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Critical Play VISM-2006-501

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03-04-2023

OCAD, Y U Mad? The Interactive Journey

I. CONTEXT

This paper is the research component of a playable game experience I am designing and building for my OCADU GradEx108 show in May 2023. My work explores the use of computer videogame design practices and development tool usefulness for organizational network information communications, human development and structural design. Using Twine open-source software to create an interactive narrative this project will explore the OCAD University organizational visual map poster that charts complaint resolution pathways.

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

OCAD Y U MAD? The OCAD U Collaborative Guide to Complaint Resolution (OCAD University) is an information visualization concept map, styled as Yes/No flowchart (Fig. 1.) [1]. It was released by OCAD University VP's office in 2017 to outline various resolution pathways available within the institution when individuals are navigating conflict. The campaign was distributed around the university campus as 11" x 17" printed posters, and placed in high-traffic areas. The poster shown here was photographed from an original print that is still posted in the OCAD Student Union office, five years on.

Fig. 1. OCAD University. OCAD Y U MAD? The OCAD U Collaborative Guide to Complaint Resolution, 2017.

Vice-Provost Deanna Fischer who led the campaign, said that the poster's creative aesthetic was designed with the intention of bringing a playful visual lightness offering familiar OCADU imagery (coffee cups, cutting matts) to organizational mapping, and communicating information on how to navigate complaints to find resolution within the given institutional structure [2].

III. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

OCAD Y U MAD? The Interactive Journey is a choose-your-own-adventure style game that takes the choice-based visual narrative design of the OCADU poster, and reproduces the flowchart information as a playable, interactive experience [3]. The game explores the complaint's guide from the user's (the complainee) perspective through a non-linear interactive narrative. The storytelling takes a critical approach where the source poster hits dead-ends, and offers a satirical tone in response to options that are offered (and not offered), but less than satisfying to the user's "madness". My intention is to give the "mad" user whom presumably these complaint resolutions exist for, a voice, some agency, and an opportunity to test and be critical of the structures intended to serve them.

Game design considerations necessary to translate the poster into an interactive game experience, raises critical questions towards the poster's communication goals, that are unclear and dissonant (e.g. exactly what aspect of the poster guide is "collaborative"?). Research into data communication [4], visual mapping tools [5], and actor-network theory [6], will be an area that informs the game's critical response to the poster's effective use of visual communication design.

The game design and response to the poster will be informed by theories from critical play studies that explore how games can be methods of practice to engage as a social political actor [7]. The game will create a dynamic experience that goes beyond passive communications

of the printed medium, and takes an approach to addressing the problems the poster seeks to resolve, complaints and people being mad, in a critically playful way that aligns energetically with the dissonance and purpose of what the original content was responding to, and in addition to asking why you are mad, asks what's not working?

Game design concepts and videogame technology will be used to support a critical response to the poster, and to create an experience that effectively communicates the poster's goals of addressing people who are mad, and offering a guide on how to approach complaints at the university in a collaborative way. Twine is open-source game development software that uses hyperfiction, a form of interactive media which usually relies on links between passages of text, to tell non-linear interactive stories that can be executed in a web browser [8]. Like Visual Mapping, Twine game design emphasizes visual flow structure and allows for the information flow chart to be modeled for user interaction. Twine allows for rapid prototyping and testing of the organizational models as a playable experience [9]. The game can provide a simulated test environment to evaluate the organizational structural design for complaint resolution from a user's perspective. Story-telling approaches provide easy-to-understand views on organizational information allowing for communication with people [10].

As a structure to guide the development process, Schell's concept of game design elements will be a reference (Fig. 2.). This incorporates the aspects that have already been mentioned, like technology (Twine), and also includes aesthetics, mechanics and story, that are principal components to effective game design when balanced to support each other [11].

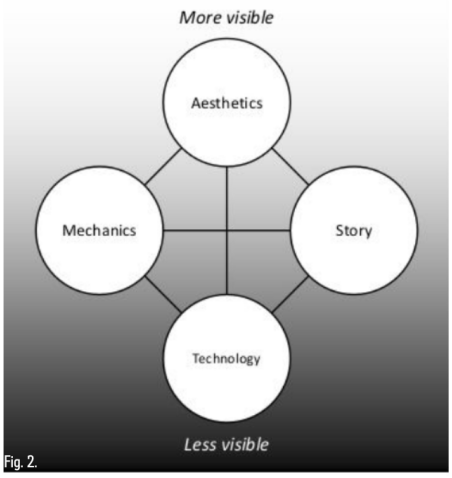

Fig. 2.

SCHELL, J. *The Art of Game Design A Book of Lenses*. 1. ed. Burlington: Morgan Kaufmann, 2008. (p. 42)

Through its overall game design and critical approach to play, the *OCAD Y U MAD? The Interactive Journey* game critically explores the question behind being mad at the university, and creates opportunities for players to discover their own questions when navigating the organizational complaints. The game can raise awareness about the complaint resolution pathways that OCAD University has available, while also functioning as an interactive and digitally accessible version of the guide.

IV. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Davies, Martin. "Concept mapping, mind mapping and argument mapping: what are the differences and do they matter?" Higher Education, vol. 62, no. 3, Sept. 2011, pp. 279+. Gale Academic OneFile, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A344949384/AONE?u=toro37158&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=4c80aa4c. Accessed 17 Apr. 2023.

   Davies discusses the differences between visual tools for organizing and representing information; concept mapping, mind mapping, and argument mapping. The article examines historical and theoretical foundations of each type of mapping and their practical applications in education and research, and offers an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each type of mapping. Davies argues that while the three types of mapping share similarities, they also have distinct features and make them more or less suitable for particular tasks.

2. Flanagan, Mary. Critical Play : Radical Game Design. MIT Press, 2009.

   Flanagan challenges game designers to think critically about the social and political impact of their work, and is a resource for anyone interested in designing games that go beyond entertainment and have a positive impact on society. Flanagan explores

the intersection of game design and social activism and argues that games are a powerful tool for promoting social change. Flanagan presents a framework for designing games that are politically engaged and socially responsible. The book offers an overview of the history and theory of game design, including a critical analysis of the ways in which games can reinforce or challenge social norms, and gives case examples of mainstream and independent games designed to address social issues, such as poverty, discrimination, and environmentalism. Building on Schell's practical aspects of game design, such as mechanics, aesthetics, and narrative, Flanagan shares how these elements can be used to convey a message. Flanagan gives practical exercises and prompts to help designers apply the concepts to their own game design projects.

3. Gemignani, Zach., et al. Data Fluency Empowering Your Organization with Effective Data Communication. 2nd ed., Wiley, 2014.

    This book is a comprehensive guide for effective data communication and improving data communication skills. It provides practical advice and actionable strategies for making data more accessible and understandable to a wide range of audiences. The book reviews basics of data visualization and communicating complex data sets to non-technical audiences, and provides examples and case studies to illustrate the concepts. The authors emphasize the importance of building a data-driven culture within organizations, and offer suggestions on how to develop and implement data communication strategies. The book explores ethical considerations of data communication, like data privacy and security.

4. Letonsaari, Mika, and Jukka Selin. “Modeling Computational Algorithms Using Nonlinear Storytelling Methods of Computer Game Design.” Procedia Computer Science, vol. 119, 2017, pp. 131–38, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.169.

This article looks at the intersection of game design and computational modeling, and it provides insights into how game design principles can be used to communicate complex ideas in a more intuitive way, investigating the use of game design principles in computational modeling. The article looks at a case study that demonstrates the potential of nonlinear storytelling methods to make understanding algorithms more accessible to a wider audience, including people who may not have a background in computer science. The authors point out that the complexity of computational algorithms is difficult to convey through traditional methods of visualization, and nonlinear storytelling methods provide a more intuitive and engaging way to represent complex concepts.

5. Schell, Jesse. The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, Third Edition. 3rd ed., CRC Press, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1201/b22101.

This book is a comprehensive guide to what author Jesse Schell considers the art of game design. This approach to game design is based on the concept of specific elements providing "lenses" that offer perspectives designers can use to view their games from. Schell gives an overview of the game design process, which includes different types of games, the role of the game designer, and the importance of understanding the player; the concept of lenses, used to examine aspects of game design, such as the game's aesthetics, mechanics, technology and story. Schell also offers advice on game development related topics like playtesting, prototyping, and balancing. The book’s main

emphasis is on the importance of understanding the player and using lenses to view game design from multiple perspectives.

6. Sewell, Amber. “Creating a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure Library Orientation: The Process of Using a Text-Based, Interactive Storytelling Tool to Take Your Orientation Virtual.” Journal of New Librarianship, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, https://doi.org/10.33011/newlibs/10/3.

   In this piece, Sewell describes their personal experience using Twine, a text-based, interactive storytelling tool to create a virtual library orientation program and how they use technology and storytelling to enhance the learning experience they were offering. The program they created was designed to provide students with an engaging and interactive introduction to the library's resources and services. It was modeled after the choose-your-own-adventure books popular in the 1980s and 1990s. Sewell shares an overview of the process of creating the orientation program, from selecting the appropriate tool to designing the narrative and creating the content. They share the challenges and successes of the project, and offer advice for other librarians interested in creating their own interactive orientation programs.

7. Ujwary-Gil, Anna. “Theoretical Foundations of Networks and Resource-Based Approaches in Organization Management.” Organizational Network Analysis, 1st ed., Routledge, 2020, pp. 11–76, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367408947-2.

   This article explores the theoretical foundations of networks and resource-based approaches in organization management. It provides an overview of key concepts and theories underlying these approaches, including social network analysis, resource-based theory, and dynamic capabilities theory. The author argues that networks and resources are essential components of organizational success, and effective management of these

elements can lead to improved performance and competitive advantage. The article shares practical examples on how these approaches have been applied in the areas of innovation, strategic alliances, and human resource management.

Works Cited

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2. Fischer, Deanne. 7 Mar. 2023.
3. Barwick, Leanna. OCAD Y U MAD? The Interactive Journey. Web executable, Leanna Barwick, 2023.
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11. Schell, Jesse. The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses, Third Edition. 3rd ed., CRC Press, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1201/b22101.