

This is transcript for Richard Holeyton's interview for Inventio in 5, published in *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 28(1), available at <https://kairos.technorhetoric.net/28.1/inventio/index.html#holeton>

## Holeyton Inventio in 5 Descriptive Transcript

0:05

Rich Shivener

Hi, everyone, I'm Rich Shivener.

Title slide reads: "Inventio in 5: A Kairos Mini Series. Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy"

0:07

Liz Chamberlain

And I'm Liz Chamberlain. We're co-editors of Inventio. We're serious about the "how" of digital media scholarship. In Inventio, authors interrogate how their digital scholarship came to be.

[A split-screen Zoom shows Rich Shivener and Liz Chamberlain in their home offices. Each waves at the camera.]

0:16

Rich Shivener

And as Inventio editors, we invite you to participate in this series. Reach out to us anytime at the Kairos email listed below. We also plan to reach out to more authors as the series continues. Until then, thanks for watching.

[An introductory title slide features a photograph and brief bio of Richard Holeyton: "Richard Holeyton is a fiction writer, education consultant, and former teacher and administrator at Stanford University." On the right side of the slide, there is an illustration of three shining blue balls suspended by black wires, above a description of Holeyton's Kairos text, "The Winograd Matrix": "In this interactive fiction, a gaming-industry couple are confined together in a near-future, post-pandemic world of Favatars, Syndics, and roving bands of Ferengi thugs. Unlike other Choose..."]

0:45

Richard Holeyton

Lots of research, sometimes procrastinating, sometimes going down rabbit holes.

Sometimes I think it's not really wasted time, because I'm kind of percolating and digesting, and so on.

For this project because it involves software, then a lot of my time is just trying to figure out how to make the software do what I want it to.

[A question slide says, "What did the prep stage look like?"]

Holeyton, male-presenting, with white hair, black-framed glasses, and a blue collared shirt, speaks in a Zoom from an office with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves.

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A screen recording from "Winograd" shows a novel-like page, with "CONTENTS: steel" at the top and navigation buttons at the bottom. The user clicks "Next," and the text on the page changes.

A title slide reads, "What did the research stage look like?"]

1:20

Richard Holeyton

I've looked at some, you know, other simple Twine games.

I was inspired a little bit by Stuart Moulthrop who is an e-lit writer who I admire, and he was experimenting with doing some stuff with Twine Chapbook and a woman named Lyle Skains in the UK, also doing a lot of stuff with Twine, and I got some pointers from her.

And I just tried to look at what I thought other, just what other interactive fiction in general—what it was doing, I guess.

Richard shrugs slightly at "what it was doing, I guess."

[A title slide reads, "Do you enjoy the research process, or do you see it as a means to an end?"]

2:16

Richard Holeyton

Well, both. I mean, it's fun to look at and see what other people are doing.

And it's always a means to an end for me because the medium that I'm writing in is always part of what I'm exploring.

So in this case I wanted to not just use Twine, but kind of, you know, interrogate it or look at the medium itself.

And so I always have the purpose of—so the medium is always influencing my content at the same time.

[Title slide reads, "How has your composing process evolved throughout the years?"]

3:07

Richard Holeyton

Yeah, it's definitely evolved, because I'm now retired, or semi-retired, so I have, you know, more time to focus on my writing, which also means more time to procrastinate because that's the main thing that writers do in my experience or for me.

[Richard smiles and laughs as he finishes this sentence.]

Sometimes it's useful, procrastination, I guess.

When I was writing my hypertext novel, I was doing an MFA, having two young kids, being a resident fellow with it at a dorm at Stanford, and teaching and administering all at the same

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time.

[Richard counts these things on his fingers as he lists them off.]

So my writing process was little wherever I could find time: early in the morning, little bit on the weekend, and so I guess it's always been "find a way, make the time, no matter what," I think, get feedback. Always getting feedback for my work has always been part of my process.

Find trusted readers. In the final stages of revision, I read my work aloud, and that's another way to learn a different angle on your stuff. How does it sound, how does it read?

I want, you know, stuff to be able to sound good read aloud, and then an audience could listen to it and enjoy it.

[Title slide reads, "Is there anything that you'd do differently concerning composition?"]

4:56

Yes, I hit up against my limitations with how much I am willing to master the software versus getting something done. And that's always a trade off to me.

I don't wanna be a software developer. I don't want to spend all my time learning software. I want to write, and so I want to write in tools that I know.

I wanted it to do certain things that I never... couldn't figure out how to do, like have the links change colour after you visit the space.

[Here, a screen recording clicks through several pages of "Winograd."]

I would have ideally made the navigation different if I knew how to make Chapbook do it, you know, do what I wanted it to do.

Chapbook is either limited, or I'm limited in what I could make Chapbook do, and it would have, you know, done some of the formatting differently.

So mostly the formatting and the navigation.

[Title slide reads, "Did anyone give you advice that you've now implemented into your process today?"]

5:57

Richard Holeyton

I guess, in terms of advice, just, if you want to be a writer you just have to keep... Find a way to keep doing it.

You just have to be determined. There's lots of people that have talent, that they just, you know, that they're not determined to just keep doing it.

Keep plugging away with however you need to do it.

[Title slide reads, "What advice would you share to help other writers overcome

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procrastination?"]

6:28

Richard Holeyton

Maybe be patient with yourself. I know that when I'm in the procrastination mode it's because I know I'm not sure how to move forward, and I haven't hit on the thing.

During the procrastination phase, I'm endlessly researching Winograd schemas and endlessly looking at, you know, Twine documentation until I find a way forward.

I don't know if I have any help other than being patient with yourself until you find the thing that clicks for you, that moves you forward.

[Title slide reads, "Is procrastination a part of your writing process?"]

7:15

Richard Holeyton

You know, I think it's percolating, you know.

And there are these cognitive things, too, that that they tell us, like when I'm you know, when you shut your brain down, when you're struggling with whatever you is you're working on, and then when you go for a walk, or for me it's like swimming, and then you just shut your brain down. And that's when you allow connections to be made, maybe less on the conscious level.

But your brain still working, and if you're a writer and you really want, and you're motivated cause, you want to write something, well, you're going to be working on those subconscious things all the time.

And so, let yourself, you know, go do those things.

Go take that walk, go do whatever it is.

So I agree, I mean, I think for me, that the procrastination is just part of the process. I've just come to accept it.

[Closing slide reads: "Edited by: Leah Ciani, Chante Douglas. Music credit: 'Lo-Fi Chill Hip Hop | Chilling' by Alex Productions"]