Chapter 1
An Interview with Roy E. Disney

In May 2002 I approached Mark Mandelbaum at the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) about publishing a new nonprofit magazine *Computers in Entertainment* (CiE) to cover a wide range of theoretical and practical computer applications in the field of entertainment. Instead of singularly addressing game design, computer graphics, or other specialized areas, the complexity of entertainment nowadays and in the future requires inter-disciplinary technological advances and integrated applications. The magazine offers a broad as well as an in-depth view of computer technology that can be applied to existing entertainment and that can create new genres of entertainment.

The first editorial board meeting was held on March 12, 2003 with Disney Fellow Dr. Alan Kay, Kim Rose, Disney corporate vice president Bob Lambert, and myself at the famous Rotunda restaurant located at the Team Disney building (aka the “Seven Dwarfs Building”) at the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California (see Fig. 1.1). We discussed the scope of the new magazine, outlined the first issues, and suggested new board members to invite and to interview (among them were Quincy Jones, Seymour Papert, and Roy E. Disney).

In October 2003 the inaugural issue of ACM *Computers in Entertainment* was published with the theme “Educating Kids through Entertainment.” My first interviewee for the magazine was Roy E. Disney, Vice Chairman of The Walt Disney Company at the time of the interview.

In the morning of May 28, 2003, my colleagues Eric Huff, John Michael Ferrari, and Jessica Chavez arrived at the Walt Disney Studios to assist me with the lighting equipment and video camera. I was nervous because it was my first video interview for the magazine, and Roy E. Disney was the top boss at Disney—the company I was working for. My fear subsided when Roy turned out to be very warm, kind, friendly, approachable, and easy to talk to.

The following is the transcript of my video interview with Roy E. Disney held on May 28, 2003 in his office at the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank (see Fig. 1.2):

Newton Lee: Congratulations on your 50 years of achievements in entertainment.
Roy E. Disney: Thank you. It doesn’t seem like 50 years, I promise.
Lee: Based on your half a century of experience, what do you think about educating children through entertainment?
Chapter 2
Stories Across Media

From There to Here: The Beginning of Interactive Stories

The early 1990s was a heady time for interactive digital stories. Just a few years earlier, in 1987, Amanda Goodenough had used the newly-released HyperCard to write the first interactive digital story, *Inigo Gets Out*.\(^1\) Her motivation? To capture the traditional storytelling atmosphere her grandmother had created for her when she was a young child: a vital interactive environment in which her grandmother would say, “what do you think happens next?” and in which the lines were never the same. The stories her grandmother told became Amanda’s as she helped shape them with her own interpretations and brought them into her everyday reality. In Amanda’s *interactive story*, children make Inigo’s actions their own. “Children know intuitively where to click,” and how to make the story happen. It is no longer a “print” story, with words and pictures on a page, but a virtual story environment with which to interact and in which things can be made to happen.

*Inigo* was closely followed in 1988 by one of the first edutainment video games, *Mixed-Up Mother Goose*.\(^2\) Sierra On-Line’s Roberta Williams, who had created the first graphic adventure game *Mystery House* in 1979, wanted to develop a game for her children that was more than entertainment, that also had an educational component. She chose to work with popular nursery rhymes and in *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* created an interactive story in which children travel to a land where the rhymes are real and have gotten themselves all mixed up. The children help each of the characters put their rhyme back in order by bringing back objects, people, or animals that

---

\(^1\) *Inigo Gets Out* is the first interactive digital story created in 1987 by Amanda Goodenough using the HyperCard program. Photo of *Inigo Gets Out*: http://www.smackerel.net/black_white_03.html.


---

Chapter 3
Early Animation: Gags and Situations

Getting into the Business of Animation

Walt Disney officially incorporated *Laugh-O-Gram Films* on May 18, 1922. He was, at the time, working at Kansas City Film Ad Company where he had been hired two years earlier. Film Ad had brought him into the world of animation; his tremendous curiosity and interest led him to experiment on his own time and eventually to make his own films.

The ad animations Walt worked on at Film Ad were made entirely of figures cut out of paper. Joints were riveted so figures could be manipulated and changed for each frame of film shot. Animated cartoons on the other hand, a staple at theatres by 1915, consisted of drawings. The first animations entranced audiences with their “magic” quality: moving drawings were novel and audiences loved them no matter what the quality or content. In 1914, Winsor McCay, of *Little Nemo* fame, brought a realistic personality to animation with *Gertie the Dinosaur*. McCay depicted a style of movement that endeared Gertie to the audience. In the film, Gertie comes lumbering out of a cave by the side of a lake and proceeds to eat an entire tree. McCay asks Gertie to do some tricks but when she doesn’t raise her left foot as he has asked, he scolds her and she cries. She gets over it quickly and subsequent action includes her meeting an elephant and tossing it into the lake, lying down for a nap, scratching her head, her nose, and her chin with her tail in a charming fashion, drinking the lake dry, and finally, giving McCay a ride out of the picture. In creating a personality for Gertie, George McManus laid the road for animation as a new film genre based in characters not in magic.1

Such animation intrigued Walt. He had come to Film Ad as a commercial artist and a cartoonist without any experience in animation, a typical trajectory at the time.

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

1 Newspaper cartoonist George McManus bet Winsor McCay that a dinosaur could not be brought to life. To win, McCay made Gertie, the world’s first animated dinosaur. Photo of Gertie: http://cinemamonstruoso.blogspot.com/2010/05/gertie-dinosaur-1914-gertie-on-tour.html.
Chapter 4
From Gags to Characters

A New Animated Experience for the Audience

Margaret Winkler, a New York distributor, had received the promotional letter Walt had sent out in May, 1923. She was having problems with two of the series she represented and was eager to find a new cartoon series with which to replace them. Without seeing Alice’s Wonderland she had written back immediately. Walt, discouraged with the financial problems of Laugh-O-Grams, had already left for Hollywood in early August 1923 and had “put my drawing board away. What I wanted to do was get a job in a studio—any studio, doing anything” (Gabler 77). He visited them all, looking for ways to get introductions and find work in the film industry, but he made little headway. Walt wrote Winkler back from Los Angeles in August saying he was starting a new venture and was intent on working at one of the film studios so that he could “better study technical detail and comedy situations and combine them with [his] cartoons.” Winkler was persistent in wanting to see the reel and Walt finally got a copy to her in October. She immediately offered him US$ 1,500 each for the first six films and US$ 1,800 each for the next six. Even more important for a fledgling business, she offered to pay for each of the animations as they were completed and wanted to have the first one delivered by January 2. As part of the contract she sent out to Walt, she included an option for 24 more shorts (two series of twelve) to be produced in 1925 and 1926. This was an offer that had some potential to provide the type of financial security required to build an animation studio.

While Walt could rely on his staff at Laugh-O-Grams, however dwindling, to produce Alice’s Wonderland, when he was first getting started in Los Angeles, he was little equipped to deliver on his promise of even one animated short. Relying on Roy as a partner, he hustled to set up a studio. The two brothers borrowed money from relatives and friends, bought a new camera, and set up shop in a small office on Kingswell Street. They named their new studio Disney Bros. Cartoon Studio.

Walt had conceived Alice’s Wonderland as a new take on an animation schema popular at the time. Cartoon characters had been popping in and out of the real
Chapter 5
Synchronizing Sound and Character

From Silent to Talkie

*Plane Crazy*, the debut cartoon for Walt’s new character Mickey Mouse, was completed in secret by Ub Iwerks for a mid-May release. With the staff defecting to Mintz still in the office finishing the last three *Oswalds* left in the contract, Iwerks worked behind closed doors during the day and late into the evening. Walt had family and friends helping him out at his garage workshop doing inking and painting but only Iwerks worked on the drawings; the lack of resources and time meant that the new cartoon was hurried through production with little time spent on development. Iwerks set himself the goal of completing 700 drawings a day. For all his skills, the animation could only be simply drawn—Mickey had a stick-finger feel—and consisted of crude gags and a story based lightly on a previous *Oswald* cartoon. The progress the studio had made in improving animation techniques and creating more original gags and storylines suffered in the move from *Oswald* to their new character Mickey in much the same way that the progress made with some of the *Laugh-O-Grams* suffered in the change to the *Alice* cartoons.

Although *Plane Crazy* prompted some interest when Walt did the rounds of the distributors and movie houses, animations were no longer the novelty that had once drawn audiences to the theatre and he had difficulty getting interested buyers. Even so, the studio began on the second Mickey cartoon, *The Gallopin’ Gaucho*, and slated it for completion in June. After a number of distribution possibilities fell through, Walt started looking for something new to generate interest, as he had when trying to sell the *Laugh-O-Grams*.

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

Chapter 6
Drawing and Color: The Language of Realism

You’re going to develop more; you’re getting hold of your medium.
Charlie Chaplin 1931

Pencil Tests and Overlapping Action

When Walt’s studio first used sound in the Mickey cartoons and in the Silly Symphonies most of the animators’ time was spent on figuring out the basic synchronization between sound and movement and improving it, less attention was paid to the details of animation and story. For Walt there was always the need to push forward and with the increased success of their sound cartoons the Disney studio turned its attention again to its animation production and drawing techniques and how these could improve how they created the storyline and the character development.

One difficulty Walt and his animators had was knowing whether the way a sequence was being animated was really effective. To know if the action was what they wanted, or if indeed they’d made a mistake of some kind, they would have to wait until the cartoon was filmed and then, an entire sequence might have to be redrawn, inked, and colored. The animators felt they needed an interim stage: they photographed the key poses as drawings and when they had enough for a sequence they developed the film and made it into a loop. These loops, or “pencil tests” as they were called, were previewed on a Moviola, a small projector with a tiny four-inch screen that Walt had first used on his Steamboat Willie trip to New York. Later, he had a small room built that became known as the “sweatbox” in which he and his animators would huddle watching the latest tests.¹ Walt and the staff would

¹ The Moviola gave Walt and his animators a tool to test the action of their gags and scenes. Walt had a small room built in the Hyperion Studio that became known as the “SweatBox” where he set up the Moviola. The hours spent looking at “pencil tests” led to changes in how the animators approached their drawing and, in the long run, the nature of animation itself. Photo of SweatBox: http://vintagedisneymemorabilia.blogspot.com/2009/09/walt-disney-family-museum.htm. Photo of Moviola: http://www.city-net.com/~fodder/edit/moviola.html.
Chapter 7
Capturing Life in Animated Film

... a real sense of pioneering excitement centered on Snow White, and each breakthrough in technique and character delineation was greeted like a new weapon in a holy war.

Creating Believable Personalities

The studio had steadily been moving towards creating characters that would invite audiences to suspend their disbelief about the reality of its animations. In The Silly Symphonies, unrestricted by the need to work with established characters or traditional subject matter, Walt continued his exploration of uncharted territory. He used each symphony to experiment with different animation and sound techniques and to try out new forms of storytelling. While the Skeleton Dance exemplified Walt’s perfecting the technique of applying animation to music, and Flowers and Trees showed the way to using color to create atmosphere, it was through characterization and storytelling that the Silly Symphonies became a household word. In The Three Little Pigs, released in 1933, Walt and his animators “put real feeling and charm in our characterization.” Changing the traditional fairytale’s storyline so no little pigs were eaten, the studio took the three pigs and the wolf and gave them realistic appearances and a sense of life; out of their drawings they created actors who reached out, and engaged the audience emotionally by encouraging it to really feel the situation and root for the little pigs.

Walt was passionate about getting the audience emotionally involved with his characters and their story, whether a Silly Symphony or a Mickey Mouse cartoon. During a studio session of Mickey’s Mechanical Man that was being animated at the same time as was The Three Little Pigs, he shouted,

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

1 The Silly Symphonies experiment with different animation and sound techniques and to try out new forms of storytelling. The Silly Symphonies: http://www.disneyshorts.org/miscellaneous/silly.html.
Chapter 8
Creating the Disney Master Narrative

My husband is one of the devotees of Mickey Mouse. . . .
Please believe that we are all of us most grateful to you
for many delightful evenings.

Eleanor Roosevelt

Establishing a Cultural Icon Within Popular Culture

Steamboat Willie came to the screen on November 18, 1928 at the Colony Theatre in New York and became an immediate sensation, winning accolades for its sound innovation and for keeping “the audience laughing and chuckling from the moment the lead titles came on the screen” (Weekly Film Review). Walt’s love of animation, and his understanding of the nature of stories, determined the push towards exploration of the expressive nature of the new technologies he worked with. This was one of the reasons for the constant exploration for ways to present his characters and stories in animation. But it wasn’t the reason for his interest in increasing the scope of the characters he had created and shaped.

Over the years Walt’s name came to be associated with many different characters and stories. Ultimately, however, the Disney name was built on the little mouse Mickey. Early on in his career Walt had been stung by Charles Mintz’s underhanded business dealings. After his problems with the Alice series and then the Oswald character, he was determined that his cartoon Mickey Mouse would be “as well known as any cartoon on the market” so that his position would be completely invulnerable. Walt understood that stories lived in many media worlds and he would make Mickey popular in all of them. When entering the medium of television in the 1950s he said, “I’ve always had this confidence since way back when we had our first upsets and lost Oswald and went to Mickey Mouse. Then and there I decided that in every way we could, we would build ourselves with the public and keep faith with the public.”
Chapter 9
Engaging Audiences Across Media

Transmedia

Originating different manifestations of Mickey and friends outside of animation and successfully establishing these as a part of the cultural landscape, produced a firm base for the Master Narrative that Walt had conceived of in the first few months of Mickey’s success in *Steamboat Willie*. Mickey, Minnie, the Three Little Pigs, and their friends, and then Snow White and her friends the Seven Dwarfs enjoyed a popular, ubiquitous presence in neighborhoods across the country. The name “Walt Disney” became synonymous with these likeable, friendly, and amusing characters, and with the technological innovations that brought them to their admiring public.

In creating a Master Narrative, Walt used individual media for differing purposes. He promoted the animated characters to endear and entrench them in the popular collective conscious through activities such as merchandising, vaudeville reviews, and the *Mickey Mouse Clubs*. He also offered new ways to engage with his stories across different narrative media such as comics and books. Although these transmedia opportunities were seen as objects that could promote the Disney characters, the means for engagement were the stories themselves. Media such as radio and television were initially viewed by Walt and Roy only as promotional opportunities. Over time, stories were created specifically for these media, and, television in particular came to provide the public with a new way to relate to Disney characters. In the 1950s Walt embarked on a transmedia innovation—bringing Mickey and friends to life in the real world of a themed entertainment park. It wasn’t until the 1980s and 1990s, however, when another new opportunity—console and computer games and stories—would come along for people to engage differently with Disney characters and stories.

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

Chapter 10
Animated Storybooks and Activity Centers

Arcade Game to Story Game

By 1994 The Walt Disney Company had been producing children’s video games for 13 years. Since the release of its first video game, *Mickey Mouse*, for Nintendo’s *Game and Watch* handheld game systems in 1981, the company had licensed its characters and established development and publishing alliances with leading interactive gaming companies, first with Nintendo Entertainment Systems (NES) and then with Sega, Capcom, Square Enix, Sierra On-Line and others. Disney characters featured in platform games, puzzle games, and racing games, among others. Mickey and friends ran, jumped, juggled, collected, raced, got into scraps, danced and taught kids their ABCs and numbers across multiple platforms.

The first of these games were arcade type games that used Disney characters more as a merchandising opportunity than for any particular character trait or potential for story possibilities. In an arcade-type game personality did not affect the game activity. Although the game might consist of an event that had a cause and effect, it would not require a storyline to be successful. Adventure games, on the other hand, different from arcade games are based in story. Originally text-based, these games encourage players to achieve their goals not by repeating arcade-type actions but by moving through different environments, asking questions of game characters,

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

1 Mickey Mouse’s first game appearance was on Nintendo’s *Game and Watch*, a handheld system made between 1980 and 1981. It was released October 9, 1981, featured a single game, and had a clock and an alarm. Mickey’s handheld excursion finds him trying to collect eggs from a hen house as they roll down chutes. Mickey normally receives one full miss for every egg he drops, but if Minnie is present in the top left corner of the screen, he only gets a half miss. The game ends when Mickey has three full misses. There is an A and a B game. In Game A, the eggs fall from three chutes. Which three? It’s random and changes after each miss. In Game B, the eggs fall from all four chutes, adding more of a challenge. Nintendo’s *Game and Watch*: http://www.syndlexia.com/who_watches_the_watchmen.htm; http://forums.dashhacks.com/f120/some-old-games-from-nintendo-game-watch-t261823/.
Chapter 11
Going Online: A Personal Theme Park

We can’t bore the public with these things… We’ve got to be entertaining.

Walt Disney

Taking Disney’s World Online

The public recognition and financial success of the Disney CD-ROM story titles prompted The Walt Disney Company to continue their expansion in digital and online environments. Continuing the synergistic strategy that had successfully moved it into new technologies in the past, the company looked to use the graphics capabilities introduced to the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s to expand its transmedia reach and create a virtual environment for its characters and stories. Disney.com, the company’s official website, was launched February 22, 1996 primarily to promote Disney’s theme parks and provide information on such company products as videos, books, and music to adults.¹ Disney developers also took advantage of the site to give children a play space. Children could enjoy a different scavenger hunt each day as well as chat with Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse. The site joined with Family.com² and through this venue provided parents advice and additional activities for their children.

In 1996, Disney Online, headquartered in North Hollywood, California, was in its infancy with about 100 employees. The online games group was smaller yet;

¹ The 1996 Disney.com site brought information about the different Disney entertainment interests to the public in one space. Together with Family.com it was designed to provide a comprehensive resource for parents to go to for family-friendly activities. Photo of the 1996 Disney.com: http://web.archive.org/web/19961222215021/http://www/disney.com.
Chapter 12
Development Cycle: Games

The Disney Online Development Process

The children’s audience for Disney’s Blast (1997–2006) was varied. To appeal to different interests, Disney Online designed a series of “channels” for players to tune into. Each of these online channels had their own theme and featured original animation and games. The Pets and Animals Channel focused on presenting arcade and puzzle games to do with animals, like Penguin Bounce. Chat Studio featured Shoutouts for sharing birthday wishes and other community based events. Zoog Disney featured unique games based on the popular children’s TV show. One of the most popular of these channels was the Weird and Wacky Channel. A brainchild of Michael Bruza, Chris Coye, and Newton Lee, the comical channel featured Blooper Market and Adopt a Beast, among others. Blooper Market offered printable labels for spin-off comic products such as Aquaflesh, Macaroni and Fleas, Shampbell, and Smello. Adopt a Beast was a funny take on tamagotchi: the online pet beast was a crying Baby Beast, a Drooling Beast, or a Hairy Beast. If the crying Baby Beast was unattended to, his diaper would fill up; if the Drooling Beast was unhappy he would drown in his own tears; and if the Hairy Creature was left alone for too long, his hair would grow uncontrollably long.

Ideas for online activities and games such as these came from many different sources: the regular games group planning meeting attended by producers, artists, engineers, unofficial “water-cooler” gatherings of a few group members, studio producers of Disney movies and TV shows, lunch discussions with Disney colleagues, and casual conversations about surfing the net. The strategy for developing activities

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

1 Players could tune into many channels on Disney’s Blast. Each channel had a different theme so that each child would find something that would appeal to him or her. One of these channels was the Weird and Wacky that relied on humorous imitations of products available in the marketplace (e.g. Macaroni and Fleas).
Chapter 13
Development Cycle: Quality and Feedback

Developing a Community-Based Musical Activity

The advantage to having an abundance of well-loved (or even hated) characters from established stories is that there is an opportunity to use what’s special about them to create innovative activities and games. Children are often already familiar with Disney characters through the animated films the company releases and then regularly re-releases, the print and digital books that retell the story, and the dolls, toys, and other products that are merchandising spinoffs. Peculiarities of character and nuances of environment are generally already established by the time a character reaches Disney’s online environment. Take for instance the game mentioned in an earlier chapter, *Hercules*, in which players shoot arrows at a target in ancient Greece. The game is based in the character *Hercules* from the animated film of the same name. For children who have watched the film, possibly read the animated storybook or the print book, and played with the Hercules and Megara dolls, this legacy of experience with the character adds the extra dimension of a larger, all-embracing story within which they engage with the character’s activities in the game. This past experience also gives younger children the sense of familiarity and inclusion that makes a new game enjoyable rather than stressful. Disney relies on building schema and providing a sense of continuity to ensure that reiterations of its characters in both new stories and new media are successfully embraced by audiences.¹

Disney characters come with a family and cultural pedigree; their character quirks, their relationships, their circumstances, their surroundings, all of these can be used to advantage when new ways of engaging children in interactive online activities are being conceived. *Mushu*, the diminutive fire-breathing dragon from the Disney animated movie *Mulan* (1998), proved an excellent match for an idea that developed into *Mushu’s Music Maker*. Mulan, the movie’s heroin has disguised herself as her

¹ Disney’s characters brought a complete backstory from their animated films to their appearance in Animated Storybooks, Activity Centers, and online games and activities. Screenshots of *Hercules*: http://www.allgame.com/game.php?id=22917&tab=screen.


Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.
Chapter 14
MMORPGs: Player-to-Player Interaction

Initial Steps

The majority of games, activities, and stories developed for Disney sites in the first few years of online development were for the single player. Early on however, the first steps in the type of community building that had been created in the early days of Disney by the Mickey Mouse Clubs had already appeared on the horizon. One of the simplest community building ideas in gaming is sharing high scores among the players, a feature of arcade style games. In its original line-up, Disney’s Daily Blast included a bowling game that was designed so scores could be posted and children could compare their performance with others. The top scores were updated daily on one of the ESPN pages. Many other Disney online games kept the daily top 100 scores and the all-time top 10 scores. If a player scored high enough to be listed in the all-time top 10 or daily top100 list, the player would be allowed to enter his or her nickname in the hall of fame.

Two other types of community involvement that were simple to instigate and became common were paint contests and game shows. In a paint contest a player could submit a painting using the Disney branded paint application on Disney websites. The Disney producers would handpick the winners and display them in an online gallery where all Disney online users could view them. Many contests were themed for special holidays such as Christmas, Halloween, and Valentine’s Day.

In the game show, contestants were paired up to answer trivial questions. A writer came up with interesting questions for children, these included ones about the size of the world’s largest bagel, the distance of smell for a polar bear, and random facts

Online photos and graphics provide extra detail and are identified by urls the reader can refer to. This additional reference information will be particularly beneficial as an enhancement for the online version of this book. URLs are current at time of printing.

1 Even in the early Internet years Disney games incorporated community interaction. In the Halloween Painting contest players paintings were posted in a gallery display space; a winner was featured each week. In the Game Show contest, players answered trivia questions to score top points and get included in the high score gallery.
Chapter 15
Virtual Online Worlds: Stories and Engagement

Content is the new democracy and we the people, are ensuring that our voices are heard.

The Social Media Manifesto

Expanding the Online Theme Park

While MMORPGs were instrumental in connecting gamers and building gaming communities around stories, the Internet was evolving into a social environment that stimulated exchanges of information and conversations between users of every age and interest. The online virtual world that Disney’s Virtual Reality Studio had created in Toontown Online was part role-playing game and part social interaction. In keeping with the company’s history of taking a comprehensive approach to engaging audience in any new medium, whether film, book, radio, television, or theme park, The Walt Disney Company was creating a network of virtual story worlds on the internet that would attract and engage audiences in social interaction as well as in game-like activities. In particular, it would continue to grow the children’s web playground it had started with Disney’s Daily Blast.

Following the Toontown Online success, the VR group began work on their second MMORPG, Pirates of the Caribbean Online. Based on the very successful 2003 movie, the release date was planned to coincide with the film’s 2006 sequel. The original movie had been based on a very successful ride that opened at Disneyland in 1967.¹

¹ “Your adventure begins in the swampy bayous of New Orleans Square…” reads the promotional brochure for the Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland in 1967. This adventure, the last Walt Disney was personally involved in designing, has traveled across media to bring its story through books, movies, virtual reality, all manner of merchandise, and, finally, a virtual online world. Photo of the ride brochure for the Pirates of the Caribbean: http://matterhorn1959.blogspot.ca/2010/09/things-from-gate-pirates-of-caribbean.html.
Chapter 16
Epilogue

A Personal Journey with Newton Lee

In 1994, Disney Interactive, the digital media branch of The Walt Disney Company, was looking for an entry into the growing digital media consumer market. Without internal resources they needed to outsource for the technology and manpower to make it happen. At the time the blockbuster Disney movie *The Lion King* was achieving worldwide fame and success and a CD-ROM project was planned. It was outsourced to Media Station Inc. and I became one of the lead software and title engineers for *Disney’s Animated Storybook: The Lion King*.

I had been hired in 1992 by Henry Flurry, Hal Brokaw, and David Gregory to develop multimedia software and tools at Media Station Inc., a creative software engineering start-up located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. While working for them I created an object-oriented scripting language in 1994 (similar to the ActionScript in Flash) that enabled the developers to create interactivity for animation quickly and easily. I also wrote a cross-platform multimedia compiler to allow the software to run on both the PC Windows and the Macintosh operating system. The new tools and methodology enabled development of a CD-ROM title within three to six months.

Following the success of *Disney’s Animated Storybook: The Lion King*, Media Station Inc. received many more contracts from Disney, Hasbro, Mattel, Scholastic, Crayola, IBM, and Harper Collins. During the development of Disney’s *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree* CD-ROM, however, several key engineers threatened to quit Media Station Inc. I stepped in to co-manage the engineering team and successfully uplifted the employee’s morale and we were able to deliver the CD-ROM to Disney Interactive on schedule. Both *The Lion King* and the *Winnie the Pooh* titles received outstanding reviews.

In 1994 my colleagues and I received the 1995 Michigan’s Leading Edge Technologies Award for the inventions and the applications that the company developed using them. These included the CD-ROMs *Disney’s Animated Storybook: The Lion*...