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English 101

12 March 2025

Discourse Community Assignment: Game Programming Club

Having a discourse community is a big and important part of the way we as humans interact and communicate efficiently amongst others with common beliefs and goals. We as humans grew up and came to rely heavily through use of socialization. My current discourse community group is a game programming club where we come together to communicate and work towards our common public goal of publishing games for others in our community to enjoy. Our club includes a public common goal, a method of communication, mutual feedback and information through our method of communication, a genre which we use to reach out, a specific lexis, and a threshold level of expert members. These things all come together to create and allow us to call ourselves a “discourse community”.

Our common public goal is of major importance to our discourse community (club) because it stems primarily from our general common public interest of releasing enjoyable games to our community. When we (the founding members of our club, including me) first started our discourse community, we decided to make it with the common primary goal of releasing games for people to enjoy and give us feedback on, allowing us to improve not only those games but also any future games through this participation from the community. An example of this is when we were working on a game that involved randomizing certain mechanics when opening in-game crates with lootable items. After the release of that game, our community gathered together and gave us various amounts of feedback on how we could have

improved certain aspects of the randomization mechanics which in turn allowed us to better renovate such mechanics with the community being overall generally happy with the following community oriented changes. To me, this shows that a great part of a discourse community stems from having and sticking to a common public goal.

In our club, we utilize a common method of communication in order to help us work together to meet our goal. This method of communication that we use is called the Discord application and it is not only our primary method of communicating with one another as owners and developers of the games, but most importantly our primary method of communicating with the members (players) of our community. Through the use of the Discord application, we usually communicate about progress relating to game development between the developers and then relay such information to the members of our group. An example of this is when we were about to release an update to one of our most played and player-active games. We had to figure out why a bug was causing an error when a player joined every once in a while, and once we figured it out, we had to communicate with our community that the servers would be shut down within three hours from the notification warning. In this warning, we stated the reason for the shutdown and the length of the shutdown as to give the community members a heads up. As such, these changes usually involve notifying such members about certain changes before they are implemented in order to meet our common public goal of making a game that keeps the community's thoughts and ideas in mind. This goes to show that Discord is a big part of our communication and of our discourse community.

Mutual feedback and information exchanging between the developers and the community is essential to keeping up with our set upon goal of making games enjoyable for the players. In our group, we make use of feedback between the developers when it comes to the way that we

handle changes to our code. An example of this would be when a developer adds a new major change to the code, they would usually ask for and receive feedback on the code from other members to try to reduce bugs in the games being developed. Feedback from our community is important because it allows us to work with and for them in the way that we can implement certain changes that they dislike. An example of community based feedback can be seen from an interview I conducted with one of our long time members (AXxx1248), and of which in the interview, I asked how the member went about communicating their feedback, and how they thought it helps in influencing and bringing about change, being stated in the interview as such: “IN: ‘How do you think that your participation in the community has influenced it as far as giving feedback goes?’ AXxx1248: ...I initially noticed features...that I didn't think were as good as they should be...This led me to eventually start to suggest information pertaining to the gameplay...being overwhelmingly happy seeing that...features were eventually implemented.” To me, this goes to show that the mutual feedback and information exchanged between our discourse community is essential for keeping up with our mission.

Our community's “genre”, or form of communicating, is another part of our discourse community in the way that it allows us to mutually understand ourselves and the needs of the community. This is seen in the way that the community’s members sometimes write small papers in which they write papers about certain projects that they would like to see in the future, and these papers are voted upon by the community to determine which project the majority of the community is more in favor of. In our Discord community group, we have a “Game Suggestions” channel where we open up an “Ideas Event” for discussion on random days throughout the year, and in which community “experts” (members who have been in the community longer than three months), submit papers regarding ideas of games that they thought

the community would like. These papers are voted on by new and existing members, and the ideas with the most votes were projects that we started to work on. Anyhow, an example of this can be seen from one of the most voted on “ideas” paper made by a senior community member (SupahSpy007) that suggested a game that involved space travel, or more specifically a game in which a player had to create a shuttle to get fly off and explore around in hopes of going the longest possible distance without blowing up their “space shuttle” or passing on from enemy mobs. This genre of communication has become a large part of our community as is important to the way we handle positive interactions within our community. In this case, this “genre” of communication via the “Game Submissions” channel, has allowed us to diversify our games to meet our community's needs and wants. To me, this goes to show that even our genre, or form of communicating via mutual communication, is an important part of getting everyone in the club to engage and bring forth their ideas.

The specific lexis is important to the development side of the community as it allows for proper interpretation of one another's code amongst all developers. We utilize a “specific lexis” when it comes to writing code for our game, and is something seen prominently when going over such code. This lexis comes in the form of shortening the name of programming variables by leaving the first letter of the variable name underscore, and then upper casing the second word in the variable name if the variable uses more than two words. The uppercase helps us understand that there is a "space" between the first and second word in the variable name. An example of this is if we are going to implement a type string name for a variable pertaining to a dog's name, according to our guidelines, we would do it as such: `"std::string dogName = NAME;."` This “specific lexis” helps us keep our code organized, readable, and clear for whenever other developers go back to make changes to the code of our games..

Having a threshold level of expert members allows us to assist new inexperienced developers that join our community. The “expert members” help newer members in our community by assisting them when it comes to community engagement. This is true for new developers that join our group when it comes to them implementing their first hundred lines of code, and also true for new video game “connoisseurs” that join the group, with both being assisted in the form of being welcomed and shown around the guidelines and rules by the “expert members”. An example of this can be seen whenever we add a new developer to the team, they usually have no idea how we go about communication when it comes to making changes and they usually have a tendency to change the code without notifying the other developers. This is something that we do not prefer as it would allow for potential bugs and is something that experienced members would teach them to refrain from doing, and is stated in our group’s rules and guidelines page. Having “expert” members allows experience and knowledge that the community is accustomed to, to be handed to the newer members and so on. Newer members also at times suggest changes that can be of great benefit and such things are at times added to our list of guidelines. To me, this goes to show that having a threshold level of expert members is another essential part of a true and active discourse community.

Going back to what I said throughout my report, discourse communities are a major part of the way we interact with others in the way that it allows us to communicate and interact together efficiently. These such communication methods allow us to expand our common public goals and or beliefs to our own discourse communities that we are a part of. This can be seen in my personal game programming club discourse community where I cover some of the topics and ideals that the community revolves around. In other words, discourse communities are important

to the way that we expand cultural recognition amongst the community and allows us to thrive forward.

Summary of Everything I Learned

Information in this community is transmitted via messages and “channels” within the Discord application (our primary source of communication in our community) and allows for proper communication of our discourse community. Documents include the paper idea submissions for games that are posted by long time community members. The community members do not typically use a “specific lexis” as compared to the developers when it comes to writing code for the games. Texts produced are written within the discourse community in the sense that the papers submitted for review typically are voted upon based on favorability by the community. The purpose of texts being produced in this community is to bring about unity within the group when it comes to majority vote on game’s they’d like to see being made for them. The producers of such texts in the community are the long time members who have decided to bring about ideas for potential games for the community. All community members can produce the texts, but can only post whenever they become a dedicated member (three months minimum before posting), this is because of spam/fake accounts used to cause mayhem within communities as to mess around with them. Typically the founders, the developers, and the long time members (three months or more) have the most authority as compared to newer members due to having been in the group longer or being granted a trusted bypass, with the primary reason being to protect the community against “fake” accounts. The guidelines that the community has for production and acceptance of texts is being at a member of at least three months, and of these texts having no inappropriate ideas as to violate the general rules and guidelines posted on that channel. The guidelines of the text include but are not limited to: “No sexual nature of game ideas submissions.”, “No

racially oppressive game ideas submissions.”, and “No copying of existing game ideas submissions.” Some of the evidence and types of research that the community values is original game ideas submissions as to refrain from plagiaristic work, with the primary reason being due to a general dislike of stealing ideas. Members of the community can conduct individual research when it comes to creating and submitting game ideas, and developers conduct research on ways to improve their coding practices without interfering with our programming guidelines. Individual texts are not typically related to each other besides in the way that they involve the main idea of producing an interesting and original game concept. Texts carry out the community’s actions and will as a whole in the way that they involve active mutual involvement when it comes to voting on the ideas they like best. The genre used to produce the texts are possibly research papers as the individuals posting them have to research and conduct a report on their idea. The conventions for the genres include solely and mostly appropriate and original work that follows our guidelines. MLA is the general writing convention used by most members, but is not specified within our current guidelines, with APA not being used unless they include unoriginal concepts. Basic assumptions that ground the community are originality. The purpose for the community is to enjoy games that come from the support from all members. This is expressed in the writing styles of feedback received on certain games during and after release. Something that makes someone an authority in this community is having been in the community for a good amount of time (three months at least), no degrees and or previous experience besides enjoying games are needed. Other kinds of things important for communicating are sending messages every once in a while

to and from the general chat channel. Images and sounds are not currency used in this community besides during the introduction of game releases and or updates.

Works Cited

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