Algorithm*, <http://www.badosa.com/bin/obra.pl?id=n251>) by Pablo Brito Altamira in 2005 (who, however, is from Venezuela).

*Palabras digitales* (Digital words) (<http://www.palabrasdigitales.com>) is a webpage devoted to digital literature. The editor says that “Palabras digitales” is a project interested in the relationship between literary texts and the digital worlds. The project was launched in Barcelona in 2010. There are 8 sections, 7 of which publish digital literature works. The majority of the texts are written in Catalan or Spanish, but some texts are in English and French. The last section advertises events concerning digital literature (this section seems not to be frequently updated). There is possibility to comment the published works, but this requires registration and there are not that many comments.

*Epimone* (<http://www.epimone.net/>) is an open cyber-poetic anthology. *Epimone* is edited by Lluís Calvo and Pedro Valdeolmillos. The webpage is accessible in 3 languages (Spanish, Catalan, and English). There are 33 works in several languages (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Catalan). The non-Spanish authors include Jason Nelson, Komminos Zervos, and Deena Larsen.

The Second Volume of the *Electronic Literature Collection* published 3 works in Catalan and 1 work in English by a Mexican-Italian author based in Barcelona, Eugenio Tisselli. Isaiás Herrero’s *La Casa Sota el Temps* (also awarded best Catalan work Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Awards in 2007) and *Universo Molécula* (in Catalan - *Univers molècula* was the winner of the Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award 2007), Ton Ferret’s *The Fugue Book* (the winner of the Vicent Ferrer mention for the best work in Catalan at the Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award 2008) and Eugenio Tisselli’s *Synonymovie* (2004).

## Prizes and Festival

In 2005 the first international award fully devoted to electronic literature “Ciutat de Vinaròs” was organized. The goal of these prizes was to promote the creativity of literature through new forms of writing. The prizes would be awarded to the best works of digital literature in the categories of Narrative and Poetry. There would also be a special “Vicent Ferrer Romero” mention for the best

work of digital literature that uses mainly Catalan. Entries in several languages were allowed: English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish or Catalan. There were 4 editions: 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. Since 2009 due to the economic crisis in Spain the award prizes have been suspended, but according to Laura Borràs a new edition will most probably be organized in 2012.

In 2009 the biennial international festival of E-Poetry took place in Barcelona (24-27 May). Many authors could present their works in different locations, among them in two of the most important “galleries” of the city: the CCCB Centro de Cultura Contemporànea de Barcelona (Barcelona Contemporary Cultural Centre) and *CaixaForum (Social and Cultural Centre)*.

### **2.11.2 Portugal**

Portugal has an interesting tradition in experimenting with poetry. The Portuguese writer and poet Ernesto M. de Melo e Castro is considered the father of the so called videopoetry in which animation and temporality are brought to poetry.

Pedro Barbosa is considered the father of generative texts in Portugal and a pioneer in Europe. His well-known *Sintext* (automatic generator realized in collaboration with Abílio Cavalheiro) and *Ofício sentimental* (textual generator) were published in *A.L.I.R.E.* in 1994 (Édition Mots-Voir).

Barbosa published a new version of *Sintext* in 1997 in *A.L.I.R.E/DOC(K)S* n.10 (CD-ROM): *Sintext: neuf textes automatiques générés par ordinateur.*

The Edições UFP published in 2001 a CD-ROM titled *O Motor Textual* an electronic book created by Pedro Barbosa in collaboration with José M. Torres.

Nowadays, researches and publications concerning digital literature are mainly carried on at CECLICO (Centro de Estudos Culturais, da Linguagem e do Comportamento - Centre for Cultural, Language and Behavior Studies). This Research Center now integrates CETIC (Centro de Estudos sobre Texto Informático e Ciberliteratura - Centre for Computer-generated Texts and Cyberliterature Studies), at Universidade Fernando Pessoa in Oporto, directed by Rui Torres with the collaboration of Pedro Barbosa. The website (<http://cetic.ufp.pt/>) – which has also an English version – contains three sections devoted to electronic literature, titled “Ciberliteratura”, “Poesia Animada”; and “Hiperficcão” (the English version has only two “genres” “cyberliterature” and

“hyperfiction”), where critical and theoretical essays and works of digital literature (particularly written in Portuguese) are hosted.

This research group also publishes the journal *Cibertexualidades* (<http://cibertexualidades.ufp.edu.pt/>). Since May 2006 the journal has published 4 issues (the 5th is forthcoming in November 2012). All issues are freely available online at the abovementioned website.

In the second issue of “Cibertexualidades” (2007), titled “Ciberdrama e Hipermedia” (“Cyberdrama and Hypermedia”) and edited by Rui Torres and Luis carlos Petry, *Alletsator* by Pedro Barbosa and Luis Carlos Petry (with collaboration from Rui Torres) was published on CD-ROM. *Alletsator* was first automatically generated by Pedro Barbosa using the textual synthesizer “Sintext” and then it was performed as a theatrical work by Esbofetatro and presented to the audience at the Teatro Helena Sá e Costa, in 2001 during the events of Porto European Capital of Culture. According to Barbosa, “this work was conceived as a pioneering text of cyber-dramaturgy” (Barbosa, 2011). The CETIC/UFP Press also published three electronic literature works by Rui Torres: *Amor de Clarice - Poema Hipermedia*, a hypermedia poem on CD-ROM (2006), *Húmus Poema Contínuo* (2011) and *Poemas no meio do caminho* (2012).

Rui Torres’ *Amor de Clarice* and *Poemas no meio do caminho* (2009) were published in the *Electronic Literature Collection* Volume 2 in 2011. The latter of these also won the Digital Literature Award Prize Ciutat de Vinaròs in 2009.

## **2.12 France [G.D.R.]**

France has a very long tradition of experimenting with literature. Already in 1964 Jean Baudot published *La machine à écrire (The typewriter)* an example of “computer-assisted literature” (“littérature assistée par ordinateur”) that appears to be very important in French digital literature: Jean Baudot created a combinatorial program, then gathered the generated texts into the book published by Les Editions du Jour. At this stage experiments still concerned printed or recited texts. It is also relevant to mention the group OuLiPo here. In 1960, François Le Lionnais and Raymond Queneau founded the “Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle”. It was an international group, even though it mainly consisted of French writers and mathematicians devoted to the discovery of

various forms of constrained writing. OuLiPo itself was not so much concerned about the possibilities that computers offered to literary production, but in 1981 Paul Braffort and Jacques Roubaud, both members of the OuLiPo, created the ALAMO<sup>6</sup> – "Atelier de Littérature Assistée par la Mathématique et les Ordinateurs" (Workshop for Mathematics and Computer Aided Literature). True to the OuLiPian spirit, the ALAMO was mainly interested in computer as a tool that facilitates combinatorial work. It is worth mentioning that the ALAMO received strong governmental support (Bootz, 3). At the occasion of an international exhibit held in Paris at the Centre Georges Pompidou, in 1985, titled "Les Immatériaux", the ALAMO group introduced its first poems "generated" by computer, which heralded the birth of a new form of visual poetry "animated" by this new medium.

In 1985 the first issue of the *Art Access* review was published, the first art review on Minitel. 80 artists participated in this issue, spanning 1500 Minitel pages. Text animation had a prominent place thanks to authors like Philippe Bootz, Frédéric Develay, Claude Faure, Guillaume Loizillon, Tibor Papp. At the time, all of them were in the sphere of visual and sound poetry and were to play a key role in the evolution of French digital poetry (Bouchardon, 2010). Only three editions were published sponsored by France Telecom (who was the proprietor of this telematic system and method of production), the issue number 0 was published for the exhibition "Les Immatériaux" (the last issue was published in 1986).

In 1994 Jean-Pierre Balpe founded a publishing house, ILIAS, that published a few automatic or combinatorial generative texts by Balpe on diskettes. They included *La Masque* and *Paysages sans ombres* (under the pseudonym Patrice Zana). There is no reliable record of the whole publication list.

Whilst first hypertextual narratives were born in the United States, following *Afternoon, a story* (1987, Eastgate Systems) by Michael Joyce it was in mid-1990's that the first works of hypertextual fiction were published in French on CD-ROM. *Frontières Vomies* was published by the author Jean-Marie Pelloquin in 1995. In 1996 the hypertextual fiction *20% d'amour en plus* by François Coulon was published by François Kaona: Ici & Ailleurs, and in 1997 Frank Dufour's *Sale Temps* (which is

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<sup>6</sup> In 2008 there were 17 members in the ALAMO group. Cf. Philippe Bootz, *From OULIPO to Transitoire Observable: evolution of the French digital poetry*, at: [http://elmcip.net/sites/default/files/attachments/criticalwriting/bootz\\_from\\_ouliipo.pdf](http://elmcip.net/sites/default/files/attachments/criticalwriting/bootz_from_ouliipo.pdf) (accessed, January 29 2011).

an interactive drama) was published by Microfolie's. François Coulon wrote another work, *Pause*, that was published in 2002 as a CD-ROM, again by Kaona Publisher in a collection titled "interactive fictions"<sup>7</sup>.

Following this interest in the relationship between literature and computers, in 1996 the French publishing-house Flammarion published *Opération Teddy Bear* (on CD-ROM) by Edouard Lussan. In 1999 the famous French publisher Gallimard published a CD-ROM edited by Denize Antoine and Magné Bernard entitled *Machines à écrire*. The CD-ROM held a digitalized version of *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* and *Un conte à votre façon* by Raymond Queneau and *243 cartes postales en couleurs véritables* by George Perec.

Some more CD-ROM publications have taken place, such as Jacques Donguy's *Phares gamma* published (2002, SON@RT 033), which is a self generated work, infinite by nature, where words, images and sounds are posted together. That year Véronique Hubert's *Histoire de la Femme aux Grosses Mains* was also published by Éditions Incertain Sens (Université Rennes) in co-edition with FRAC Bretagne. This CD-ROM came with an illustrated book of poetry of which it constitutes the last chapter.

There has also been online publications of individual hypertextual and other types of electronic literature works, but there is no comprehensible list of those available. Serge Bouchardon, however has compiled a selection of twenty works in his paper "Filiations and History of Digital Literature in France" (2011).

### 2.12.1 Portals and Reviews

Nowadays France carries on this tradition in experimentg with literature and particularly in experimenting with literature and new media. Besides the significant number of authors creating electronic literature, there are also a few reviews that have published electronic lireature.

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that Interactive Fiction (IF) in Anglo-American world has a distinct meaning of "text adventure game".

The oldest digital review in Europe is considered to be *A.L.I.R.E.* The L.A.I.R.E. collective (*Lecture Art Innovation Recherche Ecriture* <http://motsvoir.free.fr/LAIRE.htm>) was created in October 1988, and the collective started the *A.L.I.R.E.* review. The founding members were Philippe Bootz, Frédéric Develay, Jean-Marie Dutey, Claude Maillard and Tibor Papp. The review has published 13 issues (*alire13* was published in 2009, while *alire12* in 2004). On its website is the information for where to find copies of the review.

The very first issue (0.1) was created for the inauguration of the review in the Pompidou Centre in 1989. This edition is a mixed-media work which contains programmed poems on diskettes, printed works on paper and a work of sound poetry on a video cassette. It was with the n°1 issue (March 1989) that the specificity of the review became clearer: diskettes came with a notebook which contained only theoretical thoughts (there were no more video cassettes nor printed works). This was the first clear assertion in France that digital literature existed and that its only medium was the computer (Bouchardon, 2010). “The review was identified in 1990 as the oldest review in the world which effectively diffused[sic] the programs of the works” (Orlando Carreño, 1990). At the beginning it published only animated poetry created by L.A.I.R.E.’s authors. Since 1992 (*alire6*) it has opened up to works of digital literature of all genres created by French authors, and since 1994 (*alire8*) it has started to published foreign authors.

*A.L.I.R.E.* also collaborated with KAOS for issue 138 of the journal SVM (Science and Life Micro) in May 1996. This was significant collaboration in that SVM has a large distribution and visibility through newstands. *A.L.I.R.E.* also has been shown in several galleries and exhibitions in France and in other countries. For instance, the venue Lara Vincy in Paris organized in their multimedia gallery an exhibition called “le temps d’alire” (time of alire) from October to December 1995. *A.L.I.R.E.* is particularly representative of the different forms of digital poetry before the advent of the Web and it was the only review devoted to digital poetry up until 1996. Its publications are irregular, but the totality of the works is still distributed and the review continues to be published.

Another important review is the *DOC(K)S* (<http://www.sitec.fr/users/akenatondocks/>), even though it is not completely devoted to electronic literature. The *DOC(K)S* review was created in 1976 by Julien Blaine and it has been directed by AKENATON (Philippe Castellin and Jean Torregrosa). Since 1990 it has been a reference in the field of sound and visual poetry. In 1997 it undertook a

survey on the use of diverse media in poetry. It started with an issue about the CD-ROM (alire10 / *DOC(K)S* series 3, n°14/15/16), in association with the *A.L.I.R.E* review, then continued with an issue dedicated to sound (*DOC(K)S* series 3, n°17/18/19/20, 1998), another dedicated to the Web (*DOC(K)S* series 3, n° 21/22/23/24, 1999) and a final one dedicated to the DVD (*DOC(K)S* series 3, n°34/35/36/37, 2004/2005). Some works were computerized to be presented on a digital medium. These publications also contained programmed works.

*DOC(K)S* website hosts several works of electronic literature, particularly in French but not only, there are works, for instance, by Jim Andrews, Robert Kendall, Caterina Davinio, Komninos Zervos, and so on - in this sense it is trans-linguistic ([http://www.sitec.fr/users/akenatondocks/DOCKS-datas\\_f/collect\\_f/generiqueanim.html](http://www.sitec.fr/users/akenatondocks/DOCKS-datas_f/collect_f/generiqueanim.html)). There is an alphabetic archive of the authors and a section is devoted to critical and theoretical essays. Research can also be done alphabetically in the section “réseaux” where it is possible to find the websites of the authors and other useful links to reviews, festivals etc. ([http://www.sitec.fr/users/akenatondocks/DOCKS-datas\\_f/reseaux\\_f/reseaux.html](http://www.sitec.fr/users/akenatondocks/DOCKS-datas_f/reseaux_f/reseaux.html)).

The review *T.A.P.I.N.* (1997) mostly devoted to sound and visual poetry also has a website (<http://tapin.free.fr/>) which does not specifically public electronic literature, however some works of electronic literature have been hosted. The web review *Panoplie* (<http://panoplie.emakimono.org/>) has been devoted to contemporary creation since 1999. Also this review is not specialized in electronic literature but in the 2000s many works of digital literature have been published. Unfortunately some of the links are broken.

The authors of *A.L.I.R.E* were convinced that programming was at the centre of digital literature and that it was essential to specifically investigate the new programmed forms, that could be produced. In 2003 following Alexandre Gherban’s initiative, the *Transitoire Observable* collective was created (<http://transitoireobs.free.fr/to/>). It was based on the assertion that all the components of the *device* (screen, machine, program) were interdependent in the work. The founding act is a manifesto that Alexandre Gherban, Philippe Bootz and Tibor Papp co-signed in February 2003. The collective openly opposed itself to videopoetry, which considers programming as a mere tool used for the production of a fixed multimedia object, totally observable and considered as the work. The *Transitoire Observable* does not exist anymore, however its archive is still accessible online and both texts on critics and theory and works can be read. On the website main page it is written

“having considered that most of the original objectives have been reached, on a common agreement, *Transitoire Observable* ceased to exist on December 6th 2007. We leave here, for consultation purposes, the theoretical texts, which constitute the archives of *Transitoire Observable*”. However, Bootz stated that “even if the collective is officially dissolves, it did not in fact completely disappear. Patrick Burgaud, Philippe Castellin and myself continue to collaborate on common projects. It is thus possible that *Observable Transitoire* reborn, because the concept remains relevant and current” (Bootz, 2010).

The main French website devoted to electronic literature is “e-criture.org” (<http://www.e-critures.org/>). It is described as a website focusing on “electronic literature, that is to say that kind of literature that could not exist without a computer”. The website hosts electronic works and essays on both criticism and theory. 27 works are hosted in the website – one work for each author, however some of the links do not work anymore. If one is a member of the group, he/she can submit a work. Also to submit an article one needs to be a member of the group. E-criture.org consists also of a mailing list (discussion list). The discussion list, created in November 1999, came first (it has at present around 160 members and more than 5000 messages have been posted since its creation). According to Serge Bouchardon” The actors of the e-critures list are not only interested in the works, but also in the issue of the genres” (Bouchardon, 2010).

The first version of the website, created in January 2001, made it possible for the authors to present their works (“individual creations”) but also to come together in a common space (“collective creations”). In order to enrich the contents of the exchanges with the visitors of the site, to create a community of digital literature creation and to reference all the works of its members, a new version of the website was launched in November 2003, following Gérard Dalmon's initiative. The latest version dates back to January 2008.

### 2.12.2 Anthologies

In October 2004 Philippe Bootz published a CD-ROM “créations poétiques au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle visuelles, sonores, actions...” (poetic creations in the twentieth century visual, sound, action) where several examples of French digital poetry taken from different issues of the review *A.L.I.R.E.* are shown. The CD-ROM was published with the support of the CRDP (Centre Régional de Recherche

Pédagogique -Regional Centre of Pedagogical Research) in Grenoble. The CD was specifically created with an educational aim: it is a tool for teaching art particularly on high schools (Bootz, 2010).

Besides being published on the author's personal websites or in the reviews previously mentioned, some French works were published in both volumes of the Electronic Literature Collection. In the first volume: *The Set of U* (2004) by Philippe Bootz and Marcel Frémiot, *Jean-Pierre Balpe ou les Lettres Dérangées* (2005) by Patrick-Henri Burgaud (French artist based in Netherlands); and in the second: *Separation / Séparation* (2002) by Annie Abrahams (Dutch artist based in France), and *Toucher* (2009), Serge Bouchardon, Kevin Carpentier, and Stéphanie Spenlé.

### 2.12.3 Prizes and festivals

In 2009 Jean-Pierre Balpe has co-organized an award prize devoted to electronic poetry. The prize is called “prix poésie média” and this prize is one section of a biennial festival devoted to the contemporary poetry (la Biennale des Poètes de la Val-de-Marne). The prize was a success; more than 150 works were sent and due to this success a call for a second edition was opened in 2010. The website clearly states which works are considered media-poetry: “Works considered “media poetry” are those that place contemporary technologies at the service of poetry, be it within the framework of a performance or in that of a recorded and projectable work. Among the many forms accepted are included videopoetry, digital poetry, multimedia poetry, sound poetry, interactive poetry, and poetic installations in physical space or on the Internet. Works that illustrate a poem will not be considered (these are works that use sound or images to represent or complement a poem, for example). There are no restrictions regarding the form or content of the media poems submitted”. The scope of the prize seems to be truly international in that entries came from several countries, and the first edition was won by Australian Jason Nelson's *Secret of an uncomfortable ocean*.

Also “La Société des gens de lettres de France” organised a prize in media-writing: “Grand Prix SGDL de l'œuvre Multimédia”. The prize has not always been won by a work of digital literature. In 1999 Antoine Denize's *Machines à écrire* won the prize. In 2001 Dominique Autié won that edition with his work titled *De la page à l'écran – Réflexions et stratégies devant l'évolution de l'écrit sur les nouveaux supports de l'information*, (Éditions Éléa, Montréal), a book focusing on

the relationship between writing and new media. More recently works on the web have been awarded such as Philippe Boinsard, a French author of digital literature, won the first prize for his website (<http://databaz.org/xtrm-art/>) in 2007 and YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES ([www.yhchang.com](http://www.yhchang.com)) won the award in 2008.

In 2007 the biennial festival of electronic poetry, E-poetry 2007 was organized in Paris at the University of Paris VIII. During the event several evenings were organized by the association MOTS-VOIR (publisher of *alire*), also sponsored by DICREAM (Ministère de la culture et de la communication). Many artists could present their new works in key cultural venues of the city, such as Divan du Monde, Le Cube and le Point Ephémère.

### **2.13 Switzerland [G.D.R.]**

In the Italian, Rhaeto-Romance and French speaking areas there is a quite active research group connected to the University of Geneva. Infolipo (Informatique et Littérature Potentielle – Informatics and Potential Literature <http://www.infolipo.org>) created in 1987 by Ambroise Barras and Pascal Delhom – following the ideas of Oulipo and Alamo – is a research group devoted to digital art and literature. They have published several articles and volumes together as a group focusing on electronic literature. Infolipo’s website also has a small but interesting archive of works, these are works which experiment with literature and computers. It is titled “variations combinatoire” (<http://www.infolipo.org/ambroise/varcom/index.html>) where works by Perec, Queneau, and Butor are re-generated randomly by the machine.

However the most interesting activity of the group is the offline dissemination of digital art and literature. In the last number of years Infolipo has co-organized national and international festivals devoted to digital art and/or literature: such as *<home\_page />* (May 2004, *Garden Party 2004*, Geneva) *expoésie* (13-30 May 2005, Lausanne), *Virage au Nord* (28 April 2006, Stade de Genève), *mots images paysages* (1 March - 13 April 2008, Lancy), *projectangos* (26 March 2010, Geneva).

## **2.14 BeNeLux Countries [G.D.R.]**

### **2.14.1 Luxemburg**

It appears, according to our network of expert contacts, not to have any publication of digital literature in Luxemburg.

### **2.14.2 Belgium**

Belgium does not appear to have portals or anthologies devoted to digital literature, except for a special issue of the Flemish journal *Dietsche Warande & Beaufort* (DWB), (August 1999, n. 4, with a CD-rom) edited by Eric Vos and Jan Beaten. However, a few examples of digital literature have been either published online or on CD-ROM.

Anne-Cécile Brandenbourg's *Apparitions inquiétantes*, (1997-2000) is one of the first hypertexts written in French and published online (<http://www.anacoluthe.be/bulles/apparitions/jump.html>). In 1999 *Voyage avec l'ange*, an interactive fiction by Tamara Lai, with music by Serge Winandy and Jean Furst, was published by Thalamus and Magic Media on CD-ROM. Another example of hypertext is G. Berche-Ngô's *Hypertexte* (<http://www.hypertexte.be/>), which, however, is more recent, as it was published online in 2010.

### **2.14.3 Netherlands**

Netherlands presents a quite interesting peculiarity, in that it offers an example of a community constituted by an institution: digidicht ([www.digidicht.nl](http://www.digidicht.nl)). The website was launched in 2008 as a virtual platform for Dutch poets, visual artists, and designers. The idea was that they could meet on the website and negotiate in order to create digital literature. It was funded by the Dutch Literature Fund and the Visual Art, Designer and Architecture Fund. Some of the works hosted on the website were created thanks to another literary project "copoetry on the screen". Once a year a call for works is launched and 5 works are paid to be made and then shown in the international festival Poetry International (and eventually published on digidicht website).

The website is nowadays more an anthology of Dutch digital literature according to Yra van Dijk. 52 works (written in Dutch) are hosted there: 31 realized thanks to “copoetry on the screen”, 20 by workshops and just one by digidicht’s web community. The works are divided according to different genres: hypertext fiction (2), interactive fiction (5), generative art (3), codework (2), and Flash poems (42).

The second volume of *Electronic Literature Collection* (2011) published a Dutch digital poem translated into English *Ah* by K Michel and Dirk Vis.

## **2.15 UK and Ireland [G.D.R.]**

### **2.15.1 United Kingdom**

It appears that most authors of digital literature work within a self-publishing model. According to Simon Biggs it is probable that “many of these authors, if not most of them, have chosen to work with digital and networked media, at least in part, as they do not wish to have their work mediated through publishing industry or mainstream art world mechanisms” (Biggs, 2010).

There are many artists and authors active in electronic literature, however, if one wishes to access their work then generally it is necessary to visit their personal websites. “This means that the responsibility for the maintenance and dissemination of such artworks remains with the authors themselves” (Biggs, 2010). This also means that gathering representative data of the UK situation is particularly difficult, and there is the caveat, that there may be significant gaps in our account.

One of the first publishers in the UK that started to present and promote artists working with internet and new-media was *Ellipsis* (<http://www.ellipsis.com/>). They produced a series of CD-ROM's of artists like Simon Biggs. Unfortunately, the website is now mostly empty, except for Softopia and the Internet and Everyone, seminal online activities in London from the early 90's coordinated by John Chris Jones. The *Ellipsis* was taken over by Chrysalis and they disposed of most of the *Ellipsis* back catalogue. *Film and Video Umbrella* (<http://www.fvu.co.uk/>) worked

closely with *Ellipsis*, amongst other partners. They used to work with artists whose work crossed over into the area of digital language.

In 1998 the digital artist Stanza created the website *Soundtoys* (<http://www.soundtoys.net/>). Stanza describes the website as “the internets [sic] leading space for the exhibition of exciting new works of audio visual artists”. There are several artists known for their work in digital literature hosted on it such as Annie Abrahams, Heath Bunting, Tamara Lai, Peter McCarey, Jason Nelson, and Jörg Piringer. Interestingly, one section is called “for kids”. The *Soundtoys* is notable in that it hosted the works on its own server. The website was very active from 2002 to 2007. However, in 2008 there was very little work presented and there have been no new projects in evidence in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

There is also a relatively new project called Electric Bookshop, which however, despite its name, seems to be more a discussion forum than a bookshop." the Electric Bookshop wants to bring together people with a common interest in technology, literature, design and publishing to meet and talk about the brave new world of books in the digital age."

(<http://electricbookshop.wordpress.com/about/>)

## Reviews and Collections

In 1996 Sue Thomas created the project *trAce* and launched the website. In an interview still accessible online she explains her project:

trAce came out of my own interest, as a writer about technology, in the internet and what it offers for writers. It began in 1995 as a small research project at the Nottingham Trent University. I was teaching writing at the time, and, along with an MA Writing student Simon Mills, started a project called Cyberwriting which aimed to collect and review websites for writers. In 96 we renamed it to trAce and launched the website. In 1997 we received a 3-year grant from the Arts Council of England to establish an online community for writers, and that is when we really started to expand. Our original intention was simply to find and pass on information, but we have evolved into something much more complex. I think of trAce now as rather like an art centre - we still provide information, but we also provide

training, studio space, exhibitions and all kinds of participatory creative activities ([http://www.3ammagazine.com/magazine/issue\\_3/articles/intertext\\_interview\\_sue\\_thomas\\_race\\_website.html](http://www.3ammagazine.com/magazine/issue_3/articles/intertext_interview_sue_thomas_race_website.html)).

The website is still available even if it has not been active since 2006 and its archive contains ten years of writing “on, about, and via the internet”. In the section “frame” the 6 issues of the *frAme: Online Journal of Culture and Technology* are still available. Among other artists there are works by Talan Memmott, Alan Sondheim, and Mez.

In the UK there are no anthologies or collections devoted to electronic literature but some works from the UK were published in both volumes of the (US based) *Electronic Literature Collection* such as John Cayley’s *windsound* (1999), *wotclock* (2004, with photographs and additional production by Douglas Cap), and *Translation* (2004, with music by Giles Perring); Donna Leishman’s *RedRidinghood* (2001) and *Deviant: The Possession of Christian Shaw* (2004); Maria Mencia’s *Birds Singing Other Birds’ Songs* (2001); babel and escha’s *Urbanalities* (2005); Alison Clifford’s *The Sweet Old Etcetera* (2006); Christine Wilks *Fitting the Pattern* (2008) and *Tailspin* (2008). And several authors are hosted in the Electronic Literature Directory.

### Prizes and Festivals

In 1998/99 trAce co-launched a prize called “trAce/Alt-X International Hypertext Competition” (trAce – Sue Thomas; Alt-X – Mark Amerika). The first edition was won *ex equo* by Jenny Weight’s hyperpoem “Rice” and Scott Rettberg’s (et al.) hyperfiction “The Unknown”. For the second edition both the title of the competition and the form of the works were altered. The title changed to “trAce/Alt-X Media Competition”. The 2<sup>nd</sup> trAce/Alt-X New Media Writing Competition was won by Talan Memmott’s *Lexia to Perplexia*.

In 1998 trAce ran the “trAce electropoetry competition” in conjunction with the NOW Festival of Electronic Arts”, the poems that got the 3 first positions are still available online (<http://tracearchive.ntu.ac.uk/electropes/index2.htm>). 2004 saw the launch of the New Media Article Writing Competition. There were three categories and four prizes and one honourable mention. Although all these prizes were discontinued they show the interest in such objects and studies. For

the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the “trAce/Alt-X Media Competition” the website highlights that more than 100 works were submitted. Nowadays, neither of these prizes is running and the trAce website serves mainly as an archive.

In 2010 a prize for new media writing was created by the Poole Literary Festival with the partnership of the Media School at Bournemouth University (<http://www.poolelitfest.com/new-media-prize.php>) On the website is written “[w]e are asking all entrants to create an engaging and interactive narrative, through the use of digital technologies. Typically ‘new media writing’ exploits the potential of the web, which offers readers/viewers a range of narrative ‘activity’ beyond reading a piece of text online or watching a film. For example, a viewer might need to click the mouse on a word or image on screen to activate the next sequence of text, or to link them to the next chapter”. The first edition of the New Media Writing Prize went to Lorenza Samuels (from the University of Bournemouth) for *Evidence* (<http://www.evidence-interactive.co.uk/index.html>), and Christine Wilks for *Underbelly* (<http://www.crisscross.net/elit/underbelly.html>).

The UK also hosted the most important event in electronic poetry in 2005 (28 September - 1 October), as the international festival and conference E-poetry took place in London. In that occasion many artists presented their works, such as for instance John Cayley’s *Transl(ite)ration*, Maria Mencia’s *Cityscapes: Social Poetics/Public Textualities*; and Jerome Fletcher ...*Reusement - starting from scratch*.

#### Portals and Archiving Initiatives

The *Hyperliterature Exchange* (<http://hyperex.co.uk/index.php>) is a UK based online project managed by Edward Picot. The *Exchange* was launched in Summer 2003 and its purpose is to review and provide an online directory of hyperliterature for sale. Picot clearly says that the main function of the exchange is to promote the sale of hyperliterature (they are not selling, or publishing, the works by themselves) – electronic literature, cyberliterature, hypertext, new media literature, nonlinear literature, digital poetry and Flash poetry by self-published authors or released by small independent publishers and writers' cooperatives. The main page states that 132 titles are listed at the present (but it is impossible to say what at the present means because there is no year). The majority of the works are electronic literature, however there is also some work in critical

theory by some scholars interested in electronic literature. The *Exchange* lists electronic literature from several countries, not only UK productions.

The UK offers a wide range of public initiatives to preserve digital art and it appears to be rich in offline presentations in galleries and museums. Although, these initiatives do not intend to preserve/present electronic literature specifically, due to its nature an interesting amount of electronic literature works is preserved (Biggs 2010). The public initiatives involve both museum and academies.

*Lux* (<http://www.lux.org.uk/>) is an institution whose specific focus is on video art and experimental film. None of *Lux*'s projects specifically address digital literature but a number of artists in their collections have been active in this area.

Since 1992 the *Foundation for Art and Creative Technology* (<http://www.fact.co.uk/>) has been an instrumental UK organisation in the commissioning and exhibition of new media art. Based in Liverpool and housing state of the art cinemas and galleries, *FACT* has mounted some of the seminal exhibitions of media arts held in the UK, including the Videopositive series of festivals. “*FACT* has built up an extensive documentary resource of artists work with new media, including many authors of digital literature” (Simon Biggs, 2010).

*Intute* (2006) is an academic initiative. It has structured its database into sections for the Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Health Sciences. As far as Arts and Humanities is concerned, there is no section devoted to literature. However, there are sections for visual and performing arts, film, music and cross-disciplinary arts that include “links to material of relevance to digital literature studies” (Biggs, 2010). The database is fully searchable and contains records of the work of authors who have been active in digital literature, many of them non-Europeans. *Intute* is not an archive, but functions as a portal to existing online resources.

### **2.15.2 Ireland**

Ireland more than the UK seems to be interested more in digital art rather than specifically in electronic literature. In 2009 Belfast (UK) hosted the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the ISEA International (Inter-

Society for the Electronic Artists) an international non-profit organization fostering interdisciplinary academic discourse and exchange among culturally diverse organizations and individuals working with art, science and technology (in 1998 it was held in Liverpool and Manchester). This electronic art festival is not devoted to electronic literature, however, some works with predominant literary aspects were presented and some of the major events were scheduled in Dublin.

The Electronic Literature Directory only hosts Michael J. Maguire, who appears to be the only author of electronic literature based in Ireland.

### **3 FINDINGS BY CATEGORY [M.E.]**

#### **3.1 Commercial publications<sup>8</sup>**

With the exceptions of the short-lived Editions Cyberfiction series published by update verlag in Germany/Switzerland between 2000 and 2004 (four volumes), the short-lived Elettro Libri in Italy and ILIAS in France in the mid-1990s, the still active alire series in France (1989-, 14 issues) published by the mots-voir association, and the newcomers in Italy (Quintadicipertina) and Poland (Ha!art), the general rule in the field of e-lit is an author's non-commercial self-publication and its more elevated or glorified form: publications of a literary group (such as Perfokarta in Poland or Infolipo in Switzerland) that sooner or later may find their way into more inclusive portals and occasionally to online journals as well. Multimedia literary works were and still are sometimes commercially published on CDs and DVDs, but beyond these and the other fringes of the world of the visual arts, electronic literature is clearly a community and not a market driven scene.

The Hypertextual Exchange, a British site, promotes and encourages “the sale of hyperliterature - electronic literature, cyberliterature, hypertext, new media literature, nonlinear literature, digital poetry, Flash poetry, etc.” and has in its catalogue digital fiction and poetry published by small publishers in France, Canada, Australia, and USA (including Eastgate) or by the authors themselves. As far as we can tell this enterprise (run by Edward Picot) is unique in Europe.

#### **3.2 Reviews and journals**

Outside France and its history of online and offline literary journals publishing electronic literature (ever since the Minitel/teletext era and Art Access in the mid-1980s), we didn't come across a single review or journal that was designed solely for publishing electronic literature. It is much more typical that e-lit is published together with scholarly papers, net art, or digitized literature, especially with sound, visual and concrete poetry.

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<sup>8</sup> The word “commercial” with all its connotations may be misleading here. In this survey it simply means publications that are not available free of charge.

In France journals are closely tied to avant-garde groups and practices, which is exactly what could be expected given the history of French avant-garde movements in the last century. The main example is the L.A.I.R.E group and its review *alire*, although the latter has expanded far beyond its original aesthetics as well as become more international over the years. The importance of *alire*, the L.A.I.R.E and *transitoire observable* both in French electronic literature and in establishing international networks for the theorists and practitioners of e-poetry has been without peer in Europe. The major online reviews in France that are relevant in the context of electronic literature, DOC(K)S (1976-), *Tapin* (1997-) and *Panoplie* (1999-), are primarily focused on sound and visual poetry, but e-lit still has a notable presence in these publications.

Online journals publishing electronic literature also exist in Poland (*Techsty*; 2003-; six issues) and Portugal (*Cibertextualidades*; 2006-; four issues). The former is exceptional in its scope and its activities in translating electronic literature. In the late 1990s there were also online journals in the UK (such as *Frame*), but by the 2000s they seem to have faded away.

### **3.3 Portals**

Portals and websites constitute the main publishing channel and model for European e-literature. They publish and give access to new works, archive old ones, are to some degree connected with each other as a rudimentary networked infrastructure, and they do all this for free. In some cases the differences between a portal and a digital library or archive seem to vanish or blur as is the case with the encyclopedic German e-lit and net art (meta)portal *Netzliteratur.net*.

Outside Germany major e-lit portals exist at least in Switzerland (*cyberfiction.ch*), Poland (*Techsty*, *Ha!art*, and *Perfokarta*); Finland (*Nokturno*); Danmark (*Afsnit P*); Norway (*Elinor*); Spain/Catalunia (*Hermeneia*); France (*DOC(K)S*, *e-critures*) and the United Kingdom. The three Scandinavian portals form a loose network although they are different in scope (*Elinor* and *AfsnitP* are regional and *Nokturno* more international).

What Simon Biggs says about the situation in the UK could equally well be said about e-lit in Europe: "It remains the case that whilst there are many artists and authors active in electronic literature in the UK, if you wish to access their work then you generally have to visit their personal

websites. This means that the responsibility for the maintenance and dissemination of such artworks remains with the authors themselves.” (Biggs, 2010) It is only logical then that the problem and the various initiatives for archiving electronic literature will remain on the agenda for a long time to come, and it is here that the social, cultural, financial, and practical role of networked national and international digital libraries could be crucial.

### **3.4. Online art sites including electronic literature**

These sites are hard to detect, because the metadata and conceptual framework surrounding works that belong both to e-lit and net (or multimedia) art are rudimentary at best and misleading at worst. In our data there are several online sites dedicated to both visual arts and literature, but to explore the countless sites focusing on digital and net art hoping to find bits and pieces of misplaced electronic literature would be an exercise in futility.

Many portals and literary artists already situate themselves in the nexus of netart and literature, but usually the dividing lines between the two are clearly demarcated in the portals. The case may be slightly different with the Slovenian artists mentioned in this survey as their work could be easily classified either way. The overall pattern is similar to the situation Simon Biggs described above: in order to access these works or get basic information about them you have to access the artists' personal websites.

As might be expected, animated e-poetry and e-poetry performances have also found their way to social media. At least Infolipo and p0es1s have successfully used YouTube in delivering certain types of e-poetry and e-poetry performances.

### **3.5 Offline art sites including electronic literature**

For obvious reasons this is an even harder scene to explore and catalogue. By necessity only a fraction of electronic literature is visually or multimedially oriented, and only a small fraction of this fraction attracts the attention of museums and art galleries. Text-based installations, textual sculptures and visual and kinetic poetry may and do often enter offline art venues that sometimes-

also commission them. The series of p0es1s exhibitions and symposia (1992- ) in Germany and Brazil (accompanied by its online archives) is the most successful long-term example in the data we managed to gather. Historically speaking, probably the most important single event was the L'Immateriaux exhibition in Paris in 1985. In Slovenia electronic literature has close ties to net and new media art. The dynamics of this expanded field of electronic literature are thoroughly analyzed by Jaka Zeleznikar (Zeleznikar 2012).

Ars Electronica gave birth to the first German hypertext novel in 1989, but since then the paths of electronic literature and ars electronica have rarely crossed (at least according to the online archive of Ars Electronica). Seminars, festivals, exhibitions, conferences and conference series devoted to electronic literature and /or digital arts such as E-poetry (biannually from 2001) and Digital Arts and Culture (1998-) form major venues for showcasing and exhibiting electronic literature for one's peers if not also for a larger audience, and in some cases media art exhibitions and festivals also commission new works.

### **3.6. Electronic literature collections**

Surprisingly there are no European equivalents of ELO's two electronic literature compilations published in the USA, although both of these include several European works. However, the situation is about to change as there is an ELMCIP anthology in progress. *Hyperfiction, ein hyperliterarisches Lesebuch* (1999) with its 24 German hyperfictions (and 11 scholarly essays) is a snapshot and showcase for German hyperfiction in its peak period and the collection of visual, concrete and digital poetry Philippe Bootz edited to be used in high schools clearly had admirable pedagogical purposes. All in all, the lack of electronic literature collections is hard to explain given the long history and prehistory of electronic literature in Europe. On the other hand, and as can be seen from Chis Funkhouser's *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* (2007), there is much archeological work and guess work to be conducted and concluded before we can firmly establish even the basic facts of our digital literature heritage.

### 3.7 Competitions

The annual Vinaros prize (2005-2008-) is clearly the most successful electronic literature competition in Europe; it is truly international in its scope although it also recognizes local talents (writing in Catalan). Despite its success the competition's future is unclear at the moment and it may well be discontinued. The new biannual international competition Poesie-media (media poetry; 2009-) in France is close to Vinaros in its scope, but it is too early to say what its future prospects will be. On the other hand, no competition is truly international as the number of accepted natural languages is always limited: the Vinaros competition accepted contributions in Catalan, English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, and the Poesie-media prize in English and French.

Germany is definitely the country with the most attempts at establishing competitions and prizes for electronic literature. The problem seems to be that the scene and the cultural niche was determined for a relatively long time by the failures of the first attempt, the Pegasos Prize (1996-1998), which was also the first electronic literature competition in Europe. Moments when electronic literature is more or less suddenly brought to public attention and spotlighted for discussion can be decisive, especially if those impulses arise from outside the field itself and people with no expertise in electronic literature dominate the jury. It will be necessary to study the actual effects and functions of electronic literature prizes in Europe in comparative and contextual terms along the lines Patricia Tomaszek recently suggested (Tomaszek 2011) and situate the findings in a broader context even more recently provided by Beat Suter (Suter 2012).

In Italy an annual prize called *scrittura mutante* (“mutant writing”) was running from 2003 to 2007, focusing on electronic literature, blog writing and e-mail fiction. The only e-lit competition in Scandinavia was organized in 2005 in Norway. It managed to get some public attention and provide an incentive to writers to try producing electronic literature. However, after the competition the published authors didn't continue their careers in electronic literature. This leaves us with Poland and Ha!art's monthly award for poetry, which seems to be a good concept as it only demands one poem from each participating author.

Finally, it is important to notice the cyclic or periodic nature of competitions. While they all seem to wither away sooner or later, other competitions will almost certainly replace them, at least in Germany.

### 3.8 Europeanwide patterns

Based on our findings it is clear that there are several different patterns in e-lit publishing and distribution in Europe. In a few countries we couldn't find electronic literature at all (Romania, Greece, and Luxemburg). In the former Eastern Europe except Poland (Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia), in the Baltic countries (Estonia; Latvia, Lithuania), and in the former Yugoslavia (Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia) as well as in Iceland and Ireland authors' self-publications existed but national portals were not found. Surprisingly the pattern was the same in Italy, although an extensive database on Italian experimental literature including electronic literature is well on its way. In the Nordic countries (except Sweden and Iceland) we find the combination of regional and international portals and authors' websites. As the scope of the regional Elinor portal covers Sweden too we can include it in the same pattern as its Nordic neighbors.

Almost self-evidently the biggest European nations and languages (in population size and the amount of native speakers respectively: English, French, German, Spanish, Polish, Italian) dominate, although there are important differences within this group of six languages and language areas. The major portals and the most important reviews, the few commercial publications, publishers and e-lit collections, and almost every competition take place in these languages. The main positive anomalies outside this sphere are easy to list: Slovenia (close ties between electronic literature and new media art); Portugal (one major review); Norway (one competition and regional portal); and Finland (one major international portal and several translated works of electronic literature).

All in all the summary of the e-lit scene in Europe looks somewhat like this:

Collections: France (in 2004) and Germany/Switzerland (in 1999)

International/multilingual competitions: France (2009; 2011), Spain (2005-2008; on hold)

National/monolingual competitions: Germany (several from 1996; most of them discontinued); Austria; Poland (one, monthly; 2010-); Italy (one, 2003-2007; discontinued); Norway (one, 2005; discontinued)

Commercial publications/publishers: France, Germany/Switzerland (1999-2004), Italy, Poland

Offline reviews: France (alire, 1989-)

Online reviews: France, Portugal, Poland

Major international/multilingual portals: Spain (Hermeneia), Finland (Nokturno)

Major regional/monolingual portals: Germany (netzliteratur.net), Switzerland (cyberfiction.ch), Spain (The Spanish Hyperfiction Directory), Norway (Elinor), Denmark (afsnitP)

Major national portals: France, Spain, Poland, Italy (in progress)

Offline exhibition series: p0es1s (Germany/Brazil; 1992-)

Online art venues: p0es1s

Literary groups: L.A.I.R.E (France), transitoire observable (France), ALAMO (France), Perfokarta (Poland), Infolipo (Switzerland)

#### **4 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS [M.E.]**

There are five main characteristics of e-lit publishing and distribution in Europe. First, with a very few exceptions it does not constitute a commercial, but instead a community-centered activity. Secondly, most e-lit that satisfies the criteria used in this survey is freely accessible or downloadable on the Internet. Thirdly, as electronic literature is often seen and it also situates itself in the continuum of 20th century experimental and avant-garde literature, it is (and stays) culturally in the margins of more mainstream literary practices or even completely separated from them. Fourthly, so far the ongoing technological changes in the commercial publishing world, including for example the competition among publishers, teleoperators, bookstores, and hardware and software manufactures over the digital marketing and distribution channels of literature (cf. portable reading devices such as Kindle and tablet computers such as iPad) don't seem to be closing the gap between electronic literature and mainstream literary practices. Fifth, institutionally various e-lit communities are supported by or intertwined with, if anything, either the academic (creative writing programs, scholar-authors, presentations at conferences etc.) or the art world (museums and galleries that may or may not get public funding).

All five of these factors deserve a closer look, as each of them has ongoing consequences and constrains possible practices and networked structures in the field. The lack of commercial publications and publishers effectively de-centralizes the scene and leaves e-lit authors with three basic types of publication possibilities: self-publication, publication in portals if such structures exist (in many ways and cases this is just a form of networked self-publication), and publication in e-lit journals.

Two additional options are only available to some authors: museums and galleries naturally prefer works that are as much literature as visual arts (text-based installations, textual sculptures, kinetic and holographic works, digital multimedia). Publications in e-lit collections such as the two existing ELO ones in the USA seem to be something that may happen in major European languages later in this decade. To a high degree the publication opportunities and channels depend on the quantitative aspects of the local scenes. Quite simply in countries with just a few practitioners there's no chance to go beyond portals and self-publications unless one is able and willing to start writing and publishing in some major European or global language (this is a trend clearly visible in e-poetry, for obvious reasons). Journals and competitions require a constant and sufficiently substantial e-lit production to support them, most probably in more than just one digital genre, but even then both competitions and journals tend to be relatively short-lived projects.

Very early in this survey it became evident that electronic literature is not a market-driven literary phenomenon, but a community driven scene with an accompanying set of aesthetic, social and cultural values and practices. It is far from being an OuLiPo-inspired world literature as described by some commentators (Tabbi 2010), because there are several traditions from which it emerged, and these traditions in themselves go much further than the usual emphasis on 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde movements (as its predecessors) acknowledges (see Aarseth 1997; Bouchardon 2011). On the other hand, if avant-garde is defined in terms of cultural opposition, then the combination of freely distributed electronic literature and technologically savvy, skill-based e-lit communities running on co-operation and peer recognition perfectly match the excessive demands of the definition. Although e-lit is isolated from most of the trends and concerns of mainstream publishing industries, it is close to and sometimes almost inseparable from other literary avant-gardes using the variety of non-digital media. In this respect its cultural position could be described a hyper-niche (a niche within a niche). Quite ironically, this exemption from media attention and monetary exchange and the strong emphasis on aesthetic and social motivation may go a long way to guarantee the creativity of these communities especially as literary canons, editorial constraints, stable publishing structures, production and distribution costs, and copyright laws do not play a decisive or inhibiting role in most e-lit activities.

Having said this, it is clear that e-readers and tablet computers with their more or less developed multimedia capabilities constitute the first fully functional and commercially viable digital delivery channel for literature. This may seem inconsequential and trivial from the perspective of electronic

literature professionals, and in many ways that is an accurate estimation. Still, it is possible that these e-lit devices and gadgets will result in establishing an expanded field of mainstream publishing practices and institutions (to take just one crucial example: App Store is not controlled by giant publishing conglomerates) – a field that suddenly includes ergodic multimedia as well. In the worst case scenario, the new battle lines are drawn between two kinds of professionals, us and the multitude of print authors and publishing conglomerates with a somewhat limited understanding of multimedia literature and ergodic variation.

Finally, it is useful to bear in mind that nothing is set in stone. The cyclic nature of the electronic literature scene (or scenes) and its social and aesthetic dimensions is one of the key findings of this survey. Some genres of e-literature, especially hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, or MUDs seem to have active lifespans uncannily similar to most avant-garde movements (discounting the two long lived or still living exceptions, surrealism and the OuLiPo). Hypertext fiction seems to be well past its prime; in most countries covered in this survey it existed either as self-publications by authors available at their web-sites and blogs or as well-archived past scenes available at on-line databases that in some cases date back to late 1990s (such as the 100 or so German hypertext fictions from the 1990s and early 2000s listed at [cyberfiction.ch](http://cyberfiction.ch)). Needless to say, no European equivalent of Eastgate was located (despite the short-time success of Editions Cyberfiction).

This leaves us with electronic poetry and its many forms, genres, practices and venues. The production numbers of e-poetry are on a level that is capable of supporting and justifying the existence of several reviews, journals, and both national and international competitions. It has a long and diverse history that merits collecting, some of its intermedial forms can be circulated and presented in non-literary contexts, and last but not least e-poetry in this century constitutes a truly international scene of writing. In fact, one may even ask if there is electronic literature outside e-poetry anymore. And if there is nothing outside e-poetry, that may be good news too. After all poetry is poetry is poetry, culturally and institutionally defensible, supportable and expandable as literature or art or both.

Still, it is too early to tell. The scene is changing and the complex local and global traditions and networks of electronic literature need and require further research. One could do a lot worse than to investigate the diachronic and synchronic aspects of electronic literature genres and genre formations, electronic literary groups and their self-understanding, archiving and translation

practices, sources of funding, publishing policies, market and community driven scenes, connections between e-lit and print lit communities, quantitative and qualitative effects of population sizes, available and emerging infrastructures and technologies not to mention broader contextual issues in order to get a fuller view.

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## **5.2 E-mail exchanges and interviews**

Jean-Pierre Balpe (France)

Pedro Barbosa (Portugal)

Ambroise Barras (Switzerland)

Simon Biggs (UK)

Philippe Bootz (France)

Laura Borrás (Spain/Catalunia)

Serge Bouchardon (France, Belgium, Luxemburg)

Patrick-Henri Burgaud (BeNeLux)

Daniela Calisi (Italy)

Philippe Castellin (France)

Theodoros Chiotis (Greece)

Eliza Deac (Romania)

Dubravaka Djuric (Serbia)

Maria Engberg (Sweden)

Krystof Fenyvesi (Hungary)

Jerome Fletcher (UK)

Daniele Giampa (Bulgaria)

Zuzana Husarova (Slovakia)

Teemu Ikonen (Finland)

Jesper Olsson (Sweden)

Mariusz Pisarski (Poland)

Vladimir Piskor (Czech Republic)

Hans Rustad (Norway)

Jörgen Schäfer (Germany and Austria)

Janez Strehovec (Slovenia and Serbia)

Eugenio Tisselli (Spain)

Patricia Tomaszek (Germany, Austria and Swiss e-lit in German)

Rui Torres (Portugal)

Yra van Dijk (Netherlands)

Piret Viires (Estonia)

Katarina Vukovic (Croatia)

Jaka Zeleznikar (Slovenia)