

**Frans Mäyrä, DiGRA President  
Level Up (2003), Utrecht**

**“Opening Words”**

-Welcome to Utrecht on behalf of DiGRA. This is the inaugural conference, and we're sold out, so at least in those terms this event is already a success!

-DiGRA: New association, 2003, established to bring together all that critical mass that we perceived to be gathering around games research, as we organised conferences and seminars in Denmark, UK, US, Finland and elsewhere. Simultaneously also journals and textbooks started appearing, and now we are in the middle of busy accumulation of expertise and academic professionalism in this field.

-Level Up is an important step: the conference presents a wide coverage of this nascent research, educational and professional field. Establishing a new discipline will not happen overnight and no doubt game studies will look back to 2003 and Utrecht as an important watershed moment

-We should remember that as important as the substance and content of research is the social networking of researchers from different countries and academic disciplines. So: looking around today, it is important that you all are here! Science and scholarship are not only paper and bits - it is first and foremost human activity.

-I want to thank Utrecht University, Faculty of Arts, Marinka Copier, Joost Raessens and the whole organiser team for taking up the challenge. Organising a large games studies conference is certainly a learning experience - there are few examples to follow and much to contribute.

- You might feel confused by all the various things going on in the conference. Yesterday I discussed with Jeffrey Goldstein on how to best profit from the experience. It might be a good idea not just to go to ones "own" sessions, but to mix and try and find new angles to games and to listen researchers not previously so familiar to you. Currently we have the luxury of not having a long-established discipline with its small expert ghettos - let's diversify our research and hope that our example and thinking will also diversify games and games culture, in the long run.

(Also: remember the DiGRA members gathering at Wednesday 5pm and the Annual Meeting at Thursday 10am!)

-With these words, I open the first digital games research association conference, Level Up!

**“CLOSING WORDS”**

- Event like this is a sum of many things: scientific content, evolution of science and scholarly understanding of games has been an important part of Level Up conference. But equally important is creation and development of understanding on game studies as a possible disciplinary option - that you actually can do games research and that it is important and intellectually, culturally, socially and probably also economically valuable. Third dimension in Level Up is the awareness and growth of identity for the research community which is interested and working on games. Level Up has been site of innumerable conversations and new connections between more than 500 delegates making this event what it is.

-You, the research community finally decide whether this event is a success or not, and please remember to fill in the feedback questionnaires with you thanks and criticisms, ideas and observations so that when DiGRA organises future conferences

we know what was good and should remain, and where we should do better. Also please volunteer to be conference reviewers.

- What in the future? First of all, we want to welcome you to the next DiGRA conference, sometime either late 2004 or early 2005. Info at [gamesconference.org](http://gamesconference.org) and [digra.org](http://digra.org). Subscribe, become a member if you care about this field strongly enough. We have now also first elected executive board of DiGRA and I am particularly happy to welcome Marinka Copier to the board as the new Liaison Officer of DiGRA. The association will continue to be the sum of its members, so the board will try to find new ways in which we can both build internal communication and community, and externally, spreading and promoting games research in academia and outside.

-Informal feedback I have received has been very positive, and I also personally think that this conference is a success. This has also been a learning experience: there has not been an event like this before, so Utrecht organisers and us surely feel like explorers at a new frontier.

-On behalf of DiGRA I want to warmly thank three key persons from the Utrecht team:

professor Jeffrey Goldstein, the mentor of conference

conf.chair, Joost Raessens and

conf.manager Marinka Copier (flowers, present)

-University of Utrecht has done well, we are all much enriched by the experience, maybe also made little wiser. How fully you also have had fun! Thank you, all speakers, researchers, students and players of games.