Lecture 8: Alternate Reality Games

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Homework Questions

• Listen → Think → Speak loop
• Procedural and instantial assets
• Imagine two variations: radially procedural and radically instantial
• Ryan’s 8 narrative dimensions
• Material and formal affordances, agency
• Story (characters, relationships, sequence of events)
• Describe the discourse (order of events experienced by the player)
• Operational logics
Ryan’s 8 Dimensions of Narrativity

• Spatial Dimension
  – 1. Narrative must be about a world populated by individuated existents

• Temporal Dimension
  – 2. The world must be situated in time and undergo significant transformations
  – 3. The transformations must be caused by non-habitual physical events

• Mental Dimension
  – 4. Some of the participants in the events must be intelligent agents who have a mental life and react emotionally to the states of the world
  – 5. Some of the events must be purposeful actions by these agents, motivated by identifiable goals and plans

• Formal and Pragmatic Dimensions
  – 6. The sequence must form a unified causal chain and lead to closure
  – 7. The occurrence of at least some of these events must be asserted as fact in the story world
  – 8. The story must communicate something meaningful to the recipient
PhotoCity: Alternate Reality Game With a Purpose (ARGWAP)
An Alternate Reality Game (ARG) is an interactive networked narrative that uses the real world as a platform and uses transmedia storytelling to deliver a story that may be altered by players' ideas or actions.
Ingress
I Love Bees

HALT - MODULE CORE HEMORRHAGE

Control has been (**BUCKET**
ACCESS DENIED:SERVER LOADING FAIL
Alert, Covenant are on Reach.

grape
Seneca > I stashed Prances
fail *msg: SPOR-6:14:2:

SUSSPACE RUPTURE DETECTED

!probe extern proc 1

!rage procedure activated
!!gauge A2 activated

IT9 - 7 has been alerted

!bite rage proc 1 across
level /epidemic "confidence 100"
The master chief has quite rampart
error has script

Mission Log  MIA   Recruits

COUNTDOWN TO WIDE AWAKE AND PHYSICAL:
0000:000:000000:00
Make your decisions accordingly.
Countdown has stopped.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNhurUnOWKQ

I LOVE BEES
So many ARGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Developer</th>
<th>Story summary</th>
<th>Gameplay summary</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Love Bees</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>42 Entertainment</td>
<td>An AI from the Halo 2 universe is stranded in our world and needs help.</td>
<td>Puzzle solving by online communities. Information released by phone calls to public telephones. Rewards in the form of new websites and videos.</td>
<td>600,000+ players.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ilovebees.com">http://www.ilovebees.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Call Poker</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>42 Entertainment</td>
<td>A cursed gun, passed down through generations, threatens the granddaughter of its last owner.</td>
<td>Puzzle solving by online communities. Real world missions in cemeteries. Online poker with dead characters. Rewards in the form of new stories and videos.</td>
<td>Over 500,000 active participants.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lastcallpoker.com">http://www.lastcallpoker.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lost Ring</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>AKQA</td>
<td>6 Olympians from another world came to help us save this one.</td>
<td>Puzzle solving by online communities. Real world missions. A new Olympic sport &quot;The Lost Sport&quot; was introduced.</td>
<td>3,000,000 players from over 150 countries.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thelostring.com">http://www.thelostring.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Big Urban Game
PacManhattan
Extrasolar
Alternate Reality *Experience*

- Similar to ARGs in that narratives are told from several different mediums in a way that is meant to appear as if they are really happening.

- Different level of interaction between storyteller and participants.
  - More limited
Transmedia Storytelling

The lizzie Bennet Diaries

Episode
My Name is Lizzie Bennet
Flash Mobs
Serious ARGs

Tombstone Hold’em

CRYPTOzoo
Corporate Team Building ARGs

• 2002: “Shelby Logan’s Run” (Microsoft)
  – Player Bob Lord was severely injured after misunderstanding a clue and falling thirty feet down a disused mineshaft. The players were sent into the desert outside Las Vegas with a clue containing the cryptic warning "1306 is clearly marked. Enter ONLY 1306. Do NOT enter others."
  – Lord mistakenly entered mineshaft 1296...
  – The fall crushed several vertebrae and left Lord a quadriplegic.

“This is not a game”

• “This is not a game”
  – The **rabbit hole** in *AI: Artificial Intelligence* movie
    • The Beast ARG

![Movie Poster](image)

• Blurring of fiction and reality
  • Xmplar game by Jacob Garbe
Games are about choice

• “The thing that makes a game a game is the need to make decisions”
  – Greg Costikyan

• “In order to create instances of meaningful play, experience has to incorporate not just explicit interactivity, but also meaningful choice.”
  – Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman

• “The game consists of the need to find or continue at once a response which is free within the limits set by the rules”
  – Roger Caillois
“You are written in advance by the puppet master.”

• ARGs seem to be about performing the PM’s script.
• Except that humans are creative, unruly, improvisational animals
  – “drop your pants and dance” interpreted literally
• PMs interactively update the script in response to players
  – Something digital games aren’t that good at yet
  – Ingress probably has most technical infrastructure of any ARG
Ingress designers speak at DICE

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8YTDEJyfs0
Discussion

• Ingress
• Alternate reality games vs. traditional video games
  – Challenges? Advantages?
• Puppetmasters
  – Optionality and choice vs. lack of choice, virtuality vs. reality
The Future

• Guest Lecture on Friday: Kate Compton

• Required Reading due on Monday
  – Genre Trouble. Espen Aarseth.
    • Read responses
    • Read responses

• Reminder:
  – Assignment 2 due on Monday (beginning of class)