

**INTERACTIVE  
FICTION  
TECHNOLOGY  
FOUNDATION**

## 2018 Transparency Report

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### Introduction

This report summarizes the [Interactive Fiction Technology Foundation](#) (IFTF)'s activity from January 2018 through December 2018, 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 compiled this report in March 2019, 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:** Much like [the previous year](#), 2018 saw IFTF funded primarily by small donations from generous individuals. Expenditures mixed modest technology-service costs tied to various programs with a few larger professional-service fees, as well as a sizable prize-pool for the IFComp. IFTF launched two new public-service programs, while another program held a significant fundraising event. We anticipate 2019 to become a standout year in IFTF's early history by way of its first-ever conference.

### Accomplishments

In 2018, IFTF launched two new standing programs, ending up with six active programs by year's end. This section of this report includes summaries of each program's activity, written by the chairs of the respective programs' committees.

IFTF also engaged in a number of other minor initiatives outside those managed by standing program committees. A short summary of this activity follows the program reports.

## Program activity

Each [public-service program](#) within IFTF is steered by an autonomous committee. This section contains summaries of 2018 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*

**Total volunteer hours:** 178

After more than a year of discussion, the [Accessibility Testing Committee](#) decided in early 2018 to pare down its goals and tighten its focus.

For the sake of simplicity, the committee dropped testing the accessibility of IF creation tools from its goals, focusing exclusively on game-play platforms instead. From there, we decided to create two IF games – one parser-based (via Inform) and one hypertext (via Twine) – that would serve as accessibility obstacle courses for different play-platforms. We planned to invite volunteers, all users of different assistive technologies (such as text-to-speech screen readers), to play the games and then rate their experiences with a set of surveys. We would then analyze this data and present it all to the community in the form of a final report, filled with observations and recommendations from the various accessibility experts on our committee.

By the year's end, we had the games written and tested, the surveys drafted, and a call for testers released to the world by way of the [AbleGamers Foundation's Player Panels program](#). At the time of my writing this summary in mid-March of 2019, we have collected a lot of wonderful and surprising player response. I very much look forward to describing, for next year's transparency report, what we ended up doing with it all.

### Conference

*Reported by Andrew Plotkin, Conference Committee co-chair*

**Total volunteer hours:** 78

Our brand-new [Conference Committee](#) is running a conference! [NarraScope 2019](#) was announced in March. We solicited program content from the community from November through January. We wound up with a terrific planned program, and we are on track for the conference to launch in mid-June of 2019.

## Education

*Reported by Judith Pinter, Education Committee chair*

**Total volunteer hours:** 118

On January 31, 2018, the IFTF board ratified the charter of the new IFTF Education Committee, with Judith Pinter serving as the director of the committee. Chris Klimas was added to the committee on February 27, 2018, and the other five members, Brendan Desilets, Jeremiah McCall, Anastasia Salter, Matt Farber, and Stuart Moulthrop were approved as committee members on April 24th 2018. Monthly committee meetings were held on Slack beginning in April for the rest of 2018.

An initial effort towards creating a website with curated resources for IF Educators was tabled as we shifted towards a more expansive conversation about how to affiliate educators who use IF, or who wish to do so, into some sort of community association through IFTF, for the purpose of sharing resources and experiences. As plans for the migration of intfiction to IFTF and for the NarraScope conference were in the works, the Education Committee began more pointed discussions about what the organization of such an IF educator's community or association should look like, and what sorts of social media platforms would be best to use as a base for communication.

Finally, the Education Committee took on the task of developing teaching workshops for the NarraScope conference. The three workshops that we proposed and will be running at the conference are: "Make Lamp: Crafting Parser-Based IF with Inform 7", led by Anastasia Salter and Judith Pinter, "Teach Lamp: IF Workshop for Educators", led by Brendan Desilets and Matt Farber, and "Untangling Twine: A Beginner's Workshop" led by Chris Klimas and Stuart Moulthrop.

## IF Archive

*Reported by Andrew Plotkin, IF Archive Committee chair*

**Total volunteer hours:** 67

The [IF Archive Committee](#) updated the IF Archive to a beefier (virtual) machine, and also set it up with Cloudflare for content caching and delivery. This replaced the old volunteer IF Archive Mirror network, which was enthusiastic but hard to keep in a consistent state.

We also gave the old [Inform 6 web site](#) a permanent home on IFTF infrastructure, helped Ian Millington transition his [Undum site](#) to GitHub, and [placed the bibliographic standard for IF known as the \*Treaty of Babel\*](#) under a Creative Commons license.

## IFComp

*Reported by Jacqueline Ashwell, IFComp Committee chair*

## **Total volunteer hours: 179**

The Interactive Fiction Competition has one of our largest committees, consisting of Jacqueline Ashwell, Sam Ashwell, Stephen Granade, Flourish Klink, Jason McIntosh, Mark Musante, Andrew Plotkin, Aaron Reed, Emily Short, and Carolyn VanEseltine. In 2018, Jason McIntosh transferred the lead organizing role to Jacqueline Ashwell, and Jason McIntosh stayed on as technical lead.

This year marked the 24th annual IFComp, another strong year in terms of entries and prizes. There were 77 entries, 51 of which qualified for a cash prize from our Colossal Fund and a tangible gift from our prize pool. The competition was heavily covered in blogs, and collections of post-competition thoughts were promoted by video game industry news site Gamasutra. Of particular note, this year the IFComp experimented with live streaming its award announcements via Twitch, which was well-attended and well-received.

For its second year, the IFComp held its Colossal Fund campaign, garnering 83 donations that amounted to \$9000, 80% of which supported IFComp, and 20% of which is held to support running the competition and other general IFTF endeavors. IFComp also benefitted from the volunteer labor of many people—in total, 179 person-hours. Jacqueline Ashwell provided the most labor, as organizer, followed closely by Jason McIntosh as technical lead, and Thomas Mack as prize distribution coordinator. Other volunteers were: Line Hollis (pre-screening entries); Andrew Plotkin (website maintenance and Colossal Fund prize distribution); Emily Short (planning and rules consultation); and Sam Ashwell (proof-reading, planning, and rules consultation).

## **Twine**

*Reported by Chris Klimas, Twine Committee chair*

### **Total volunteer hours: 111**

The Twine committee's major accomplishment for 2018 was launching the [Twine Cookbook](#), a resource for Twine authors that demonstrates how to perform common tasks with major Twine story formats, such as displaying text in a delayed fashion or incorporating custom fonts. Its first release was in January 2018, and has seen several subsequent releases that have incorporated community content.

The committee also started [Twine News](#), a twice-monthly roundup of Twine-related releases, events, and other news of interest to the community.

The committee began the process of filing a U.S. trademark application for Twine that will belong to the IFTF, but as of the end of the 2018 calendar year, that process had not yet completed.

In 2018, Liz England left the Twine committee, and M.C. DeMarco, a long-standing member of the Twine community and author of several story formats, joined it.

## **Notable non-program activity**

Public IFTF-related accomplishments in 2018 that were not tied to any particular program included the following:

- We published [the results of the IFDB user survey](#) that Judith Pintar conducted in 2017 (as documented in that year's transparency report).
- Jason McIntosh wrote [an article about the intersection of interactive fiction and open source software](#), published on [OpenSource.com](#).

## Core personnel changes

### Changes in board of directors

In March, co-founder Flourish Klink chose to step down at the end of her two-year term on the board. Among all the other work she contributed towards IFTF's construction and launch, Flourish first suggested that IFTF adopt a strongly transparent public attitude, including an open-book policy with its finances. She proceeded to lead by example, authoring IFTF's first two annual transparency reports. Let this third report stand as evidence to the lasting nature of her efforts.

In August, the board welcomed Liza Daly, a software engineer, startup founder, and technology executive who specializes in digital publishing. She founded ifMUD, an early, influential chatroom for the IF community, and has authored several parser and hypertext games. This work most recently includes the XYZZY Award-winning *Harmonia*, a delightfully marginalia-driven story that finished among IFComp 2017's top five entries.

### Changes in advisory committee

Also in August, Graham Nelson accepted IFTF's invitation to join its advisory committee. Graham is a fellow in pure mathematics at St. Anne's College of the University of Oxford, but the IF community recognizes him chiefly as the inventor and ongoing lead developer of Inform (as well as the author of *Curses*, the sprawling text adventure that debuted Inform to the world). Inform helped catalyze interactive fiction out of its post-commercial dormancy in the 1990s, and continues to serve as a centrally important tool for countless authors creating new work.

### Changes in program leadership

In January, Jacqueline Ashwell became chair of the IFComp committee – thus also becoming the annual competition's new head organizer, and the fifth in its 23-year history. Jacqueline took over the reins from Jason McIntosh, who had organized the Comp since 2014.

That same month, Jason proceeded to become the new chair of the Accessibility Testing Committee, formerly led by Claire Furkle. Claire remains on that committee as its resident Twine technology expert.

# Financial summary

In 2018, IFTF took in \$8,555.02, and spent \$7,977.88 (with an additional \$73.58 payable but unspent).

At year's end, IFTF's bank accounts held a total of \$9,445.78.

## Donations

As with 2017, IFTF's income in 2018 almost entirely comprised donations from individuals and small companies. Most of these donations arrived via the Colossal Fund drive (described in more detail below). These donations totaled \$8,387.25.

Additionally, we received \$31.50 in 2018 from Amazon via its Smile program, and \$15.00 in corporate-matched employee donations.

IFTF also received donations from its founders in 2018 totaling one dollar and thirty-six cents. The author of this report seems to recall this as resulting from a test of IFTF's PayPal-based system for accepting recurring donations, carried out over a two-month period. (See "Enabling monthly support", below.) It worked.

## Merchandise sales

An additional \$119.91 came from sales of IFTF-branded merchandise, which is to say IF Archive-themed clothing and tchotchkes sold through our [online gift shop](#).

## Grants

IFTF continued to investigate grant opportunities throughout 2018, but did not receive any grant money that year.

## Fundraising initiatives

### The Colossal Fund

After a resounding success in 2017, IFComp once again held its Colossal Fund to raise both competition prize money and funds to support the competition itself.

In 2018, the Colossal Fund set a \$9,000 goal, one-third larger than that of the previous year, and succeeded in reaching it. This resulted in \$5,791.11 paid out to authors as prize money (taking into account PayPal transaction fees, and authors who declined to receive cash prizes). IFTF added the remaining \$1,922.30 to the organization's general fund.

(These totals do not include \$73.58 of prize money claimed but not yet delivered by year's end.)

## Enabling monthly support

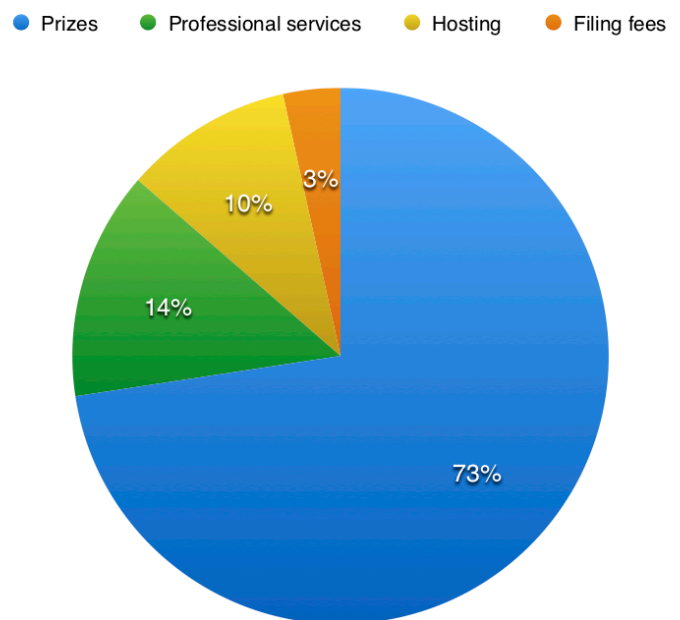
In May, IFTF began a new policy of rewarding folks who set up a recurring donation of \$5 or more per month with [special recognition on the organization's website](#). Community response was mild but extant, with a handful of generous monthly donors' names enshrined by year's end.

Having even a small dependable income flow can make a big difference to a little nonprofit like this one. IFTF salutes the first community members who become recurring donors, and we look forward to finding new ways to encourage a lot more company for them.

## Expenditures

The ways that IFTF spent money in 2018 much resembled that of the year before. Most money donated went right back into the community by way of the Colossal Fund, and the rest helped keep the lights on for IFTF's various programs.

- \$5,791.11 (73%) went towards IFComp prizes, via the Colossal Fund.
- \$1,100.00 (14%) paid for professional services. In 2018, that went entirely to IFTF's lawyer, who helped make all of our programs GDPR-ready with updated terms-of-use policies for their respective websites.
- \$811.77 (10%) covered all our programs' various infrastructure costs. This includes server hosting, domain transfers and renewals, and the use of online services such as Cloudflare and Amazon S3. It also paid for the organization's physical post-office box in Cambridge.
- \$275.00 (3%) covered the filing fee for the Twine program's trademark application.



IFTF spent no money on promotional items or services in 2018.

## Overall health, and future outlook

IFTF's 2018 income total is about 58 percent the size of its 2017 income. We don't see this difference as cause for immediate concern: with only two full calendar-years of operation we have rather too few datapoints to declare a trend-line, and the donations we did receive continue to cover the organization's costs. (Furthermore, we can attribute much of the difference to the presence in 2017 of a single, large donation from a particularly generous individual.)

The difference does, however, highlight IFTF's need for regular and reliable income as it continues to expand the variety – and cost – of its programs. The organization began investigating such routes in 2018, and will continue to do so in 2019 and beyond. And while we do possess a buffer against modest future shortfalls, ending the year with cash holdings of over \$9,000, we don't wish to depend on that.

We anticipate 2019 to be a transformative year for IFTF via NarraScope, our first conference, scheduled for June. This IFTF-facilitated gathering of people, art, and ideas may significantly expand IFTF's reach and recognition, moving the organization beyond the very modest scale at which it has so far operated. Only time will tell what happens, but IFTF's directors will continue to seek opportunities that will allow the organization to best serve its digital arts community.