Robin Johnson

Edinburgh, Scotland—robindouglasjohnson@gmail.com
Portfolio: https://robinjohnson.org

Skills

Interactive storytelling, game design/development, and scripting

- Author and developer of multiple interactive fiction (IF), narrative and puzzle games
- Winner of IFComp, Spring Thing, and Xyzzy Awards
- Experience developing authoring tools, including an open-source IF development language
- Experience of visual scripting of NPC and AI behaviours, and development of scripting tools
- Experience with Unreal Engine 4 and 5, Unity, Amazon Lumberyard, and O3DE
- Working alone and in a small team on various projects, including procedural narrative and AI

Writing

- Excellent written English in both creative and technical contexts
- Professional scriptwriter with experience of producing fringe theatre and audio drama
- Experience as lead technical author on documentation for complex software

Programming and web development

- Coded in a wide range of development environments and languages, including domain-specific languages (DSLs) for interactive storytelling such as Ink, Inform 7 and TADS, web languages such as HTML/CSS and JavaScript/React, and general languages such as C#, XML/XSLT, Perl, Java, and C/C++
- Fast learner of new languages, scripting systems and development environments
- Creator of an open source DSL for web-based narrative puzzle games

Work history

July 2023—present: Writer/Producer, *Submitted for the Approval of the Midnight Pals*

- Collaborating with the creator of *The Midnight Pals*, a Hugo-nominated comedy-horror social media and book series, to create an audio fiction podcast adaptation
- Writing and editing episode scripts, exchanging feedback with other writers, finalising drafts
- Casting, directing voice actors, composing and recording music, sound design, and audio editing
- One season complete as of December 2023; peaked in top 20 of UK and US Apple Podcast charts

April—June 2023: Story Tech, Die Gute Fabrik (Remote contractor)

- Using Ink and Unity, worked on content for story-driven adventure game *Saltsea Chronicles*
- Placed character animations and emotive voice sounds to add life and authenticity to dialogue

2018—April 2023: Tools Developer/Writer, Kythera AI, Edinburgh (Remote from 2020)

***Note:** my work in game AI did not involve GPT/LLMs, 'AI art' or any unethical content harvesting tools*

- Developed tools and content for clients' games across multiple genres, engines and platforms
- Involved in design of 'assistant director' system to manage NPCs in *Borderlands EchoVision Live*, including content creation using bespoke UE4/UE5 tools
- Authored procedural AI combat behaviours and quest content in *Aquanox: Deep Descent*
- As part of a team of 2, developed and maintained our React-based AI behaviour tree editor
- Wrote and edited documentation, both in-house and client-facing, and marketing materials
- As member of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team, helped improve hiring practices

2021: Mentorship, Columbia University, New York (Remote)

- Mentored a graduate student through the creation of an interactive fiction game in Inform 7
- Delivered a Q&A session on interactive narrative to a postgraduate digital media class

2014—2017: Software Engineer, Glastonbridge Software, Edinburgh

- Various projects including mobile games, audio processing, and education software

2013—2014: Software Developer, learnPro, Edinburgh

- Developed and maintained C#-based in-house authoring tool for online training courses

2009—2013: Various contract work

2007—2008: Programmer, Press Data Ltd, Edinburgh

- Developed in-house web application to scan newspapers and find articles relevant to clients

2005—2006: Web Programmer, Bulbecks Ltd, Edinburgh

- Worked on a range of web and intranet sites for clients in various sectors

2003—2005: Developer, enCircle Solutions, Loughborough

- As part of a team of two, created a Java/JavaScript/XSLT-based timesheet system

2000—2002: Web Programmer, All-Hotels.com, Edinburgh

- As part of a team of three, developed a Perl/XSLT system for online hotel booking

Game credits

Commercial

- ***Saltsea Chronicles*** (story-based adventure, Die Gute Fabrik, 2023)—Additional Story Tech
- ***Borderlands: EchoVision Live*** (live narrative event, Genvid, 2023)—AI/Narrative Technical Designer
- ***Wolcen: Lords of Mayhem*** (ARPG, Wolcen Studio, 2020)—AI Tools Developer
- ***Aquanox: Deep Descent*** (submarine shooter, Digital Arrow, 2020)—AI Developer
- ***Thaumistry: In Charm's Way*** (interactive fiction, Bob Bates, 2017)—QA

Noncommercial

- ***NetHack*** (roguelike, 1986-2023)—contributed code for monsters and gameplay, and descriptive text
- ***Shunty Train*** (2D casual puzzler, Glastonbridge, 2017)—game design, level design and artwork

Interactive fiction (solo development)

***Gruescript* language (2021—present)**

- Development language/online authoring tool for point-and-click, puzzle-focused, text-based IF
- Full documentation and annotated code examples, including full-length game *The Party Line*
- **Winner of the Xyzzy Award for Best Technological Development in IF**
- Presented at Programming Languages in Interactive Entertainment (PLIE) at AIIDE 2021

***Gruesome* (2021)**

- Revised JavaScript parser engine, incorporating improvements from my point-and-clicks
- Autonomous NPCs who interact with the game world and each other

***Pirateship* (2019)**

- **Shortlisted for four Xyzzy Awards** (Best Setting, Best Puzzles, Best Implementation, Best Use of Innovation)

***Zeppelin Adventure* (2018)**

- Built on the *Draculaland*/*Detectiveland* engine, adding better support for longer prose

***Detectiveland* (2016)**

- Built on the *Draculaland* engine, with improved design adding illustrations, sound and music
- Complex narrative structure using separate 'cases' which can run sequentially or simultaneously, with interdependent narrative pathways and multiple endings
- **Winner, IFComp**—first non-parser game and first 'homebrew' game to win in its 25-year history
- **Shortlisted for six Xyzzy Awards** (Best Game, Best Puzzles, Best Individual Puzzle, Best Implementation, Best Use of Innovation, Best Use of Multimedia)
- **Shortlisted for Reading Digital Fiction's *Opening Up Digital Fiction* award**
- Showcased at AdventureX narrative games expo

***Draculaland* (2016)**

- Implemented a new, JavaScript-based, mobile-friendly point-and-click interface
- Released on the web and as a mobile app for Android using Cordova/PhoneGap
- Showcased at the Wordplay narrative games festival at the British Library

***The Xylophoniad* (2016)**

- **Winner, Spring Thing interactive fiction festival**

***Portcullis* (2015)**

- Included complex NPCs, multiple puzzle solutions, narrative pathways and endings

***Aunts and Butlers* (2006)**

- Built on the engine used for *Hamlet*, adding better support for NPCs
- **Shortlisted for two Xyzzy awards (Best NPCs, Best Individual NPC)**

***Hamlet—The Text Adventure* (2003)**

- Implemented a smooth browser-based parser adventure game engine in JavaScript

I have also made several non-IF web/mobile puzzle games, all freely playable at **versificator.itch.io**.

Other creative work and productions

***Untrue Stories* (audio drama podcast)**

- Self-producing including writing, directing, sound design, editing, and managing a cast of 10
- Completed after one season; peaked at #25 in UK Apple Podcast Comedy Fiction

***Broken Holmes* (stage play)**

- Self-produced, managing 4 cast and 2 crew, at Edinburgh Fringe, 2009 and 2013 (sold out)
- Five productions by companies in the UK and US between 2011 and 2015

***In a Handbag, Darkly* (stage play)**

- Self-produced, managing 9 cast and 2 crew, at Edinburgh Fringe, 2012 (sold out)
- Produced by Idiom Theatre in Bellingham, Washington in 2015

For my full portfolio, including writing samples, see **https://robinjohnson.org**.

Education

BSc Physics with Space Science and Technology (Class 2ii), University of Leicester, 2002
Scottish Highers, 1998: English, Physics, Technological Studies, German (all A), Mathematics (B)

Personal interests

- Environmentalism and social justice, which I believe to be inextricably linked
- Composing and playing music—my favourite instrument is the Appalachian dulcimer
- Cycling, for transport and leisure