Digital Games Go Online..

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Overall

- Welcome OECD report on online computer and video games
- An independent academic perspective
- Academics, policy makers and small game companies face considerable barriers accessing information in this field which is independent and international
- Welcome the broad definition of online games.
Simple/classic games....
Networked PC games
To more complex MMORPGs
Definitional probs..

- Videogames = used more in US
- Computer games = used more in Europe

- Digital Games –
  See http://www.digra.org/
Drivers...technology

- Technology an important driver of games industry but there are others which impact upon ‘content’.

- One is finance
  - to produce the game – VC, publisher advance, debt finance etc..
  - Financial barriers also vary between sub-sectors of industry – i.e. between console, PC and mobile
Drivers – Demographics..

- Very poor demographic data available. Academic surveys of game players access and use is structured by class, age and sex – esp. in UK.

- IDSA/ESA survey data note increasing numbers ‘play regularly’? Play what for how often? The most popular form of online games are free, short/classic games..

- PC player profile v. interesting..
  - more females in this segment, why?
  - Online aspect, social aspect, flexibility/ability to modify content, game genres, type of gameplay?

- No certainty that games ‘will evolve’ to appeal more to women..
  - structural probs in industry, representational probs, public contexts of play,
Drivers – player culture?

- Taylor (2003) study of *EverQuest* (1999), MMORPG
  - identity and team play
  - social interaction/community
  - Combat/competition

- Studies of LAN parties (PC multiplayer)
  - Not just in Korea!
  - importance of social interaction - hanging out, watching machinima,
  - swapping cheats.. sharing strategies
  - team play
Spillovers...- Education

● Evidence to suggest that games can encourage critical learning..

● But no strong empirical evidence that critical learning skills from games are ‘transferable’ to other contexts. Also studies show numerous barriers to using commercial off the shelf games in schools.

● Educational reform, pedagogical reform, and investment in games developed specifically for education needed..

● Examples of research
  ● see the educationarcade.org, MIT’s Games To Teach,
  ● NESTA Futurelab projects in the UK, the London Knowledge Lab game literacy projects,
  ● Kaleidescope (NoE).
  ● M-learning european project on mobile learning apps
Spillovers – Other sectors..

- **Simulation Games**
  - US military spent over $7M to make *America’s Army* (PC multiplayer, free to download) –
  - aim was marketing, recruitment
  - Army also uses simulations widely in training

- ‘**Serious Games’ initiative in the US**
  - Promoting and researching games for health, management and public policy
  - Serious games conferences in 2004
And finally... Intellectual Property Rights

- PC games provide tools to players so they can produce their own modifications or ‘mods’ of games, replacing levels, characters,

- Player generated content problematises and produces difficulties for IPR laws... who owns this content?

- What of user/consumer production and ownership rights? Government policies must balance industry rights with promoting user creativity and user production rights
Challenging conceptions

- *Second Life: Your World, Your Imagination*

- …online multiplayer PC game

- Developers produce tools and manage community

- players produce the content, own IP of these creations but still pay a subscription!
More info:

1. Online academic journal http://www.gamestudies.org/
2. DIGRA – association of game researchers  
   http://www.digra.org/
3. European research on gender and ICTs, including games  
   http://www.rcss.ed.ac.uk/sigis/
4. Collection of academic work on games  
   http://www.game-research.com/
5. All Ireland game community and industry website  
   http://www.gamedevelopers.ie/