

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACADEMY OF INTERACTIVE ARTS & SCIENCES HONORS DAVE LEBLING AND MARC BLANK AS THE 2013 PIONEER AWARD RECIPIENTS

Infocom Co-Founders of Zork Fame Recognized as Trailblazers of Interactive Fiction

CALABASAS, Calif. – Dec. 19, 2012 – The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences (AIAS) will honor Infocom co-founders Dave Lebling and Marc Blank with its 2013 AIAS Pioneer Award. As innovators, storytellers, game designers and programmers, Lebling and Blank have inspired a generation of gamers and game designers over a broad spectrum of games and genres with their contributions to interactive fiction and text-based adventure games such as the *Zork* and *Enchanter* series.

The Pioneer Award is reserved for individuals whose career-spanning work has helped shape and define the interactive entertainment industry with the creation of a technological approach or the birth of a new genre. The 2013 Pioneer Award will be presented by Steve Meretzky, vice president of game design at Playdom, during the 16th D.I.C.E. Awards on Thursday, Feb. 7, 2013 at The Joint in the Hard Rock Resort and Casino Las Vegas.

“I wouldn't be a game designer today if Marc hadn't given me my first game job as a tester for Infocom back in 1981,” said Steve Meretzky, friend and former colleague of both Lebling and Blank. “And I wouldn't be as good a game designer as I am today, if it hadn't been for Dave's games at Infocom setting such a high bar for me to attempt to reach. It's an honor to try to repay a little of that debt by presenting them with this well-deserved reward.”

Lebling graduated from MIT and worked for more than ten years at the MIT Laboratory for Computer Science, where he co-authored *Maze* (the first FPS played on the ARPANET) and *Trivia*. It was there that he met Blank who was also attending the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at the time. At MIT Blank had started creating his own adventure game using MDL, a computer language invented at MIT, and was already working on the original mainframe for *Zork*, a virtual machine called the “Z-Machine,” which was fundamental to Infocom's future success. Dave and Marc co-founded Infocom in 1979 and went on to co-author *Zork I*, *Zork II*, and *Zork III* (where Dave introduced the “grue”) and *Enchanter*.

Lebling went on to write *Spellbreaker*, *Starcross*, *Suspect*, *The Lurking Horror*, and *James Clavell's Shogun*. Since the closure of Infocom he has worked on graphic story editing and newsroom computer systems for Avid, home-based multi-media web services for Ucentric, and a voice- and touch-driven medical advice system for Gensym. He is currently a Principal Investigator and Senior Principal Engineer at BAE Systems, where he is building web-based tactical planning tools for the U.S. Air Force.

Blank left Infocom in 1982, but he kept active at developing the Z-Machine further and made use of the advancements in the interactive fiction games *Border Zone* and *Journey*. After the closure of Infocom he teamed up with former Infocom writer Michael Berlyn to found Blank, Berlyn and Co. (later changed to Eidetic) where they published productivity software for the Apple Newton. Blank returned to text adventures in 1997 when Activision hired Blank and Berlyn to create a small prequel game to promote the release of Activision's *Zork: Grand Inquisitor*. Blank went on to develop email applications for smartphones, and most recently worked on Android applications at Google from 2009 to 2012. He is now at Lab126 where he is the Principal Software Engineer.

“Great storytelling with a healthy dose of wit is the foundation of everything we create in the interactive entertainment industry,” said Martin Rae, president, Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences. “At the 16th D.I.C.E. Awards, Dave and Marc will be recognized for their pioneering career in front of game makers they have greatly influenced, colleagues who have admired their work, and new audiences who will get their first glimpse into this important piece of gaming history. The Academy is very much looking forward to honoring these individuals for their seminal work and achievements.”

The Pioneer Award’s first honoree was David Crane, co-founder of Activision and creator of games such as *Pitfall* and *A Boy and his Blob* in 2010; followed in 2011 was Bill Budge, creator of *Raster Blaster* and *Pinball Construction Set*; and most recently Ed Logg, famed programmer of the arcade era with *Asteroids*, *Centipede*, and *Gauntlet* in 2012. The 12th Annual [D.I.C.E.](#) (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) Summit and 16th D.I.C.E. Awards will take place at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Las Vegas, Feb. 5 – 8, 2013. For more information please visit www.dicesummit.org.

###

About the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences:

The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences (AIAS) was founded in 1996 as a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote, advance and recognize the outstanding achievements in the interactive entertainment industry worldwide. The Academy conducts its annual awards show, the D.I.C.E. Awards, to celebrate and honor creative accomplishments in the field. To further enhance awareness of the Academy’s vision, the organization created the D.I.C.E. (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) Summit in 2002, a once yearly conference dedicated to exploring approaches to the creative process and artistic expression as they uniquely apply to the development of interactive entertainment. With more than 22,000 members, including Electronic Arts, Microsoft, Sony, Nintendo, Google, Bethesda Game Studios, Ubisoft, Epic Games, Double Fine, Gearbox Software, Nexon and Insomniac Games, among others. More information can be found at <http://www.interactive.org> and <http://www.dicesummit.org>. Follow the Academy on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Google+](#).

MEDIA CONTACTS:

For AIAS: Sean Maggard, Zebra Partners
DICE@zebrapartners.net or 214-267-9001