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Writing with Alice the Virtual Peer

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Abstract: Sharing stories is an entertaining and learning activity for people, especially children. Most children, however, find it more challenging to put down their stories on paper. When a child encounters difficulty during story writing, a virtual peer can mimic the support given by a human teacher or peer, by facilitating the process through asking questions, giving directives, and even recommending possible story text to move the story forward. In this paper, we describe how the aforementioned tasks are achieved by our software agent Alice, using a combination of computational text understanding and generation techniques. Test results showed that children found Alice's prompts to be useful in situations when they were having a hard time writing their story and they would want to be given more options of how their story may progress. Furthermore, those who opted to include Alice's suggestions did so because these stated facts that add new details to their story.

Arts and Culture: Heritage, Practices and Futures

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