

Divine Decisions

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Abstract

1. Introduction

Divine Decisions is a fusion of genres, combining elements of a semi-auto-battler, roguelike RPG, fantasy, decision-making, and immersive simulation. In this game, players assume the role of an omnipotent puppet master tasked with guiding their chosen champion through a medieval fantasy world. The goal is to shape the champion's destiny with strategic decisions that go beyond the confines of traditional RPGs. Using a specialized input device, players physically cast spells and influence the champion's path, becoming the true architects of triumph against the embodiment of all evil. The dynamic narrative ensures that every decision matters, creating consequences that faithfully reflect the player's choices. With a central focus on decision-making, Divine Decisions challenges players to carefully balance intervention and restraint, providing an engaging journey where every choice shapes the course of history in the epic struggle against evil.

2. Target Audience

Divine Decisions represents a groundbreaking gaming experience meticulously crafted to appeal to a diverse audience. Its primary focus is on individuals who may not have contemplated their gaming habits and obligations towards others, often possessing limited knowledge of video games but demonstrating an openness to unique and thought-provoking experiences. This audience is encouraged to engage deeply with the game, assuming the role of a guardian responsible for the main character's life through an innovative statue controller, fostering

reflection on their gaming behavior and responsibilities. Divine Decisions also focuses on their secondary audience composed of teenagers and young adults who ardently embrace semi-auto-battler games, roguelike RPGs, fantasy adventures, decision-driven narratives, and immersive simulations. This group, well-versed in the gaming genres incorporated into the game, is offered a refreshing and entertaining gameplay experience. The project meticulously addresses the needs, expectations, and experiences of both primary and secondary audiences, providing newcomers with the unique controller experience and captivating aesthetics for avid gamers. The project's rhetoric and description skillfully highlight a captivating narrative, extending an invitation to players from both segments to become active participants rather than mere spectators, imbuing their gaming adventure with profound depth and significance. Divine Decisions pledges to deliver a comprehensive and inclusive gaming encounter that resonates across a broad spectrum of players.

Situated Project I.1

Category	Audience Information (Primary Audience)	Audience Information (Secondary Audience)
Audience Description	People who haven't contemplated their gaming habits and obligations towards others.	Teenagers and young adults who enjoy semi-auto-battler games, roguelike RPGs, fantasy adventures, decision-driven narratives, and immersive simulations.
Importance	Our game encourages players to reflect on their gaming habits and responsibilities towards others by placing them in the role of a guardian, responsible for the main character's life through an immersive statue controller.	Our game encompasses these genres, promising enjoyment for players who will also contribute valuable feedback.
Knowledge or Familiarity of Project Genre	In general, their knowledge may be somewhat limited due to their lack of reflection on gaming habits and responsibilities towards	Indeed, the game integrates elements akin to semi-auto-battler games, roguelike RPGs, fantasy adventures, decision-driven

	others. They have some video game knowledge but nothing too specific.	narratives, and immersive simulations, offering a sense of familiarity to those who enjoy the genres.
Attitude & Behaviors with Similar Interests or Projects (engagement, past use, expectations)	Immersive experience, thought provoking, unique experience, eye opening	Fun, entertaining experience, with refreshing gameplay, with some expectations that need to be reached with these types of projects

Situated Project I.2

- How do you address the needs, expectations and experiences of your primary and secondary audiences in the design of your project? How are their interests, experiences or needs represented?

In our project, we prioritize addressing the needs, expectations, and experiences of both our primary and secondary audiences by incorporating a unique physical interface that sets us apart from traditional PC and console games. For our primary audience of avid gamers, the statue offers an immersive experience that transcends typical gameplay, seamlessly blending the real and virtual worlds. Simultaneously, for our secondary audience, we ensure their interests are represented through captivating aesthetics and interactive features, making our project accessible and engaging to a broader range of individuals. This approach underscores our commitment to delivering a comprehensive and inclusive gaming experience.

- How are your audiences represented or addressed in your rhetoric and description of your project? How do you present your project?

Our approach to representing and addressing our audiences in the rhetoric and description of our project is centered around creating a captivating narrative. We aim to go beyond the conventional gaming experience by inviting our players to step into the shoes of the guardian, the unsung hero responsible for guiding the main character through their perilous journey. This narrative not only immerses players in a unique and emotionally resonant role but also emphasizes their crucial role in shaping the course of the adventure. By presenting our project in this way, we ensure that players understand that they are not merely spectators but active participants, adding depth and meaning to their gaming experience.

3. Impact/Significance

Rather than a digital version of the game, Divine Decisions is trying to combine video games with the tactile play that defines board games and other physical toys, creating a new kind of interaction in the player's mind. In terms of game content, Divine Decisions encourages players to think about decisions rather than confining them to the fixed storyline of traditional RPGs, communicating the core ideas of RPGs to the player community and everyone.

4. Precedents/Related Projects

[Skylanders](#)

The *Skylanders* series, derived from the *Spyro* games, was one of the first to incorporate a collection of physical mini-figures that act as summoning tools for each character. The player would place the figure on a physical portal that would summon them in your game. They also produced later iterations of the figures that could separate at the waist and could be mixed and matched. This relates to our project because of the physical figures embodying the digital characters and the potential for mix and match. However, it differs because the figures in the Skylander series are rigid and once summoned you still only control them in game with a controller. (2)

[R.O.B](#)

The R.O.B toy/controller may be the first of its kind. It was developed due to the stagnation of the video game market in the 80s, where they hoped to gain customer interaction via the pairing of a toy. R.O.B (robotic operating buddy) would move different building blocks or spin its torso mirroring the play of two games on the NES. This product is very similar to our project's design, utilizing a physical figure that moves and interacts with the digital landscape. It differs in that R.O.B didn't have a digital twin and ultimately wasn't appealing to broad audiences due to its clunkiness and boring/limited usability which we want to improve upon. This relates to our project because the R.O.B. controller and their games were very basic and not too engaging with their audience. This serves as a reminder and warning for our project to make sure the interaction of our device is engaging, fun, and unique through our microcontrollers and sensors, as well as having an engaging game that will provide a fun time to the player. (1)

[Loop Hero](#)

Loop Hero is an endless RPG that came out in 2021. It masterfully utilizes retro 2D-pixel

graphics to present its fantasy setting. The player controls a deck of cards that set up obstacles in the hero's path to stimulate growth as the hero endlessly loops through the level you slowly design. Our game can draw a lot from Loop Hero with our goal of creating an auto-battler RPG with similar aesthetics. Additionally, we plan to use a simpler form of control over our hero with a limited amount of options and predetermined environments. (3)

Undertale

Undertale is one of the most influential and unique indie RPGs of our time. Developed by a very small team, mostly by a single individual, it takes you on a journey through a mysterious and strange underground world. A key gameplay feature is that the game gives the player the choice to choose violence or peace when interacting with enemies/characters. This leads to a complex web of relations determined by which path you choose. One of the main goals of our project is to emphasize the weight of the choices you make and few games demonstrate that as well as Undertale. One key difference would be that it is more of a classic RPG format where you directly control the main character. (4)

Fear & Hunger

Fear and Hunger, the game that sparked the inception of this project, delves into profound themes of destiny, personal choices, and the consequences of one's actions. Inspired aesthetically by its dark medieval fantasy world and thematically by the exploration of the human mind and body, the project embraces the same harrowing journey into existence and morality as Fear and Hunger. (7)

5. Context/Background Research

This is a game based on an individual's difficult choices throughout their journey. This game will tell a story of how the hero can go through hard obstacles such as enemies, buying materials, leveling up, and making the hardest decisions. If people enjoy playing fantasy games, RPG games, or tabletop games, then this game calls for their names. The whole world will take place in medieval times but it will not be related to the stories we've been told. Instead, it will be our fictional storytelling of the hero (you players!!!).

Decision Making

Decision-making is an important factor in video games because they often possess features such as character selection, multiple paths leading to good or bad endings, choosing from multiple options, buying what material will be useful in a battle, and so on. The variety of choices that a game makes available to the player is often a key factor in the player's perception of the game. (5)

[Prisoner's Dilemma](#)

Game theory strategy improves decision-making and brings together three things: mathematics, psychology, and philosophy. All games require you to use your brain, though at varying degrees. RPG games require the player to manage several resources simultaneously, from health and energy to equipment and consumable items. In a well-designed game, every decision the player makes will have consequences, either positive or negative. (9)

[In Game as in Life](#)

The value attributed to a decision is directly linked to the risk involved in making it. This is true both in our physical lives and in the digital world of video games. Risk and consequence attribute value and importance to the choice being made. When designing a game, it is critical to not only provide the player with decisions to make but to give them a reason to care about it. One key example is the Pokemon series, where the very first choice you make, selecting your initial partner, will substantially affect your experience through the beginning of the game. (11)

[The Impact of Controllers in Games](#)

A fundamental, yet often overlooked component of any game is the interface used to play it. A game controller is a critical part of the gameplay experience, whether it takes the form of the standard modern console controller or something unique to the game in question. XControllers are well suited for games that require precise movements and actions and provide inputs. Researchers wonder how controllers lead to greater presence or enjoyment in different types of games. (10)

[Aesthetics of Controller, Hand, and Screen](#)

A game controller represents the connection between our hands and the characters on the screen. Modern video game controllers are designed to feel more like generic vehicle controls, rather than fitting with any particular game, due to the variety of experiences they will be required to work with. The most powerful design, however, is one that unifies the aesthetics of the world, the character, and the controller into one complete picture. The visual design of a controller is not the only critical aspect of its design. The programming integrated into the hardware is necessary to allow it to communicate with the game efficiently and responsively. (8)

[Body Movement Controlled Games](#)

Body Movement-Controlled Video Games(BMCVGs) are a genre of video gaming utilizing body movement to control gameplay that is becoming increasingly popular. Examples like Wii Fit, Wii Sports, or Just Dance require players to move their whole body to input a movement. It's a good exercise for kids and families to enjoy because of exercising. Throughout some years, BMCVG was rated higher than traditional bike games. The Player doesn't play the

games with the controller, the player becomes the controller. In this project, we are using our hands to directly manipulate the physical representation of our character, which in turn affects their digital twin. (12)

The Semiotics of Game Controllers

To play a video game, you have to act on the controller and in the video game through the controller. Video game controllers require muscle movements. The controller is an integrated part of the video game experience. A player masters the game controllers throughout a game's journey the same way people are in the process of learning a language. With the use of single in-game actions carried out by stringing together several controller actions (so-called combos), actions are not limited to individual buttons. Like in fighting games, to perform a special move, you have to string together 2 or more buttons for the move to take effect. Movement is important in a video game and without movement, there is no play. (6)

6. Tools and Methods

Method

- Paper- Create Base RPG System, Create art drafts, define draft ideas, create story and game flow
- Draw.io- Map out scenes and selections
- Photoshop- Translate art Drafts into digital assets
- GameMaker Studio 2- Translate the RPG system into the platform, Animate assets
- Logic Pro & Ableton Live- Create Soundtracks and record SFX
- Physical- Acquire sensors and make the statue
- Arduino- Code sensors to work
- Blender- Build a 3D model in Blender
- 3D Print- Print out Model
- Merge everything

7. Outcomes

Divine Decisions highlights how important your choices are and the responsibilities that come with having great power. It also shows how your decisions affect the people you're in charge of.

As you play the game, your choices shape what happens, and you can see how they cause a

chain reaction. This helps players see the results of their choices and understand the power they have.

On top of that, while guiding the lives of those under your care, you'll see how each choice leads to different outcomes, making every decision feel more meaningful and thought-provoking.

By the time we get to Fall, we will have a metal framework for the statue we have created and one coded instance of our game. When we get to Spring, we will have a functional statue along with a short playable game.

8. Group Roles

- Chris Tran- Project Leader, RPG System Designer, Narrative Designer
- Jonah Craven- Lead Programmer and Statue Designer
- Atehkeng Fomeche- Narrative Designer
- Jett Cunningham- Controller Programmer and Statue Designer
- Hailin Zhang- Lead Artist and Animator
- Cristian Jeffries- Sound Designer

9. Updated Timeline

Current Situation 11/21/2023

Jonah: Finish character selection code, finish modular selection code, victory/consequences scenario

Jett: Implement and incorporate sensors into a figure

Cristian: Make forest exploration music, forest combat music, and victory music, voice recording will happen tomorrow on Tuesday

Halin: Make forest background, back view of statue character, front views of wolf, goblin, cultist, and bandit (Optional: Front Views for Valor, Wisdom, and Mercy)

Ateh: Look at all of Jonah's placeholder image needs and go down the list and make sure all things are done

Chris: Do Draft II Proposal with professor's feedback, give art inspiration to Halin if needed

01/08/2024 - Capstone II Starts

Chris- Make a huge meeting to thoroughly define the rest of what needs to be done. Overall Map and step-by-step sections for everyone to finish. Make sure to help in any of the departments afterward.

Jonah- (Broken up goals and mentally complex) Expand on a prototype to include 3 different sections in the game, as well as include the attribute test section portion of the game, and make sure the overall game is playable.

Jett- (Broken up goals and mentally complex) Be able to code microcontrollers and have it work. All aspects of the statute will be implemented. Make a 3D model to print out soon.

Hailin- (Constant and More Labor Intensive) Continue creating art for all the scenes, enemies, items, etc.

Christian- (Constant and More Labor Intensive) Continue creating music for all the scenes, enemies, etc.

Ateh- Support in sound creation and art creation.

February- Crunch Done

Deliverables by crunch time:

- Playable Game
- Working Statue Components
- 3D Model of Statue

March- Fluff

- Combine Components with statutes, hopefully, don't need much time for trial and error situations, but incorporate them into the schedule and meetings outside of class.

- Playtest the game and use the extra time to make sure the game is more polished
- Continue with Art and Sound and fill in the rest of the holes if needed

10. Reflection

The Day Before the Showcase

During the day before the showcase, the main issue that the Divine Decisions team encountered was that the team efficiently worked on every aspect of the game but did not think about the UI for the players as much. That was a detail that the team leader overlooked. On top of that, the controller device required emergency repairs. That was when the group spent the rest of the day making an instruction manual, added UI elements into the game, and fixed the statue.

What Worked

What really worked for the team was the concept of the world as well as the incorporation of the statue within the project. Players and spectators really enjoyed how they can decide their actions using the statue and how it brings in a sort of immersion where the player is responsible for the champion's life. What also worked was the game idea, it was a refreshing concept in the world of videogames where the game can run by itself and the player can intervene whenever they want to.

What didn't work

What didn't work was certain UI elements. The main issue was that players were confused whose health was whose when their champion was in battle. The group and the players also agreed that the timer should finish quicker if the player ran out of influence points as well as incorporate a skip button for when they don't want to decide nor wait for the timer to go down. So certain UI elements and the lack of other ones didn't work for the group but that was due to the project leader's overlook of the UI and the group had only one night to put in UI elements into the game.

11. Future Plans

Logistics Department

- Have a group meeting to further define what else needs to be done throughout the departments

Game Department

- Incorporate UI elements from the feedback of the capstone showcase
- Add another screen for an endless mode and a story mode
- Add a high score table
- Add in more game functions like stat tests, buffs and debuffs, more areas, and enemies

Statue Department

- Create a 3D model
- Print the model
- Assemble the model
- Test the model
- Rinse and Repeat until satisfied

Story Department

- Help Art and Sound Department envision the introduction scene

Art Department

- Make more maps
- More enemies
- Work on story scenes

Sound Department

- Make more map music
- More enemies sounds
- Work on story scene music

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