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Explore Task Questions

Computational Artifact

2a)

My computer innovation is the digital distribution platform Steam, which is the largest

PC software distributor in the world. It's services are primarily used for video games, but it has

been recently branching out into other forms of media as well. The main reason for making this

stemmed from the need for a combined space to purchase and manage games, interact with other

people, and deliver mass content updates to millions at the same time.

2b)

I used Google Drawings to create my artifact. I took screenshots of the process of

purchasing a Steam game and used short phrases to describe what I was doing in each of those

screenshots. Then I downloaded the drawing file as a PDF, made a new Final Exam folder, and

pushed it up to Github.

2c)

One effect that Steam had on the industry was that when it first came out, there were no

other software distributors like it at the time. So eventually when it grew, it had time to dominate

the market and grow to hold a monopoly on the industry. Nowadays Steam is the only reliable

source of digital games/software on the web. Sure there are others, such as Humble Bundle,

G2A, and the new Epic Games store, but they will all have to put in the work to even get as close to where Steam is, especially the Epic store. Now, a more beneficial effect that Steam has is that it stores all of your games in one place, so you have a library where you can manage them, and download or uninstall them at your leisure. Steam also manages updates to games and routinely checks for any conflicts in the game files as well. They are also working on their own operating system, SteamOS, which according to PC Gamer, "if you have a living room PC, or plan to build one, you can ditch Windows for free." This can also encourage more competition from the console market, which can stimulate the gaming industry as a whole. A negative effect of Steam is that they take a huge price cut from the developers who decide to publish their games on Steam, around a 25-30% cut. So if a person purchases a $60 game from Steam, Valve (the company that owns the Steam platform) will take anywhere between 15-18 dollars from that. It might not seem that much, but it does add up over time. This discourages not only big time publishers from putting their games up on Steam, but it also stifles small time indie developers for putting their games on Steam's early access platform, where a person could put a game on there, the community will vote for the game to pass through so it could receive feedback and improvements before the full release. It is now not recommended to put games on there, because according to blog site JaleoPR, "It's hard work. You have to be open with your community, explain what you are doing and why you are doing it." Steam has a huge cultural benefit now, since it's inception it has helped to band together the PC community under a common brand, and now the PC has a formidable platform to assemble and congregate. The biggest games on PC, CSGO, Team Fortress 2, and Dota 2 are all made by Valve and are distributed on Steam. These games receive upwards of hundreds of thousands of players every day.

2d)

The data that Steam uses on the daily for it's millions of users is mostly personal data, such as what type of games a person plays, for example first person shooters, RPGs, puzzle games, etc. So if you are on the storefront browsing Steam will recommend games that you might like based on what you bought and played already. Steam also takes data from people in the form of a hardware and software survey, where they ask it's users what the specifications of their computers are, what resolution they play their games at, peripherals, etc. In fact, in July, according to digitaltrends.com, Steam's surveys found out that "63.72 percent of Steam's registered members still play games with a 1,920 x 1,080 resolution (aka Full HD)." This is used to determine what games should be put on the store, so that people who might not be able to afford a computer upgrade can still enjoy the games that the platform puts out. Now an important security concern is through phishing scams, which is where a fake user (a bot) will add you as a friend on Steam and send you links to a YouTube video or fake giveaway. These links will look legit at first, but when you click on them the website will put malware on your computer that will seize your Steam account and your payment information, and also whatever information is on your computer. This has been a problem for a while now, and Valve is constantly looking for ways to stop these fake bot accounts from being created.

2e)

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