

**CIS300**  
Spring 2005  
Setting and Story  
Lecture 8  
Week 4

1

## Announcements

- Communication/Writing lab this week:
  - **bring 6 copies** of your concept doc draft
  - final draft due 2/25
  - will start milestone doc
- Game lab this week:
  - collision detection, music, animation
  - last of specific lab assignments
- Other assignments:
  - group charter
  - will start **Asheron's Call 2** and other analysis

2

## Overview

- Setting and Story
  - location
  - "dimensions"
  - role of narrative
  - implementation of story
- Why do this lecture this lecture now?

3

## The Game World

- **Artificial Universe** revisited:
  - game designer(s) as The Creator
  - universe must be somewhere....
- Setting definitions:
  - **Story setting**: where/when
  - R&A: **fictional component** of your universe
    - has connection to notion of story
- Do all games have/need setting?
  - setting *of* game?
  - setting *in* game?
  - **harmony** and **balance**

4

## Reality and Abstraction

- **Graphics and realism:**
  - graphics as root of setting  
(aside: games for the blind?)
  - how to create realism? resources to investigate?
  - do fantastically realistic graphics make great games?
- **Abstraction:**
  - how realistic can games be?
- **Alternative realities:**
  - Fiction, historical fiction
  - Sci-fi, fantasy
  - Surrealism
- **Connections to gameplay and core mechanics**
  - choice of setting and its effects

5

## Immersiveness

- **Immersiveness:**
  - draw player(s) into game world
  - player(s) become engrossed
- Does immersiveness measure "funness"?
- **Connections to setting:**
  - **what is suspension of disbelief**
  - how does that affect setting? immersiveness?
- **CIS 300 groups:**
  - what do you anticipate will make your game immersive?
  - can setting help?

6

## Dimensions of Game World

- **R&A categories:**
  - Physical
  - Temporal
  - Environmental
  - Emotional
  - Ethical
- **Help to design your game**
  - several questions/guidelines scattered throughout chapter
  - we address a few issues here

7

## Physical and Temporal

- **Physical dimension:**
  - games as 2-D, 3-D
  - 1-D? 4-D? 5-D? (how?)
  - scale of objects (realism, fiction, abstraction)
- **Temporal dimension:**
  - are real-time games really real time?
  - allow time to vary as needed?
  - does **anomalous time** break suspension of disbelief?
  - process of tuning parameters:
    - gameplay
    - mechanics
    - immersiveness

8

## Environmental Dimension

- Ways to include environment?
  - one example: shrubbery
  - others?
- Some connections:
  - characters:
    - cultural references? (icons, symbols, ...)
    - clothing (environment?)
    - behaving/communicating based on environment
  - music:
    - soundtrack
    - scoring

9

## Emotional Dimension

- The player experience:
  - what kind of reactions do you design for?
  - player reactions to setting
  - player reactions to connected elements (sound, story, ...)
- Dramatic tension:
  - connection to gameplay?
  - connection to narrative?
- Aside:
  - Can a game make you cry?  
<http://www.akxlen.com/flashlevel%20ads/banner1%20468x60/mariocentral.html>

10

## Ethical Dimension

- Gameplay:
  - player makes choices, overcome obstacles
  - designer creates those choices
  - what *kinds* of choices?
- Ethics in choices:
  - do you railroad players into certain choices?
  - do you prevent bad behaviors?
  - reason for allowing good/bad/unclear choices?
    - effects on players?
    - effects on design and size of universe?
- Sins? (more detail later...)
  - sex, drugs, rock-n-roll, violence, torture, ....
  - responsibility of designers? publishers?

11

## Stories and Narrative

- Role:
  - help in defining setting
  - necessary/unnecessary for some genres?
    - large RPG
    - "Tetris Worlds": good or bad idea?
    - MMOs? (what's the story?)
- Implementation:
  - the box
  - user manual
  - website
  - in-game (dialog, cutscenes, intro screens, setting clues...)
- Some discussion and analysis:
  - <http://www.costik.com/gamnstry.html>

12

## Games and Story

- Fiction:
  - we can have great, engrossing movies/tv/books (what makes them great?)
  - do great games share what makes those great? (aside: can a game be a documentary?)
- Interactive fiction? non-linear fiction?
  - choose your own adventure books
  - hypertext fiction
- Games:
  - games are interactive
  - player is primary storyteller
  - linear? non-linear?
  - do/can games tell a story?

13

## Games as Stories?

- A viewpoint from <http://www.costik.com/gamstry.html>: "Play is how we learn; stories are how we integrate what we've learned, and how we teach others the things we've learned ourselves through play. But play comes first."
- Considerations:
  - attempt to tell a story?
  - attempt to incorporate story elements?
  - fun focus is gameplay?

14

## Archetypes

- The Heros and Heroines:
  - **archetypes**
  - some examples:
    - <http://www.tamicowden.com/archetypes.htm>
    - "The Spunky Kid", "The Waif", "The Free Spirit", ...
    - "The Bad Boy", "The Best Friend", "The Lost Soul", ...
- R&A: Monomyth and the Hero's/Heroine's Journey
  - reluctant hero and call to adventure
  - mentor and training
  - first threshold
  - tests, allies, enemies
  - innermost cave
  - the ordeal, its reward(s)
  - heading back home...

R&A discuss these in great detail

15

## Some Considerations

- Hero/Heroine:
  - pick archetype? combine archetypes?
  - motivation of character? backstory?
  - cultural, dialogue, character issues (R&A Chapter 5)
- Call to adventure:
  - set up victory condition(s)?
  - different endings?
- Tests, Allies, Enemies:
  - random elements for non-linear story?
  - passages in story connect to gameplay and levels?
- The Road Back:
  - are levels completed linearly?
  - do characters revisit places? (opportunities to provide more detail on setting)

16

## Story Vehicle

- Story vehicle: dynamic structure to fit story elements
- Story flow and pacing:
  - story has dramatic flow:  
rising action, climax, falling action
  - split story into acts, perhaps each with own flow
- Gameplay and narrative:
  - narrative: non-interactive
  - gameplay: interactive
  - inverse relationship
  - enfold clues in narrative to help gameplay?
- Striving for balance:
  - player allowed to "right" amount of choices