

Preface

After two years as a virtual conference due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, the 18th AAAI conference on Artificial Intelligence and Interactive Digital Entertainment is returning this year to an in-person meeting at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, California, USA.

AIIDE remains a small but active event. For many in our research community, AIIDE is the first choice of venue to publish work on AI and games due to the conference's emphasis on high-quality, rigorous, constructive peer review and the expectation that a research paper's claims be clearly stated and thoroughly evaluated.

This year we have made several improvements to the conference based on community feedback. First, we introduced the Software Track, which is the successor to AIIDE's long tradition of publishing Playable Experiences and Demonstrations. The Software Track is a place to submit full or short papers where the main contribution is research software, including games and other interactive artifacts.

We have expanded the page limit for full papers to be 8 pages plus up to 2 pages of appendices. AIIDE continues to publish all accepted papers at their full length regardless of whether they are presented orally or as a poster at the conference. This remains one of AIIDE's great strengths.

We have also revamped the aging conference website, aiide.org, and compiled a historical record of the organizing committees, keynotes speakers, and awards given at past meetings. We have established what we hope will be a permanent public archive for the code and data artifacts that are submitted alongside many AIIDE papers.

Finally, we piloted a new outreach program this year which matched experienced AIIDE authors with people new to AIIDE and in need of help designing or writing research papers. We had four matches this year, and two materialized into submitted papers. We hope to continue the program next year. We offer our sincere thanks to mentors for their volunteer effort.

Overall, 52 full length papers, 8 short papers, as well as 4 Doctoral Consortium abstracts and one practitioner paper were submitted to the conference and reviewed by our program committee. Of the 52 full papers, 44 were submitted to the research track, and 8 to the software track. After a thorough review, the program committee recommended 13 papers for acceptance as full papers (25% acceptance rate), and another 19 papers for acceptance as posters (62% acceptance rate as full paper or poster).

This year's conference will feature three keynote talks. Borut Pfeifer of Wolfeye Studios will return as an AIIDE keynote speaker after 14 years to discuss the variety of procedural storytelling systems used in the newly released game *Weird West*. Jill Fain Lehman of Carnegie Mellon University will reflect on over a decade of research on interacting with

autonomous characters via natural language. Ankur Oswal of Obsidian Entertainment will discuss the interaction of AI systems and game design in commercial games.

The conference will also feature three workshops: Experimental AI in Games (EXAG), Intelligent Narrative Technologies (INT), and Strategy Games (SG). All three of these workshops have a long history of meeting at AIIDE. There will also be a virtual event focusing on Esports Analytics, the annual Doctoral Consortium, and the 13th iteration of AIIDE's StarCraft AI competition.

We would like to sincerely thank our silver sponsor, Ubisoft LaForge, and our bronze sponsors, DeepMind and the Artificial Intelligence journal, for their support of the conference. These sponsor funds were critical for supporting our invited speakers and assisting doctoral consortium students who would not have been able to attend otherwise.

Organizing this conference would not have been possible without the selfless volunteer effort of our organizing committee. We would like to thank Arnav Jhala (Workshops Chair), Raluca Gaina (Software Track Chair), Rob Zubek and Jurie Horneman (Industry Chairs), Jim Whitehead and Bahar Bateni (Doctoral Consortium Chairs), Adam Summerville (Local Arrangements Chair), Joseph C. Osborn (Outreach Chair), Anton Vinogradov and Sasha Azad (Publicity Chairs), and David Churchill (StarCraft competition). We also owe a deep debt of gratitude to the AAAI staff for their help in organizing this event, especially Meredith Ellison (AAAI Executive Director) and Chesley Grove (AAAI Conference Manager).

Stephen G. Ware
General Chair

Markus Eger
Program Chair