

INTERACTIVE FICTION TECHNOLOGY FOUNDATION

2019 Transparency Report

Introduction

This report summarizes the [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#) (IFTF)'s activity from January 2019 through December 2019, including a high-level accounting of the organization's financial income and expenditures. As a public-service organization that many people entrust with their time, attention, and money, IFTF presents this report in an effort to show how it has applied its community's investments over the past calendar year.

IFTF president Jason McIntosh wrote and published this report in March 2020, based on IFTF's internal financial records, [public blog posts](#), and consultations with various other IFTF staff. Jason authored all text except where noted otherwise. All monetary numbers that appear in this report are expressed in U.S. dollars.

Summary: IFTF held its first-ever conference in 2019, and this unsurprisingly dominates our financial reporting, accounting for more than half of all money received and spent during the year.

Our income was otherwise defined by small donations from generous individuals, which continue to provide IFTF's financial backbone, supporting the activities of all our other programs.

Outside of Narrascope's novelty, 2019 proved a stable year for IFTF at the organizational level. We had no significant personnel additions or departures, and ended the year with the same number of programs as we started with. But, those programs' activities tell a more interesting story, so let's turn our attention to them.

Accomplishments

IFTF began and ended 2019 with six active programs, adding one new standing program while another program completed its work and disbanded. The bulk of IFTF's accomplishments happen at the program level, as described below, followed by a description of the year's non-program activity.

Program activity

Each [public-service program](#) within IFTF is steered by an autonomous committee. This section contains summaries of 2019 committee activities, written by each such committee's chairs. It also includes hour-totals of volunteer effort contributed by each committee's membership over the year.

Accessibility testing

Reported by Jason McIntosh, Accessibility Testing Committee chair

In June 2019, after nearly three years of work, the accessibility testing project [delivered its report](#) to the IF community. The report includes the [two games](#) (one Twine, one Inform) that we concocted to test IF platforms' accessibility fitness, and [the survey responses](#) that we received from dozens of players with disabilities who took these games for a spin on a variety of assistive-technology setups.

Most importantly, it lists [fifteen recommendations](#) to IF's creative community for improving the accessibility of future work, both in terms of individual games and the software used to create and present them. These recommendations base themselves on [Accessible Player Experiences](#), a thoroughly researched set of guidelines and design patterns recently published by [The AbleGamers Foundation](#). We believe that these recommendations could help make IF games more accessible not just to players with disabilities, but to the entire potential audience for interactive fiction.

AbleGamers partnered with IFTF on the publication of this report from the start, and we extend our gratitude to it for its invaluable assistance — as well as to all the accessibility consultants and IF experts who volunteered so much time and attention towards this project, and all the players who responded so thoughtfully to our testing surveys.

With this work complete, IFTF's Accessibility Testing program met the concluding terms of its charter, and so the program came to an end as well. IFTF plans to keep the report permanently available at <http://accessibility.iftechfoundation.org>.

Total volunteer hours: 140

Conference

Reported by Justin Bortnick, Conference Committee co-chair

The Narrascope Committee organized our first-ever conference, held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in conjunction with their Comparative Media Studies/Writing Department on June 14–16, 2019. The conference had approximately 250 people in attendance, and financially ran at an expense of \$16,298.09. Our income was \$16,082.09 and thus our deficit was \$216. The conference was well-received by attendees with overwhelmingly positive exit feedback. Planning on a 2020 incarnation of the conference, to be held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign began following Narrascope 2019's conclusion and continues apace. We also began a podcast series following Narrascope 2019 spearheaded by Shae Rossi to more broadly disseminate the conference talks for those who were unable to attend, thus increasing the accessibility of the content.

After Narrascope, Eleri Hamilton and Nick Montfort stepped down from the committee and were replaced with Kacy Crider (Treasurer), Alexis Kim (UIUC representative) and Raluca Percec (Articy representative). Andrew Plotkin stepped down from his role as conference chair but remained on the committee, and the empty chair was filled by Justin Bortnick. Various committee members shuffled roles as planning for the 2020 conference began.

In 2020 we expect to successfully hold Narrascope in May, and begin the planning work for the 2021 iteration. Last month we finalized our programming content for the upcoming conference and will be opening registration soon with the expectation for moderate growth over last year's event, taking into consideration the less accessible location balanced against the lower cost of food and lodging when comparing Urbana to Cambridge.

Total volunteer hours: 250

Education

Reported by Judith Pintar, Education Committee chair

In 2019, the IFTF Education committee consisted of Judith Pintar, Chris Klimas, Brendan Desilets, Jeremiah McCall, Anastasia Salter, Matt Farber, and Stuart Moulthrop, the same group that was approved in 2018, without change. Synchronous and asynchronous meetings were held throughout the year, on our Slack Channel.

Issues up for discussion during the year included the idea of a community association of educators, organized through IFTF for the purpose of sharing experiences and resources. We agreed that one necessary step was to have a place where IF educators could meet and converse. The idea of an IntFiction forum dedicated to educators emerged in our discussions. It was brought to the board and approved, and the forum was created in June to coincide with Narrascope.

Much of the first half of the year was taken up with plans for and development of EdCom's Narrascope panel and teaching workshops. The teaching workshops that we ran at the conference were "MakeLamp: Crafting Parser-Based IF with Inform 7", planned and led by Anastasia Salter and Judith Pintar, "TeachLamp: IF Workshop for Educators", planned by Brendan Desilets and Matt Farber, and led by Brendan, and "Untangling Twine: A Beginner's Workshop" planned and led by Chris Klimas and Stuart Moulthrop.

Following Narrascope, Anastasia and Stuart suggested the possibility of the Education Committee developing a part online/part residential summer IF Writer's Workshop to be taught by members of the committee, and held at the University of Illinois Campus in Champaign-Urbana. This event will be/was announced in early January 2020.

Total volunteer hours: 50

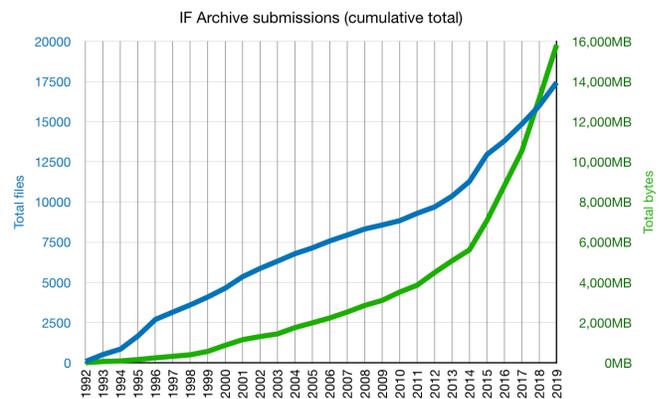
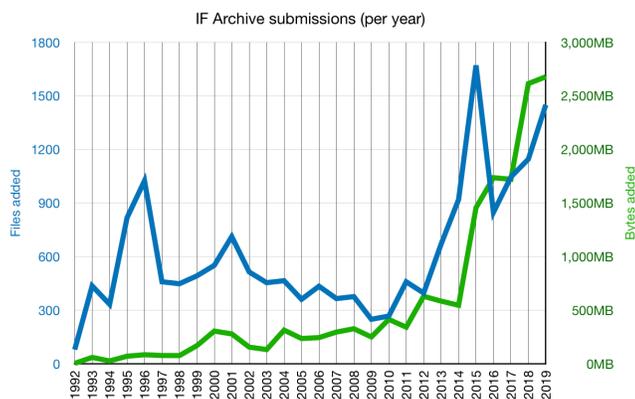
IF Archive

Reported by Andrew Plotkin, IF Archive Committee chair

Archive operations have continued at their usual quiet pace. In 2019, the IF Archive grew by 2.5 gigabytes. 1450 new files were added and filed by our volunteers.

We started a project to store metadata for our archived files. This effort is still in infancy, but the first step was to add IFDB links for most (though not all) game files, game source files, and walkthroughs.

Total volunteer hours: 70



IF Archive submissions, 1992 - 2019

IFComp

The Interactive Fiction Competition has one of our largest committees, consisting of Jacqueline Ashwell, Sam Ashwell, Stephen Granade, Jason McIntosh, Mark Musante, Andrew Plotkin, and Emily Short.

This year marked the 25th annual IFComp, another strong year in terms of entries and prizes. There were 82 entries, 57 of which qualified for a cash prize from our Colossal Fund and/or and a tangible gift from our prize pool.

The competition was heavily covered in blogs and vlogs. For the second year, the IFComp live streamed its award announcements via Twitch (subsequently archived to YouTube), which was again well-attended and well-received.

For its third year, the IFComp held its Colossal Fund campaign, which garnered \$9854 in donations, 80% of which supported IFComp, and 20% of which were held to support running the competition and other general IFTF endeavors.

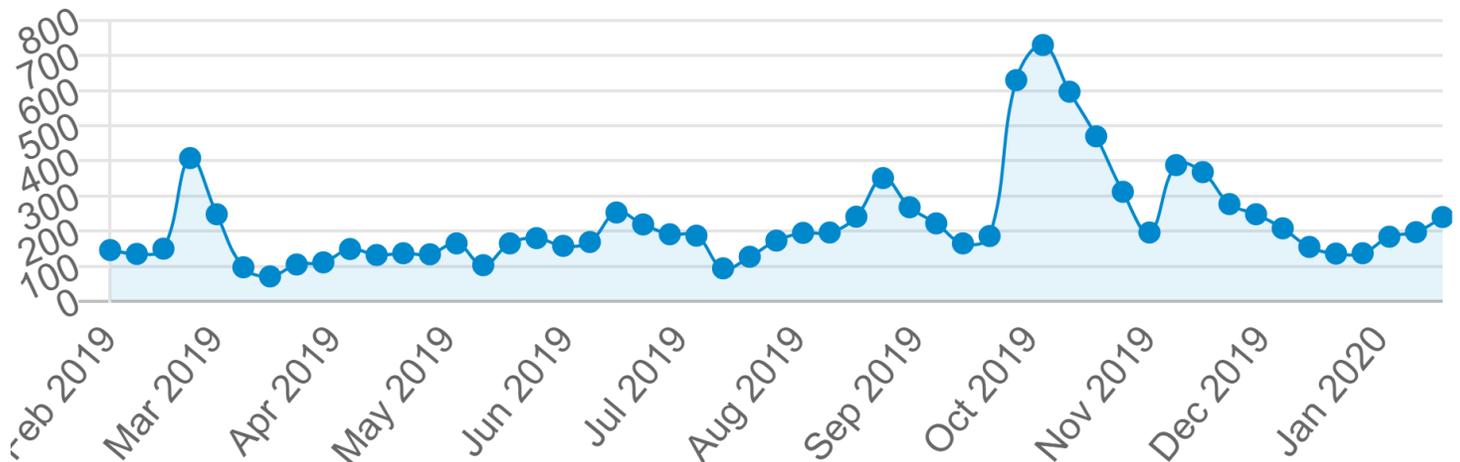
Total volunteer hours: 170

IntFiction Forum

Reported by Dannii Willis, IntFiction Forum Committee chair

This year the IntFiction Community Forum Committee was very pleased to join the IFTF, and in February we migrated to both a new server and new forum software, Discourse. The committee would like to thank Mike Snyder again for the many years he hosted and ran the forum, which has been such an important meeting place for part of the IF community.

Over this year we have seen steady growth, as illustrated below in a graph of posts per week. As in every year, the annual IF Comp leads to a huge activity spike in October-November, but we've seen good growth in all categories as well. We've been happy this year to add sub-categories for ZIL and Dialog, while the Twine sub-category has seen significant growth after the Twine committee decided to retire their question and answer website. We anticipate that 2020 will be another year of steady growth, and welcome everyone in the broader IF community to join us in writing, playing, and discussing IF works and games.



IntFiction.org posts per week, Feb 2019 - Jan 2020

Twine

Reported by Chris Klimas, Twine Committee chair

2019 was a productive year for the Twine committee. Firstly, it completed the process of registering the name Twine as a trademark in the United States for hypertext creation software. The intention of the trademark registration was to protect Twine and its ongoing development, and explicitly not to stifle expression in the community.

The committee also ratified several Twine-related technical specs, most notably Twee 3.0, which is a textual representation of Twine code. This harmonized several different strategies for representing metadata not present in the original Twee syntax, and has been adopted by several Twee compilers.

We continued work on the Twine Cookbook, and published two releases. The committee also shepherded the migration of the Q&A section of twinery.org to the IntFiction.org forum with the gracious assistance of IFTF's IntFiction Forum committee. The migration has been a success, with little to no interruption for its users.

Total volunteer hours: 110

Notable non-program activity

IFTF did not engage in much activity outside of its programs in 2019, other than a bit of PR: Jason McIntosh gave [a presentation to the Providence Geeks technology meetup](#) in February, and he and Jacqueline Ashwell appeared on the podcast *Titans of Text* in December.

Core personnel changes

Unlike 2018, IFTF had a rather static year regarding its leadership roles in 2019.

Changes in board of directors

The board of directors held the same membership all year long.

Jason McIntosh and Judith Pintar both had their two-year terms on the board expire during 2019, and were each re-elected to remain on the board for an additional two-year term by unanimous vote. Jason retained his role as President of IFTF.

By another unanimous vote in January, the board elected director Liza Daly as Secretary of IFTF. Judith Pintar had served as Acting Secretary from early 2018 until this election, and IFTF thanks her for ably filling that role.

Other personnel changes

Neither the advisory committee nor any program's chairship saw changes of personnel in 2019.

Financial summary

In 2019, IFTF took in \$27,702.23, and spent \$26,543.00 (with an additional \$353.85 payable but unspent by December 31). More than half of our income came from NarraScope sales and sponsorships, marking 2019 as the first year that the majority of IFTF's income did not come from simple charitable donations.

At year's end, IFTF's bank accounts held a total of \$10,606.01.

Donations

While 2019 presents the first year that IFTF's income did not come almost entirely from small individual donations, they continue to act as IFTF's financial backbone.

Individuals and small companies donated \$12,721.63 to IFTF in 2019. Of that total, \$8,991.20 was earmarked for IFCOMP (see "The Colossal Fund", below), \$234.83 for Twine, and \$1,263.52 for NarraScope. The remaining \$2,232.08 went into IFTF's general fund.

Additionally, we received \$48.66 in 2019 from Amazon via its Smile program, and \$50.00 in corporate-matched employee donations.

Conference sales and sponsorship

IFTF took in \$12,292.50 from sales of NarraScope 2019 registrations, and an additional \$2,689.10 from corporate and institutional sponsorships of the conference. These two categories alone account for 54 percent of IFTF's total income for the year.

Fundraising initiatives

The Colossal Fund

For the third year running, IFComp once again held its Colossal Fund to raise both competition prize money and funds to support the competition itself.

In 2019, the Colossal Fund set a \$10,000 goal, one thousand dollars larger than that of the previous year. The drive collected \$9,854 from donors – setting a new Colossal Fund record, even if it didn't reach its posted goal.

This resulted in \$7,169 paid out to authors as prize money (taking into account PayPal transaction fees, and authors who declined to receive cash prizes). Of the remainder, \$830 (the total of declined cash prizes) will seed the 2020 Colossal Fund, and \$1,855 goes into IFTF's general fund.

Expenditures

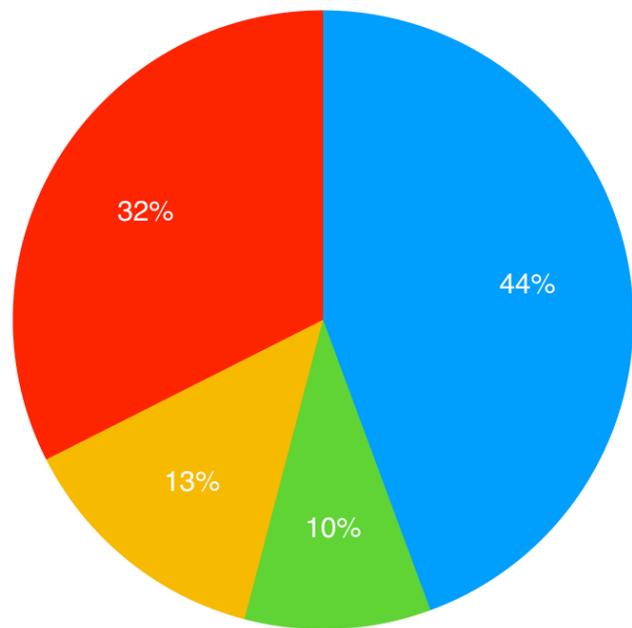
Most money donated to IFTF went right back into the community by way of the Colossal Fund, while every cent that NarraScope collected went into paying for the first NarraScope event. Much of the rest helped keep the lights on for IFTF's various programs.

For a more detailed breakdown of how NarraScope used its money, please see [the separate NarraScope 2019 transparency report](#) prepared by conference co-chair Andrew Plotkin.

("Payable", below, denotes money allocated to but not yet collected by payees by December 31, 2019.)

- \$13,473.30 (51%) paid for NarraScope-related services: venue fees, food and beverage costs, and reimbursing keynote speakers' travel costs.
- \$8,104.60 (31%) (plus \$303.85 payable) went to grants and awards:
 - \$7,744.28 towards IFComp prizes, via the Colossal Fund.
 - \$360.32 bought the Amazon gift cards that the Accessibility Testing program distributed to volunteer testers as tokens of gratitude for their assistance.
- \$1,853.31 (7%) bought office supplies and other physical materials, mainly those distributed at NarraScope 2019, including bags, badges, and program booklets. This also got us a new checkbook, so we can write all the checks we need to pay for some of this stuff..

● Conference registration ● Conference sponsorship
● Other donations ● Colossal Fund donations



IFTF 2019 income by category

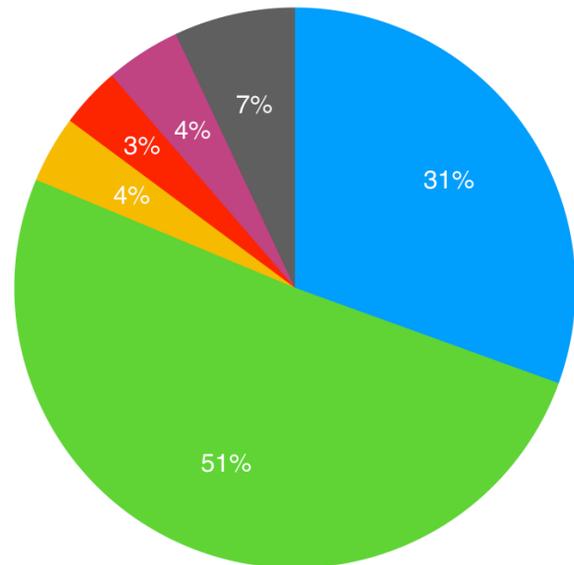
- \$1,152.99 (4%) covered all our programs’ various infrastructure costs. This includes server hosting, domain transfers and renewals, and the use of online services such as Cloudflare and Amazon S3. It also paid for the organization’s physical post-office box in Cambridge.
- \$980.00 (4%) paid for non-NarraScope-related professional services:
 - \$680.00 covered the annual premium of IFTF’s D&O insurance policy.
 - \$250.00 commissioned artwork to celebrate the 25th annual IFComp.
 - \$50.00 (plus \$50.00 payable) paid a nonprofit-planning consultant.
- \$928.90 (3%) let us print up NarraScope and IFTF promotional goodies: pins, stickers, and business cards.

Overall health, and future outlook

Our 2018 report ended with “we anticipate 2019 to be a transformative year for IFTF via NarraScope”. If we consider cash-throughput as a rough indicator of organizational activity and prominence, then this prediction would seem to have come to pass, with IFTF both receiving and spending around twice as much money in 2019 as the year prior, and almost entirely due to NarraScope.

Outside of NarraScope, IFTF had a financially stable year. Donations were up slightly from 2018, and our final bank balance ended the year a few hundred dollars above its starting level. Given that we ran a conference and also launched the IntFiction.org forum program with all its own attendant ongoing costs, we may mark this as a sign of quiet success.

As hinted by the expenditures list above, IFTF’s board of directors ended the year by investing a modest amount of money into hiring a consultant to help us plan the organization’s next several years. This planning continues into 2020, and reflects IFTF’s continued, gradual growth into a financially stable nonprofit that intends to serve its public for a long time to come. We therefore see 2020 as a year that will not so much involve any transformative new projects or programs, but instead efforts to examine IFTF’s progress since 2016, update our public presence appropriately, and chart a multi-year course for the organization to follow.



IFTF 2019 expenses by category