
Play Testing

CS 4730 – Computer Game Design

Credit: Several slides from Walker White (Cornell)

Why Does Play Testing Matter?

- Have you ever had someone else read a paper you wrote?
- Why?

Why Does Play Testing Matter?

- What are you actually trying to find out when you have other people play your game?
- What “matters” in a game?
- How do you measure it?
- Goal / Question / Metric methodology

Some Thoughts

- Time to learn to use a game verb / action
- Time (ability) to complete a specific task/quest
- Usage (or lack of usage) of gameplay features
- Errors (how many, where)
- Player satisfaction (Likert scale)
- Where did they have the most/least fun?
- What was the user's first reaction?
- How would the user describe the game to others?
- Would they play it again?

Why Does Play Testing Matter?

- What are you going to do with the results of your play testing?
- How will that affect this game?
- The next game?

HCI comes to Game Design

- Have you had HCI yet?
- User studies are a THING!
- There are right ways and wrong ways to do them!

Questions to Consider

- Who should play test your game? Why?
 - Remember that people's time is valuable!
 - They are doing YOU a favor!
- What is your role when they are playing the game?
 - You are not their personal game coach!
- How can you ensure that the test is the same for everyone?
 - Scripts are not a bad thing at all!

Step 1: Find your play testers

- We have stipulated three groups you must hit:
 - The “expert” / “confidant” (in CS 4730)
 - The “advanced consumer” (computing student)
 - The “general consumer” (non-computing student)
- Ask around! Ask friends of friends!
 - (surely you have friends not in the E-school... right?)
- Schedule the test for a time that’s NOT RUSHED!

Step 2: Prepare the Location

- The location should be:
 - Convenient
 - Away from distractions
 - Comfortable
- You should have:
 - Your computer READY TO GO!
 - Your script of what you'll tell them
 - Your data collection instruments

Step 3: Prepare your Script

- You are no longer a game designer for this exercise. You are an objective observer.
- DO NOT TALK ABOUT:
 - How awesome your game is!
 - What you want to do with the game in the future!
 - What is currently broken!
- DO TALK ABOUT:
 - The bare minimum of how to play! WRITE THIS OUT!

Step 4: Prepare the Data Collection

- What are you going to record?
 - Audio?
 - Screen capture?
 - Just use pen and paper?
- Have SOMETHING ready to take notes during the session!
- If there are particular things you want to look for, have that written out!

Step 5: Prepare the Survey

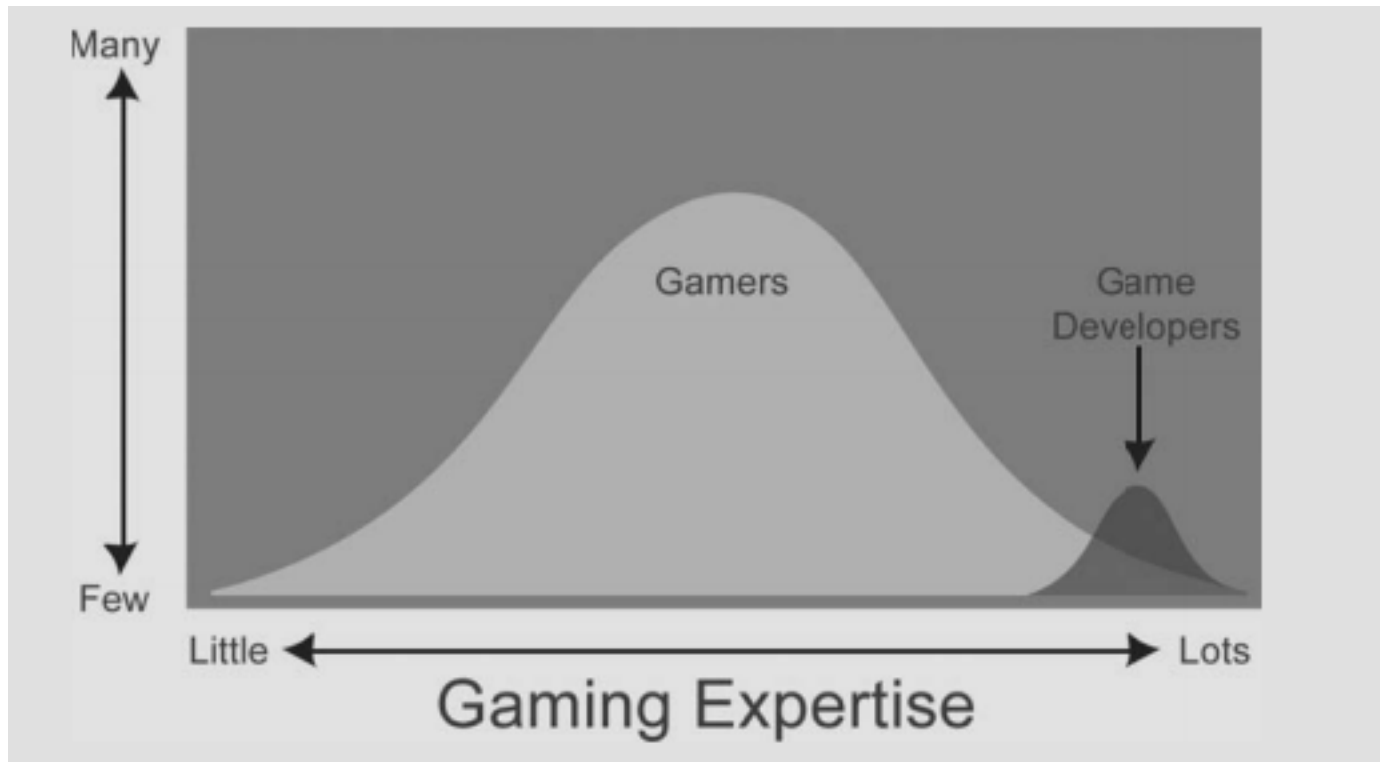
- Post test surveys are good as well
- Ask questions that have answers that are relatively easy to process
 - Likert scales (1-7, for instance)
 - True / False
 - Multiple choice
- Have some open ended questions

Step 6: The Session Schedule

- Introduction of the game
- Get background info on the tester
- Play the game
 - Give specific task / goal (even if that's just “go explore”)
 - DO ask them to “think out loud” as they are playing!
- Wrap up discussion and survey
 - Some GREAT questions on page 263

Do Not Get Frustrated!

- Remember:



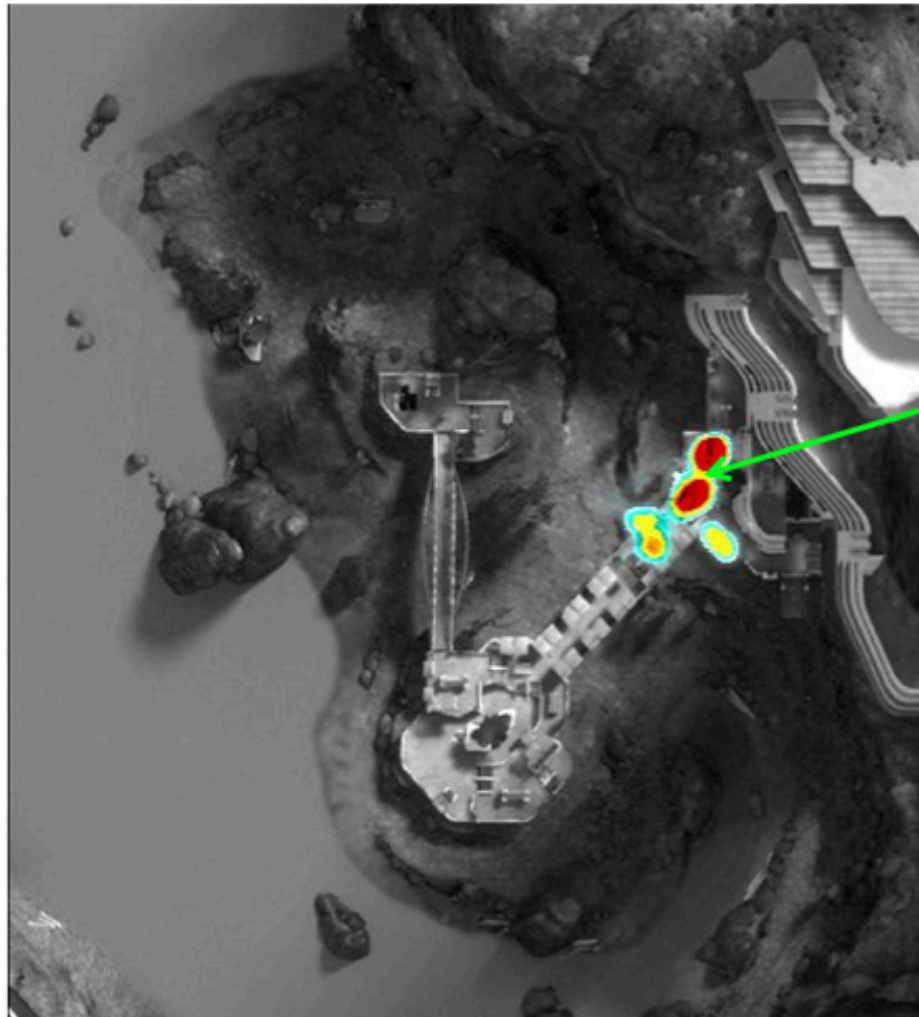
Now that you have data...

- What do you do with it?
- How do you act on the data you've gathered?
- Tips:
 - Don't wait too long! You'll forget the context of some of your notes.
 - Talk (like out loud) with the entire team discussing how the session went – and then take notes on that too!
 - Compare notes with other teams!

Advanced Play Testing

- In modern games, we often put in hooks and let beta testers do a lot of the work without actually “doing the work!”
- Here are some fascinating examples courtesy of Prof. White at Cornell

Heatmaps



Zone of
Death!

SWTOR

Filter on:
How do I...



SWTOR

Filter on:
Bug, Broken

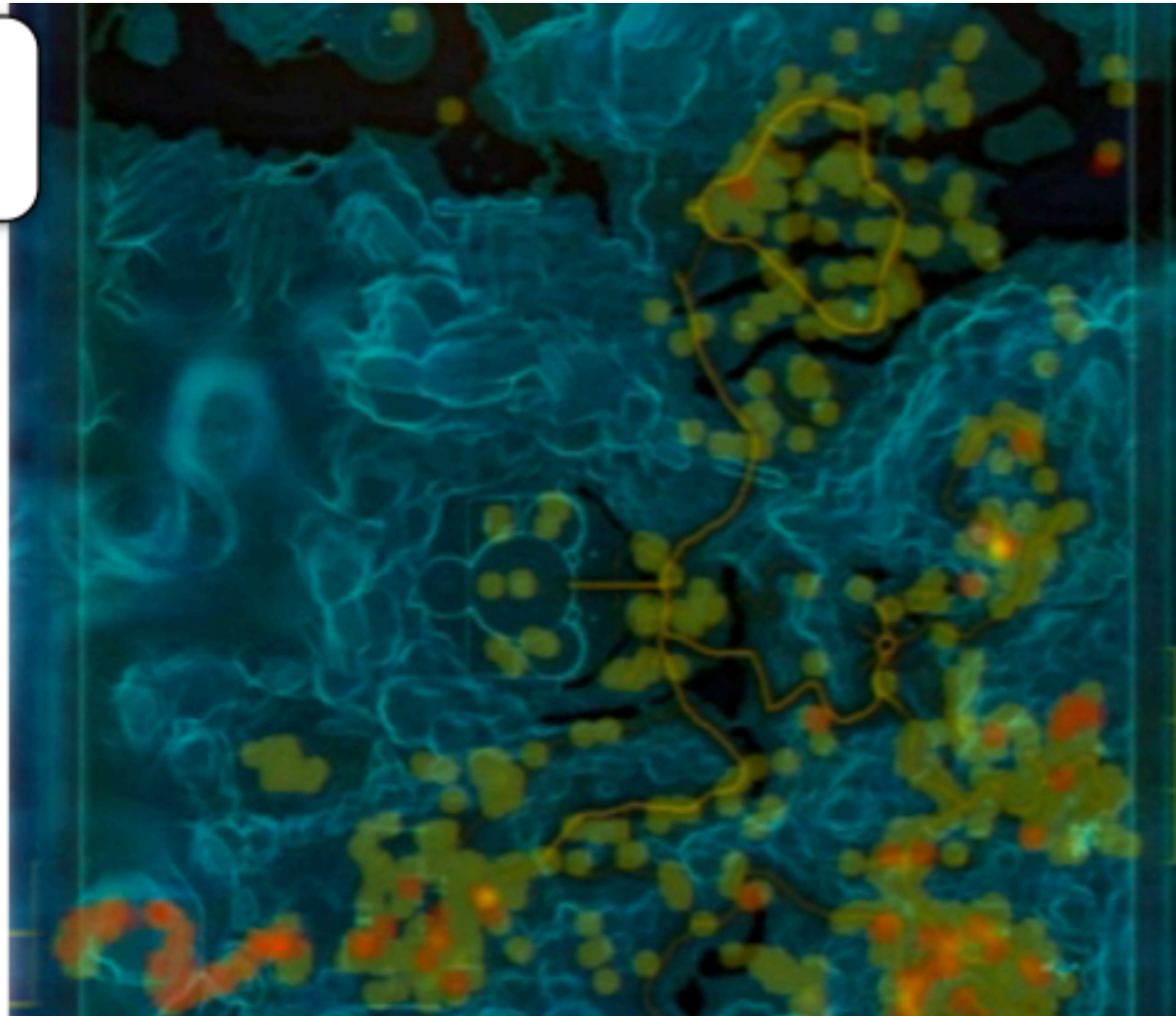


SWTOR

Legend:

Orange = group

Green = solo



SWTOR

