

THE HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA
THE MMO FROM MUD TO WOW;
ESPORTS AND COMPETITIVE
GAMING

MULTI-USER DUNGEON

- More commonly called '*MUD*'.
- Released in 1980, considered the first virtual world.
- Influenced by *Adventure*, the late 70s text adventure game.
- Initially designed and coded by Roy Trubshaw, completed by Richard Bartle, while at U of Essex.

RICHARD BARTLE

- Born January 10th, 1960.
- Ph.D. in Artificial Intelligence.
- Has worked as both a developer (primarily on *MUD* or other MMOs) and as an academic/educator.
- Researched gamer personality types common in MMOs.

BARTLE'S TYPES

- Achiever: Interested in beating the game and amassing concrete evidence of success. Like to have the opportunity to show off skills, sit at top of leaderboards.
- Explorer: Explorers like to push boundaries, look for hidden places and easter eggs. They enjoy back-story, lore and moving at their own pace. They like to have the opportunity to share knowledge.
- Socializer: Enjoy interacting with others; the game is a tool they use to form social connections. Multiplayer offers a limitless possibility for relationships; often join guilds.
- Killer: Thrive on competition; prefer fighting other players to scripted events. Desire to pit their skills against other live opponents and to exert power over weaker characters. Often leaders, not antisocial by definition; although some become trolls.

DEVELOPMENT OF MUD

- Trubshaw intended to build a virtual world with no objectives other than to explore.
- Bartle pushed for more game-like elements.
- Trubshaw agreed when it became clear he didn't have the computing power to build a fully functioning world.
- Bartle eventually took over completely; Trubshaw stepped back to focus on his degree. Added *D&D* conventions like treasure hunting, levels, and chaining of goals.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Freedom to socialize in an alternative reality was an important element of *MUD*.
- To some extent players had the ability to define the world through action.
- I.e. The players can always leave if the game is developed in a direction that does not suit them.
- One of the first 'live' products.

RISE IN POPULARITY

- University of Essex decided to test British Telecom's new Experimental Packet Switching System (EPSS).
- Bartle used EPSS to share *MUD* with other institutions in the UK and the US.
- U of Essex also permitted off-campus computer users to log in and use their systems.

CLONES AND SPIN-OFFS

- 'MUD' eventually came to refer to any text-based multiplayer virtual worlds.
- Original *MUD* was free and freely distributed - as per Bartle's and Trubshaw's goals.
- However, clones were both for-profit and free-to-play.
- Most famous was *aberMUD*; built on Unix so highly popular in universities.

THE MUD/ MOO SPLIT.

- *AberMUD's* popularity resulted in an explosion of game-focused clones.
- Players looking for a more social atmosphere split from the *MUD* community.
- The result was the *MOO - MUD Object Oriented*.
- *MOOs* dropped game conventions such as score and level in favour of social and creative activities.

NETWORK ACCESS

- Network access in the 1980s was rare and expensive.
- Most networks charged hefty up front costs and a high hourly rate.
- Each network was separate and users could only access the games, software, etc. available on that specific network.

QUANTUM LINK

- Qunatum Link was a network exclusively for Commodore 64 owners; \$4/hour to access.
- *RabbitJack's Casino* was developed by Rob Fulop (*Night Trap*).
- Goal to keep players online for as long as possible; engineered so that players win more than expected.
- Social connections via chat important in keeping people online.
- 15K players, representing about 3% of total Quantum Link network traffic.

HABITAT

- Designed by Chip Morningstar of Lucasfilm Games.
- A persistent virtual world of 20K single screen locations.
- Like a theme park, with many varied activities.
- Hoped to eventually reach up to 20K user simultaneously.
- Quest content wasn't sufficient; Lucasfilm gave players more tools and freedoms; lawlessness resulted.
- Shut down for becoming too successful; could have brought down Quantum Link's servers.

OTHER TITLES

- *Neverwinter Nights* - graphical RPG; \$4- \$8/hour.
- *Modem Wars* - robot themed war games.
- The Sierra Network - 30K users at \$2/hour; focused on games like chess, checkers, etc.

ULTIMA ONLINE

- EA bankrolled an early prototype for the project.
- Beta test in 1996; 50K people signed up to participate. Immediately became the most important property in EA.
- Used subscription service model, popularized by *Meridian 59*.
- Hired a full-time community manager based on research into other online communities
- Released in September 1997, still active today.

DISCORD IN BRITANNIA

- 250K players at peak in 2003.
- Similar problems as those that plagued *Habitat*.
- Lawlessness, including thieving, banditry, murder, extortion, etc.
- Players completely destroyed the delicate ecosystem by killing easy to kill rabbits, resulting in the wolves dying off, etc.
- Eventually resorted to creating an in-game jail, and a reputation system so grievers were easily spotted.

EVERQUEST

- Next popular mainstream MMO released after *Ultima Online*.
- Released early 1999; still active today.
- 450K subscribers by 2003.
- More directed than *Ultima Online*; more quest-based content.
- Followed by a spate of other MMOs.

PROMINENT MMOS

- *Lineage* (1998), 1M in 2008.
- *Asheron's Call* (1999), 120K in 2002.
- *Final Fantasy XI* (2002), 500K in 2008.
- *Dark Age of Camelot* (2001), 210K in 2003.
- *Eve Online* (2003), 500K in 2013.
- *Guild Wars* (2005), no subscriptions.
- *Club Penguin* (2005), 200M registered accounts in 2013.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

- Released in late 2004.
- Built off of established brand - *Warcraft*.
- Softened the steep learning curve found in *Everquest* and *Ultima Online*.
- Fully quest-driven experience; cut down on PvP by increasing restrictions.
- 10 million subscribers in 2009.
- 20K PCs running 13,250 copies of the game; 2,396 customer support personnel and 451 people exclusively building new content.

ECONOMICS OF VIRTUAL WORLDS

- The sale of virtual items using real-world currency is common in many MMOs.
- Edward Castronova published research on the economics of *EverQuest*; Norrath had a GDP equal to 77th on world stage in 2001.
- In 2004 global trade in virtual goods was worth \$100 M.
- Gold farming common in many MMOs by 2008.

SECOND LIFE

- A spiritual successor to *LambdaMOO*.
- Completely open-ended; users can create their own objects and build their own 'homes'.
- Users permitted to sell their creations on an open market.
- LindenLabs generated revenue by selling land in *Second Life* (necessary for any building projects) and maintaining the Lindex - a Linden/US dollar currency exchange.

KOREA'S REINVENTION

- Japan annexed Korea in 1910; set about dismantling Korean history and culture.
- North Korea and South Korea established after Japan's defeat in WWII.
- South Korea banned the importation of any Japanese goods; black market reigned.
- Period of rapid growth in early 90s resulted in large uptake of PCs and prompted IT firms to start developing games.
- Gamers accustomed to pirating or black market prices were adverse to paying for video games, so many early attempts failed.
- Korean government announced plans to create a 'knowledge-based society' in 1995.

ONLINE GAMES FOR PROFIT

- The solution to monetizing games and avoiding piracy was to bring them online.
- *Jurassic Park* - text-based MUD released in 1994 side-stepped the piracy issue.
- More successful of early online games was *The Kingdom of the Winds* a MUG released in 1996.

RECESSION AND GROWTH

- Loss of confidence in the Thai *baht* caused the SE Asian economy to contract.
- Many unemployed opened 'PC bangs' - internet gaming cafes.
- Large subsidies available for internet companies to encourage growth.
- In 1998 over 3000 PC bangs in operation in South Korea, and over 15,000 in 1999 due to...

STARCRAFT

- Of 9.5 million copies of *StarCraft* sold worldwide, 4.5 million were in Korea.
- TV stations began broadcasting matches.
- Korea's World Cyber Games drew 50K people to watch live, hundreds of thousands more online.
- Big name sponsors, such as Samsung; and Korean government contributed \$350K for prize money in 2002.

LINEAGE

- Designed by Jake Song, also designed *Kingdom of the Winds*.
- Inspired by more medieval European fantasy.
- Focused on large-scale battles, whereas most western MMOs were focused more on single-player content.
- 3 million subscribers by 2003.

MICROPAYMENTS

- Korea pioneered the use of micropayments and free-to-play in video games.
- Nexon released *Crazyracing Kartrider* in 2004.
- Popular enough that it is estimated 25% of all South Koreans have played it.

CHINA

- Korean free-to-play games saw major success in China.
- China spent \$1.8 M over five years to support domestic games development.
- *Learn from Lei Feng Online*, released in 2006.
- Also banned foreign made games that the government believed posed a threat to Chinese culture, by “damaging the nation’s glory”, or “disturbing the social order”.