

AlternateRealityGame

EN Version

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Chapter 1

Origins

1.1 Alternate reality game

This article is about the genre. For the specific 1980s series, see [Alternate Reality \(computer game\)](#).

An **alternate reality game (ARG)** is an interactive **networked narrative** that uses the real world as a platform and employs **transmedia storytelling** to deliver a story that may be altered by players' ideas or actions.

The form is defined by intense player involvement with a story that takes place in real time and evolves according to players' responses. Subsequently, it is shaped by characters that are actively controlled by the game's designers, as opposed to being controlled by **artificial intelligence** as in a computer or console video game. Players interact directly with characters in the game, solve plot-based challenges and puzzles, and collaborate as a community to analyze the story and coordinate real-life and online activities. ARGs generally use **multimedia**, such as telephones, email and mail but rely on the Internet as the central binding medium.

ARGs are growing in popularity, with new games appearing regularly and an increasing amount of experimentation with new models and subgenres. They tend to be free to play, with costs absorbed either through supporting products (e.g. collectible puzzle cards fund *Perplex City*) or through promotional relationships with existing products (for example, *I Love Bees* was a promotion for *Halo 2*, and the *Lost Experience* and *Find 815* promoted the television show *Lost*). However, pay-to-play models exist as well.

1.1.1 Definition

There is a great deal of debate surrounding the characteristics by which the term "alternate reality game" should be defined. Sean Stacey, founder of the website Unfiction, has suggested that the best way to define the genre was *not* to define it, and instead locate each game on three axes (ruleset, authorship and coherence) in a sphere of "chaotic fiction" that would include works such as the *Uncyclopedia* and street games like *SFO* as well.^[1]

Several experts, though, point to the use of transmedia, "the aggregate effect of multiple texts/media artifacts,"^[2] as the defining attribute of ARGs. This prompts the unique collaboration emanating from ARGs as well; Sean Stewart, founder of 42 Entertainment, which has produced various successful ARGs, speaks to how this occurs, noting that "the key thing about an ARG is the way it jumps off of all those platforms. It's a game that's social and comes at you across all the different ways that you connect to the world around you."^[2]

Unique terminology

Among the terms essential to understand discussions about ARGs are:

- **Puppet-master** – A puppet-master or "PM" is an individual involved in designing and/or running an ARG. Puppet-masters are simultaneously allies and adversaries to the player base, creating obstacles and providing resources for overcoming them in the course of telling the game's story. Puppet-masters generally remain behind the *curtain* while a game is running.^[3] The real identity of puppet masters may or may not be known ahead of time.
- **The Curtain** – The curtain, drawing from the phrase, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain," is generally a metaphor for the separation between the puppetmasters and the players.^[3] This can take the traditional form of absolute secrecy regarding the puppetmasters' identities and involvement with the production, or refer merely to the convention that puppet-masters do not communicate directly with players through the game, interacting instead through the characters and the game's design.
- **Rabbit-hole/Trailhead** – A rabbit-hole, or trailhead, marks the first media artifact, be it a website, contact, or puzzle, that draws in players. Most ARGs employ a number of trailheads in several media to maximize the probability of people discovering the game. Typically, the rabbit-hole is a website, the most easily updated, cost-effective option.^[4]

- **This Is Not A Game (TINAG)** – Setting the ARG form apart from other games is the *This Is Not A Game* sentiment popularized by the players themselves. It is the belief that “one of the main goals of the ARG is to deny and disguise the fact that it is even a game at all.”^[5]

Similarities to and differences from other forms of entertainment

- *Computer/console/video games.* While ARGs generally use the internet as a central binding medium, they are not played exclusively on a computer and usually do not require the use of special software or interfaces. Non-player characters in ARGs are controlled in real time by the puppetmasters, not computer AI.
- *Role-playing games (RPGs) and Live action role-playing games (LARPs).* The role of the puppetmaster in creating ARG narratives and the puppetmaster’s relationship with an ARG’s players bears a great deal of similarity to the role of a **game master** or referee in a role-playing game. However, the role of the players is quite different. Most ARGs do not have any fixed rules—players discover the rules and the boundaries of the game through trial and error—and do not require players to assume fictional identities or roleplay beyond feigning belief in the reality of the characters they interact with (even if games where players play ‘themselves’ are a long-standing variant on the genre).^[6] Also, the *This Is Not A Game* aesthetic is distinctive to ARGs, not being present in the RPGs or LARPs.
- *Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs).* As outlined above with computer games and traditional role-playing games, non-player characters in ARGs are controlled by real people in real time, not by computer AI; ARGs do not generally require special software or interfaces to play; the games do not require players to roleplay or create characters or avatars; and ARGs generally use multiple media and real life in addition to the internet to distribute their narratives.
- *Viral marketing/internet hoaxes.* While ARGs are often used as a type of **viral marketing**, they diverge sharply from the philosophy behind “sponsored consumers” or other viral marketing practices that attempt to trick consumers into believing that planted skills for a product are other independent consumers. Similarly, they also diverge from sites or narratives that genuinely try to convince visitors that they are what they claim to be. Puppetmasters generally leave both subtle and overt clues to the game’s fictional nature and boundaries where players can find them (e.g. through clearly fictional names on site registrations) and many ARGs openly flaunt

obviously fictional plots. The puppetmasters of the genre’s seminal example, the Beast,^{(see below)[7]} made it a point of pride never to pretend to be players in order to solicit publicity or nudge players along, and the Terms of Service of Unfiction, the central community site for the ARG genre, strictly prohibit individuals involved in creating games from posting about them without disclosing their involvement.^[8]

Influences and precursors

Due to factors like the curtain, attempts to begin games with “stealth launches” to fulfill the TINAG aesthetic, and the restrictive non-disclosure agreements governing how much information may be revealed by the puppetmasters of promotional games, the design process for many ARGs is often shrouded in secrecy, making it difficult to discern the extent to which they have been influenced by other works. In addition, the cross-media nature of the form allows ARGs to incorporate elements of so many other art forms and works that attempting to identify them all would be a nearly impossible task.

Possible inspirations from fiction and other art forms

G. K. Chesterton’s 1905 short story “The Tremendous Adventures of Major Brown” (part of a collection entitled *The Club of Queer Trades*) seems to predict the ARG concept, as does John Fowles’ 1965 novel *The Magus*. The combination board and card game, *Vlet*, that many of the main characters in Delany’s science fiction novel *Triton* (published in 1976) play throughout his novel appears to be a type of ARG. (The game’s name was borrowed from a similar game in short story by Russ entitled “A Game of Vlet”.) Ludic texts such as the popular *Choose Your Own Adventure* children’s novels may also have provided some inspiration. Reader-influenced online fiction such as AOL’s *QuantumLink Serial* provides a model that incorporates audience influence into the storytelling in a manner similar to that of ARGs, as do promotional online games like Wizards of the Coast’s *Webrunner* games. Other possible antecedents include performance art and other theatrical forms that attempt to directly engage the audience.

The One Game, a British television drama serial screened in 1988, was entirely based on the premise of the protagonist being forced to play an ARG (referred to as a “reality game” in the script).

Due to the influence the Beast exerted over the form of later ARGs and the willingness of its creators to talk about its development, its sources of inspiration are both particularly relevant to the evolution of the modern ARG and somewhat more verifiable than other possible antecedents. Elan Lee, one of its creative principals, cites the 1997 movie *The Game* as an inspiration, as well as the Beatles’ “Paul is dead” phenomenon. Sean Stewart, another of the three principal designers, notes that de-

signing and running an ARG bears some similarities to running an RPG, and the influence of that particular game form is further suggested by the fact that Jordan Weisman, the game's third main designer, was also the founder of leading RPG company FASA. Stewart also noted that the sort of "creative, collaborative, enthusiastic scavenging behavior"^[9] upon which the Beast depended has its antecedents outside the arts: the Beast just "accidentally re-invented Science as pop culture entertainment."^[10]

The conspiracy in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* may be an ARG set up by Pierce Inverarity to bedevil Oedipa Maas, as may be the hallucinatory Turkish frontier across which A.W. Hill's Stephan Raszer tracks his quarry in the current literary thriller *Nowhere-Land*.

1.1.2 Basic design principles

ARGs are sometimes described as the first narrative art form native to the internet, because their storytelling relies on the two main activities conducted there: searching for information, and sharing information.

- *Storytelling as archaeology.* Instead of presenting a chronologically unified, coherent narrative, designers scatter pieces of the story across the Internet and other media, allowing players to reassemble it, supply connective tissue and determine what it means.
- *Platformless narrative.* Stories are not bound to a single medium, but exist independently and use whatever media is available to make itself heard.
- *Designing for a hive mind.* While it might be possible to follow games individually, designs are directed at a collective of players that share information and solutions almost instantly, and incorporate individuals possessing almost every conceivable area of expertise. While games might initially attract a small group of participants, as the participants come across new challenges they try to find others with the knowledge needed to overcome an obstacle.
- *A whisper is sometimes louder than a shout.* Rather than openly promoting games and trying to attract participation by "pushing" it toward potential players, designers attempt to "pull" players to the story by engaging in over-the-top secrecy, have elements of the game "warn" players away from them, and eschew traditional marketing channels. Designers do not communicate about the game with players or press while it is in play.
- *The "this is not a game" (TINAG) aesthetic.* ARGs themselves do not acknowledge that they are games. They do not have an acknowledged ruleset for players; as in real-life, they determine the "rules" either through trial and error or by setting their own boundaries. Narratives present a fully realized world: any

phone number or email address mentioned works, and any website acknowledged exists. Games take place in real time and are not replayable. Characters function like real people, not game pieces, respond authentically, and are controlled by real people, not by computer AI. Some events involve meetings or live phone calls between players and actors.

- *Real life as a medium.* Games use players' lives as a platform. Players are not required to build a character or role-play being someone other than themselves. They might unexpectedly overcome a challenge for the community simply because of the real-life knowledge and background they possessed. Participants are constantly on the lookout for clues embedded in everyday life.
- *Collaborative storytelling.* While the puppetmasters control most of the story, they incorporate player content and respond to players' actions, analysis and speculation by adapting the narrative and intentionally leave "white space" for the players to fill in.
- *Not a hoax.* While the TINAG aesthetic might seem on the surface to be an attempt to make something indistinguishable from real life, there are both subtle and overt metacommunications in place to reveal a game's framework and most of its boundaries.

1.1.3 Scholarly views

Overall, academics have been intrigued by ARGs' potential for effective organizing. Across the board, a diverse range of organizations, such as businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and schools "can learn from the best practices and lessons of ARGs to similarly take advantage of new media and collective problem-solving."^[4] As such, implementation of ARGs in these different settings involves finding best practices for honing the collaborative, transmedia elements of ARGs for these respective institutions.

Much of this scholarly interest stems from the evolving media ecology with the rise of new media. In sustaining cooperative online communities, ARGs build off of "an alignment of interest, where problems are presented in a fashion that assists game designers in their goal while intriguing and aiding players in their goals."^[4] This returns to ARGs' framework of transmedia storytelling, which necessitates that ARG designers relinquish a significant degree of their power to the ARG's audience, problematizing traditional views of authorship.^[11]

The majority of the scholastic review on ARGs analyzes their pedagogical advantages. Notably, in the classroom, ARGs can be effective tools for providing exigence on given topics and yield a collaborative and experiential learning environment.^[12] By the same token, weaknesses of classroom learning through ARGs include the need for

a flexible narrative conducive to collaborative learning in large groups and a sophisticated web design.^[12]

1.1.4 Development and history

Main article: [History of alternate reality games](#)

Early examples

Early examples of an ARG style games were *Dreadnot* and *Ong's Hat/Incunabula*.^[13]

Dreadnot was a (non-commercial) ARG produced with a grant from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and published on [sfgate.com](#) in 1996. It included most of the aforementioned design principles. The game included working voice mail phone numbers for characters, clues in the source code, character email addresses, off-site websites, real locations in San Francisco, real people (including then-Mayor *Willie Brown*), and of course a fictional mystery.

Ong's Hat/Incunabula was most likely started sometime around 1993, and also included most of the aforementioned design principles. *Ong's Hat* also incorporated elements of *legend tripping* into its design, as chronicled in a scholarly work titled "Legend-Tripping Online: Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat".^[14] Some scholars disagree on the classification of the *Ong's Hat* story.^[15]

In 1997, a year prior to the release of the *Douglas Adams'* computer game *Starship Titanic*, *The Digital Village* launched a web site purporting to be that of an intergalactic travel agency called *Starlight Travel*, which in the game is the *Starship Titanic's* parent company. The site combined copious amounts of *Monty Python*-esque writing (by *Michael Bywater*) with ARG-type interactivity.

The marketing for the 1999 movie *The Blair Witch Project* resembled ARGs in many ways (and some of its makers went on to create the 2005 Audi promotional ARG *The Art of the Heist*), expanding the world of the movie online, adding backstory, and treating the fiction as reality through real-world media such as fliers and a fake documentary on the Sci-Fi Channel. However, perhaps in part due to the subject material and the absence of overt meta-communications that this was fiction, it also resembles an internet hoax or attempt to create an *urban legend*.

Pervasive play games like the *Go Game* and the *Nokia Game* also incorporated many elements similar to ARGs (although they tended to lack the narrative element central to ARGs) and prefigured the public play components of large-scale corporate ARGs like *I Love Bees*, *The Art of the Heist* and *Last Call Poker*.

Electronic Arts' *Majestic* began development in 1999, al-

though it didn't launch until after the *Beast* had concluded, in 2001. Featuring phone calls, emails and other media that involved players in a multiplatform narrative, the game was eventually cancelled due to lack of players. This was due to many factors, ranging from the monthly subscription fee (as part of Electronic Arts' *EA Online* venture) to *Majestic's* unfortunate timing and subject matter in relation to the *September 11 attacks* on the *World Trade Center*. Many players also criticized the absence of the TINAG principle (e.g. in-game phone calls were preceded by an announcement that they were part of the game, although these announcements were optional based on user preference).

The Beast

Main article: [The Beast \(game\)](#)

In 2001, in order to market the movie *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* directed by *Steven Spielberg* and based on *Stanley Kubrick's* unfinished project but also a planned series of *Microsoft* computer games based on the film, *Microsoft's* Creative Director *Jordan Weisman* and another *Microsoft* game designer, *Elan Lee*, conceived of an elaborate murder mystery played out across hundreds of websites, email messages, faxes, fake ads, and voice-mail messages. They hired *Sean Stewart*, an award-winning science fiction/fantasy author, to write the story and *Pete Fenlon*, an experienced adventure game "world builder," to serve as developer and content lead. The game, dubbed "the *Citizen Kane* of online entertainment" by *Internet Life*,^[16] was a runaway success^[17] that involved over three million active participants^[18] from all over the world during its run and would become the seminal example of the nascent ARG genre. An early asset list for the project contained 666 files, prompting the game's puppetmasters to dub it "*the Beast*", a name which was later adopted by players.^[19] A large and extremely active fan community called the *Cloudmakers* formed to analyze and participate in solving the game,^[20] and the combined intellect, tenacity and engagement of the group soon forced the puppetmasters to create new subplots, devise new puzzles, and alter elements of the design to keep ahead of the player base.^[21] Somewhat unusual for a computer-based game, the production drew players from a wide spectrum of age groups and backgrounds.

Although the *Beast* ran for only three months, it prompted the formation of a highly organized and intensely engaged community that remains active^[22] years after the game concluded. Perhaps more significantly, it inspired a number of its participants to create games adapting and expanding the model, extending it from an anomalous one-time occurrence to a new genre of entertainment and allowing the community to grow even after the *Beast* itself concluded. Members of the *Cloudmakers* group went on to form *ARGN*, the primary news source for the genre, and *Unfiction*, its central community hub, as well as de-

signing the first successful and widely played indie ARGs, such as LockJaw and Metacortechs, and corporate efforts such as Perplex City.

Community and genre growth

The years immediately after the Beast saw independent developers who had played it extend the form from a one-time occurrence to a new genre of gaming, and the formation of an ever-growing community devoted to playing, designing and discussing ARGs.

Grassroots development Influenced heavily by the Beast and enthusiastic about the power of collaboration, several Cloudmakers came together with the idea that they could create a similar game. The first effort to make an independent Beast-like game, *Ravenwatchers*, failed,^[23] but another team soon assembled and met with greater success. With very little experience behind them, the group managed, after nine months of development, to create a viable game that was soon seized upon eagerly by the Cloudmakers group and featured in *WIRED* Magazine.^[24] As players of the Beast, members of the Lockjaw development team were extremely aware of the community playing the game and took steps to encourage the tight bonding of the player base through highly collaborative puzzles, weekly Euchre games, and the inclusion of player personas in the game. While the numbers never rivaled those of The Beast, the game proved both that it was possible for developers to create these games without corporate funding or promotion, and that there was interest in the ARG form beyond a one-time audience for a production on the Beast's scale. Lockjaw marked the start of the ARG as a genre of gaming, rather than simply a one-time occurrence.

Shortly before Lockjaw's conclusion, players discovered a game that seemed to revolve around the movie *Minority Report*. Despite speculation to the contrary, the game (known as *Exocog*) was not an official promotion for the film, but an experiment in interactive storytelling by Jim Miller.^[25] Inspired by the independent Lockjaw effort, Dave Szulborski introduced *ChangeAgents*, a spinoff of EA's failed *Majestic* ARG, to the ARGN audience, then followed it with two additional installments. During this time, Szulborski also created a successful grassroots game not based on the Majestic universe, called *Chasing the Wish*. Just before the release of the third and the final *Matrix* movie, the team that developed Lockjaw launched Metacortechs, an ARG based on that universe. The fan fiction effort was very successful, reached a larger and more active player base than many professionally produced games, and was at first assumed by many to be an officially sanctioned promotion for the movie. Metacortechs was followed by an ever-increasing number of grassroots ARGs.

In the wake of these successful, low-budget independent

ARGs, an active "grassroots" development community began to evolve within the genre. While the quality of the grassroots games varies wildly, amateur storytellers, web designers, and puzzle creators continue to provide independently developed ARGs for the active player community.

Community development The term "alternate reality gaming" was first used by Sean Stacey, one of the moderators of the Lockjaw player community, in the Trail for that game. Stacey and Steve Peters, another of the moderators, created the two websites that have become the central hub of the ARG community: ARGN and UnFiction. Due to their efforts, when Lockjaw ended, the players had a new community resource allowing them to assemble to play the games that were soon to follow. Unfiction now boasts over 32,000 members, and ARGN employs a staff of 15 volunteer writers to report on new games and other topics of interest to the community, as well as producing a weekly netcast.

A first experience in video games Although not considered as a pure alternate reality game, *Missing Since January* ("In Memoriam" in Europe) is a video game based on the same principles that appear in an ARG: an online enquiry, the game entering into the players real life environment, willingly confusing reality and fiction (real fact-based sites, emails...). Developed from 1999 onwards by the French studio Lexis Numérique, *Missing Since January* was launched by Ubisoft in Europe in October 2003 and by Dreamcatcher in the US in January 2004. In *Missing Since January*, using the internet, the player must attempt to decode a mysterious CD ROM broadcast by the police in order to find two missing people abducted by a serial killer. More than a hundred sites were created for this purpose. By and large, as the player advances in the enquiry, they are contacted by different characters that send emails. The follow-up, which appeared in 2006 under the title *Evidence: The Last Ritual* ("In Memoriam 2, The Last Ritual" in Europe) also allowed players to receive text messages and to speak on the phone with certain characters in the game.

Gathering worldwide gamers

Because of their similarities, video games and ARGs continued to be associated through many projects. In 2009, Funcom, a game development studio from Oslo, Norway, hid a gate on its corporate website, which led to an ARG which would be part of the pre-launch campaign for *The Secret World*, a game released in 2013. The gate was discovered only in 2013, therefore requiring the puppetmaster to adapt the scenario to its actual setting.^[26]

Funcom has done a total of 16 ARGs that tie in with *The Secret World*, with the first one starting in May 2007. The ARGs focussed on several different storylines, such as:

The Expedition of Roald Amundsen, The Sanctuary of Secrets and the Secret War.

The company behind Funcom's last 2 ARGs, Human Equation, a Montreal-based entertainment studio who also created an independent ARG called *Qadhos*, has even further purchase the rights to a special class of characters, The Black Watchmen, to create their own independent ARG. A spin-off of Human Equation, Alice & Smith, released the game in June 2015.

Massive-scale commercial games and mainstream attention

After the success of the first major entries in the nascent ARG genre, a number of large corporations looked to ARGs to both promote their products, and to enhance their companies' images by demonstrating their interest in innovative and fan-friendly marketing methods. To create buzz for the launch of the Xbox game *Halo 2*,^[27] Microsoft hired the team that had created the Beast, now operating independently as 42 Entertainment. The result, *I Love Bees*, departed radically from the website-hunting and puzzle-solving that had been the focus of the Beast. *I Love Bees* wove together an interactive narrative set in 2004, and a *War of the Worlds*-style radio drama set in the future, the latter of which was broken into 30–60 second segments and broadcast over ringing payphones worldwide.^[28] The game pushed players outdoors to answer phones, create and submit content, and recruit others, and received as much or more mainstream notice than its predecessor, finding its way onto television during a presidential debate,^[29] and becoming one of the New York Times' catchphrases of 2004.^[30]

As such, *I Love Bees* captivated enough fans to garner significant press attention, and partly because of this publicity, *Halo 2* “sold \$125 mil in copies the first day of release.”^[31] A slew of imitators^{[32][33]} fan tributes^[34] and parodies^{[35][36]} followed. In 2005, a pair of articles profiling 42 Entertainment appeared in *Game Developer* magazine and the *East Bay Express*, both of which tied into an ARG^[37] created by the journalist and his editors.^[38]

The following spring, Audi launched *The Art of the Heist*, developed by Audi ad agency McKinney+Silver, Haxan Films (creators of *The Blair Witch Project*), to promote its new A3.

Roughly a year after *I Love Bees*, 42 Entertainment produced *Last Call Poker*, a promotion for Activision's video game *Gun*. Designed to help modern audiences connect with the Western genre, *Last Call Poker* centered on a working poker site, held games of “Tombstone Hold 'Em” in cemeteries around the United States—as well as in at least one digital venue, *World of Warcraft*'s own virtual reality cemetery^[39] – and sent players to their own local cemeteries to clean up neglected grave sites and perform other tasks.^[40]

At the end of 2005, the International Game Developers Association ARG Special Interest Group was formed “to bring together those already designing, building, and running ARGs, in order to share knowledge, experience, and ideas for the future.” More recently, an ARG was created by THQ for the game *Frontlines: Fuel of War* around peak oil theories where the world is in a crisis over diminishing oil resources.

In 2008, the American Art Museum hosted an alternate reality game, called *Ghosts of a Chance*, which was created by City Mystery.^[41] The game allowed patrons “a new way of engaging with the collection” in the Luce Foundation Center.^[41] The game ran for six weeks and attracted more than 6,000 participants.^[41]

The rise of the self-supporting ARG

As the genre has grown, there has been increasing interest in exploring models that provide funding for large-scale ARGs that are neither promotions for other products nor limited by the generally small budget of grassroots/indie games. The two major trends that have emerged in this area are support through the sale of products related to the game, and fees for participation in the game. A third possible model is one using in-game advertising for other products, as in The LOST Experience, but at this time no large-scale game has attempted to fund itself solely through in-game advertising.

The first major attempt (other than EA's failed *Majestic*) to create a self-supporting ARG was *Perplex City*, which launched in 2005 after a year's worth of teasers. The ARG offered a \$200,000 prize to the first player to locate the buried Receda Cube and was funded by the sale of puzzle cards. The first season of the game ended in January 2007, when Andy Darley found the Receda Cube at Wakerly Great Wood in Northamptonshire, UK. Mind Candy, the production company, has also produced a board game related to the ARG and plans to continue it with a second season beginning 1 March 2007. This model was delayed till 1 June, and has again, been delayed to an unspecified date. Mind Candy's acceptance of corporate sponsorship and venture capital suggests that the puzzle cards alone are not enough to fully fund the ARG at this time.

In March 2006, Elan Lee and Dawne Weisman founded edoc laundry, a company designed to produce ARGs using clothes as the primary platform. Consumers decipher the codes hidden within the garments and input the results into the game's main website to reveal pieces of a story about the murder of a band manager.

Reviving the pay-to-play model, Studio Cypher launched the first chapter of its “multiplayer novel” in May 2006. Each “chapter” is a mini-ARG for which participants who pay the \$10 registration fee receive earlier access to information and greater opportunities to interact with characters than non-paying participants. VirtuQuest, a

well-known corporate team, also attempted a pay-to-play model with *Township Heights* later in the year, but despite initial enthusiasm on the part of the ARG community, the game was not well-received due to the design team's use of player Hybrid-Names based on their real life names. Also the short run time frame was not appreciated by some seasoned players.

In June 2006, *Catching the Wish* launched from an in-game website about comic books based on its predecessor, 2003's *Chasing the Wish*. 42 Entertainment released *Cathy's Book*, by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman, in October 2006, shifting the central medium of this ARG from the internet to the printed page. The young-adult novel contains an "evidence packet" and expands its universe through websites and working phone numbers, but is also a stand-alone novel that essentially functions as an individually playable ARG. Neither the cost of creating the book nor sales figures are available (although it made both American^[42] and British bestseller lists) to determine whether the project was successfully self-funded.

It is difficult to judge the efficacy of self-funded ARG models at this time, but it seems likely that exploration of ways to fund large-scale ARGs without using them as marketing for other products will continue as the genre grows.

The serious ARG

In a 2007 article, columnist Chris Dahlen (of Pitchfork Media) voiced a much-discussed ARG concept: if ARGs can spark players to solve very hard fictional problems, could the games be used to solve real-world problems?^[43] Dahlen was writing about *World Without Oil*, the first ARG centered on a serious near-future scenario: a global oil shortage.^[44] Another ARG, *Tomorrow Calling*, appears to be a testbed for a future project focused on environmental themes and activism.^[45]

Serious ARGs introduce plausibility as a narrative feature to pull players into the game. People participate to experience, prepare for or shape an alternative life or future.^[46] The games thus have the potential to attract casual or non-players, because 'what if' is a game anyone can play.^[47] Serious ARGs may therefore be sponsored by organizations with activist or educational goals; *World Without Oil* was a joint project of the Public Broadcasting Service's Independent Lens and its Electric Shadows Web-original programming.^[48]

Their serious subject matter may lead Serious ARGs to diverge from mainstream ARGs in design. Instead of challenging collective intelligence to solve a gamemastered puzzle, *World Without Oil's* puppetmasters acted as players to guide the "collective imagination" to create a multi-authored chronicle of the alternative future, purportedly as it was happening.^[49] By asking players to chronicle their lives in the oil-shocked alternative reality, the *WWO* game relinquished narrative control to players

to a degree not seen before in an ARG.^[50]

In October 2008 The British Red Cross created a serious ARG called *Traces of Hope* to promote their campaign about civilians caught up in conflict.^[51]

There are possible future Serious ARGs described in fiction. In his novel *Halting State*, Charles Stross foresightedly describes a number of possible ARGs, where players engage in seemingly fictional covert spy operations.

In 2008 the European Union funded an ARG to support motivation for multilingualism within European secondary school students called *ARGuing for Multilingual Motivation in Web 2.0*. As noted above in *World Without Oil*, to complete this ARG it was necessary to move away from the strict definitions of an ARG as listed. The ARG was by invitation only and players (students) knew they were going to play a game. This project is now completed and papers on the project and the resources produced for education (a Methodology and Teacher Training guides) are available and have been presented at the 3rd European Conference on Games Based Learning.

In 2008–2009 the MacArthur Foundation supported an ARG *The Black Cloud* to teach US high-school students about indoor air quality. The project is active and allows teachers to rent sophisticated air quality sensors to run the game locally.

The USC School of Cinematic Arts has run a semester-long ARG called *Reality Ends Here* for incoming freshmen since 2011. The game involves players collaborating and competing to produce media artifacts. In 2012, *Reality Ends Here* won the Impact Award at IndieCade, presented to games which "have social message, shift the cultural perception of games as a medium, represent a new play paradigm, expand the audience, or influence culture."^[52]

UCLA Film Department had its first alternate reality game class, taught by game designer/writer Flint Dille in 2011 Winter Semester. The Class Built an ARG in one semester, culminating in a real world event which resolved the story.^[53]

New developments

2006 produced fewer large-scale corporate ARGs than past years, but the ARG form continued to spread and be adapted for promotional uses, as an increasing number of TV shows and movies extended their universes onto the internet through such means as character blogs and ARG-like puzzle trails, and as an increasing number of independent and grassroots games launched, with varying levels of success.^[54] One of the more popular indie ARGs to launch in the fall of 2006 was Jan Libby's dark yet whimsical "Sammeeees". "MeiGest", produced by Hazel Grian and Jon Williams, garnered a great deal of community attention and affection with a light, humorous storyline and numerous references to past ARGs.

lonelygirl15, a popular series of videos on YouTube, relinquished an unprecedented amount of control to its audience by recognizing a fan-created game as the “official” ARG. In December 2006, another indie ARG launched called “Bristel Goodman” which featured creative yet creepy videos made by an internet killer. Eddie Dees, the fictional character who is being sent these videos, posted them at YouTube and other video sharing sites, asking for help. The ARG community responded and the game began. As of March 2013, the game continues as obsessed players search for the truth about RHINO.

In August 2006, Hoodlum produced *PSTRIXI* for Yahoo!7 Australia. *PSTRIXI* was designed around a young DJ Trixi and her boyfriend Hamish. Players were engaged across all of Yahoo!7’s platforms and asked to help solve the mystery of Trixi’s missing sister Max. The multi-platform ARG ran for 12 weeks and used websites, email, Yahoo!360 forums, Yahoo Radio and viral television to engage the audience in the game. *PSTRIXI* was a major success with the Yahoo!7 community; players spent an average of 16 minutes per session on the websites and returned more than once a week.

2007 got off to a strong start immediately, with Microsoft’s *Vanishing Point* to promote the launch of *Windows Vista*. The game was designed by 42 Entertainment and, due in part to many large-scale real-world events, such as a lavish show at the *Bellagio Fountain* in Las Vegas as well as prizes of a trip into space^[55] and having a winner’s name engraved on all AMD Athlon 64 FX chips for a certain period of time,^[56] received large media attention.^[57] It was followed almost immediately by another 42 Entertainment production for the release of the *Nine Inch Nails* album *Year Zero*, in which fans discovered leaked songs on thumb drives in washrooms at concerts,^[58] as well as clues to websites that describe a dystopian future occurring in 2022. *Year Zero*, in turn, bled out into the real world through players flying neighborhoods and creating graffiti supporting the game’s fictitious Art Is Resistance movement.^{[59][60]} *Monster Hunter Club*, a promotion for the U.S. release of the movie *The Host*, launched by sending action figures and other items to prominent members of the ARG community.^[61] *Perplex City* concluded its first season by awarding a \$200,000 prize to a player who found the game’s missing cube.^[62] They plan to continue the ARG into a second “season” under the name *Perplex City Stories*, although they have said that there will not be a large grand prize this time around.^[63] *Megeist*, produced by a new professional puppetmaster team, garnered a great deal of community attention and affection with a light, humorous storyline and numerous references to past ARGs. The teaser site for *World Without Oil*, the first major “Serious ARG”, was unveiled in March 2007; the game itself launched on 30 April and ran through 1 June, gathering over 1500 videos, images, blog entries and voice mails to document the “Oil Crisis of 2007.”^[48]

In May 2007, 42 Entertainment launched *Why So Se-*

rious, an ARG to promote the feature film *The Dark Knight*. Hailed as being the single most impressive viral marketing campaign of all-time,^[64] it played out over 15 months, concluding in July 2008. Millions of players in 177 countries participated both online and taking part in live events, and it reached hundreds of millions through Internet buzz and exposure.^[65] Notably, *Why So Serious* prompted a great deal of collaborative organizing and action; players went to the streets campaigning for Harvey Dent and gathered in New York City as a part of gameplay.^[66]

In March 2008, McDonald’s and the IOC launched *Find The Lost Ring*, a global ARG promoting the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China. The game was run simultaneously in six languages with new story lines developing in each, encouraging players to communicate with residents of other countries to facilitate sharing of clues and details of the game as a whole. American track and field athlete *Edwin Moses* acted as a celebrity Game Master, and McDonald’s Corporation promised to donate US\$100,000 to *Ronald McDonald House Charities China* on behalf of the players.

February 2009 saw the launch of the ARG *Something In The Sea*, designed to promote the videogame *BioShock 2* by immersing players in character Mark Meltzer’s quest to find his missing daughter. In addition to the messages, documents, photos and puzzles on the website, those following along on 8 August 2009, were given the coordinates of 10 beaches worldwide and told to go there at dawn. Those who did found objects planted by the game runners designed to look like they had washed ashore from *BioShock*’s fictional underwater city of Rapture. Players who wrote letters to Mark, whose address was advertised on the website, also sometimes received items such as wine bottles, records, or masks.

On 1 March 2010, *Valve Corporation* released an update via *Steam* to their game *Portal*, adding a nondescript new achievement and some .wav files hidden within the game GCFs. The .wav files actually contained morse code and SSTV encoded images, some including certain numbers and letters. When pieced together in the correct order, these numbers and letters formed a 32-bit MD5 hash of a BBS phone number. When traced, it was found to originate from *Kirkland, Washington*, where Valve was based before moving to *Bellevue, Washington* in 2003. Accessing the number as a bulletin board system yielded large ASCII art images, all leading towards the announcement of the game’s sequel, *Portal 2*.^[67] Later, prior to release of *Portal 2* in 2011, a much more expansive ARG called the *Potato Sack* was run, arranged by a number of independent developers working with Valve, to simulate the rebooting of GLaDOS. The ARG resulted in the game being released several hours earlier than scheduled, among other details.^[67]

Also launched in March 2010, an ARG produced by David Varela at *nDreams* featured the 2008 Formula 1

World Champion **Lewis Hamilton**; entitled *Lewis Hamilton: Secret Life*, the game ran throughout the 2010 Formula 1 season, in nine languages, with live events in a dozen cities around the world.

In July 2013, Walt Disney Imagineering Research & Development and The Walt Disney Studios, launched The Optimist, built around “a story of Walt Disney, the Imagineers and other visionary thinkers and their potential involvement in a secret project that sought to build a better future.” The game culminated at the D23 Expo in Anaheim, Calif., August 9–11, 2013. Players participated over a six-week period, using social media, mobile devices and apps, while visiting locations from the story in and around Los Angeles.^[68]

An ARG accompanying the Kickstarter campaign for *Frog Fractions 2* began in March 2014 and completed in 2016. *Frog Fractions 2* will be the sequel to Twinbeard Studio’s much acclaimed *Frog Fractions*, although the ARG itself is often referred to as *Frog Fractions 1.5* in reference to an in-ARG puzzle solution. The ARG took about two years to solve, involving clues buried in 23 independent games and real-life locations, allowing the game, secretly already uploaded until the guise of a different game, to become unlocked in December 2016.^{[69][70]}

On release of the expansion *Afterbirth* for *The Binding of Isaac: Rebirth* in October 2015, players discover clues hinting towards an ARG related to the game, based on the community’s previous attempts to hack the game to discover any secret characters. The ARG including location information near Santa Cruz, California, where the game’s developer **Edmund McMillen** lived. The ARG was successfully completed in November 2015, with the community working together and enabling a new character and additional content to be unlocked for the game.^{[71][72]}

Oddworld Inhabitants have started an ARG in anticipation of their newest game *Oddworld: Soulstorm* and tasked fans with finding a mysterious entity, which would later turn out to be a character named Ed - a Mudokon slave who is speculated to be working in Necrum mines. A second website was then discovered showing existence of a Mudokon resistance formed after Abe shut down RuptureFarms and rescued his brothers during the events of *Oddworld: Abe’s Oddysee*.^{[73] [74]}

Television tie-ins and “extended experiences” Before the development of the ARG genre, television sought to extend the reality of its shows onto the web with websites that treated their world as real, rather than discussing it as fiction. An early example was Fox’s *Freakylinks*, developed by **Haxan**, creators of *The Blair Witch Project*, who would later go on to develop the well-known ARGs *The Art of the Heist* and *Who Is Benjamin Stove*. *Freakylinks* employed a website designed to look like it had been created by amateur paranormal enthusiasts to

generate internet interest in the show, which gathered a cult following but was canceled after 13 episodes.^[75] In September 2002, following a successful initial foray into ARG-like territory with 2001’s *Alias* web game,^[76] ABC brought alternate reality gaming more definitively to the television screen with the show *Push, Nevada*. Produced and co-written by **Ben Affleck**, the show created a fictional city in Nevada, named Push. When advertising the show, **LivePlanet** advertised the city instead, with billboards, news reports, company sponsors, and other realistic life-intruding forms.^[77] During each episode of the show, highly cryptic clues would be revealed on screen, while other hidden clues could be found on the city’s website. The show was cancelled mid-season, and all of the remaining clues were released to the public. Clever watchers eventually figured out that the show would still be paying out its \$1 million prize during *Monday Night Football*. The last clue was revealed during half-time, prompting those fortunate enough to have solved the puzzle to call a telephone number. The first person to call received \$1 million.^[78] In October 2004, the *ReGenesis* extended reality game launched in tandem with the Canadian television series *ReGenesis*. Produced by **Xenophile Media** in association with Shaftesbury Films, clues and stories from the series sent players online to stop a bioterrorist attack.^[79]

In 2006, the TV tie-in ARG began to come into its own when there was a surge of ARGs that extended the worlds of related television shows onto the Internet and into the real world. As with *Push, Nevada*, ABC led the way, launching three TV tie-in ARGs in 2006: *Kyle XY*,^[80] *Ocular Effect* (for the show *Fallen*)^[81] and *The LOST Experience* (for the show *LOST*).^[82] ABC joined with **Channel 4** in the UK and Australia’s **Channel 7** in promoting a revamped web site for *The Hanso Foundation*. The site was focused on a fictitious company prevalent in the storyline of the TV series, and the game was promoted through television advertisements run during *LOST* episodes. The *Fallen* Alternate Reality Game was launched in tandem with the *Fallen* TV movie for ABC Family and was originally conceived by **Matt Wolf** and created by Matt Wolf (Double Twenty Productions) in association with Xenophile Media. Wolf accepted the Emmy for The *Fallen* Alternate Reality Game at the 59th Annual Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards on September 8, 2007.

NBC followed suit in January 2007, beginning an ARG for its hit TV series *Heroes*.^[83] launched through an in-show reference to the website for Primatech Paper, a company from the show, which turned out to be real. Text messages and emails led players who applied for “employment” at the site to secret files on the show’s characters.^[84]

In May 2007, the **BBC** commissioned **Kudos** and **Hoodlum** to produce an interactive ARG for their flagship drama series *Spooks*, *Spooks Interactive*. The game enlists players to become MI5 agents who join the Section D team on missions crucial to the security of the UK, and

launched on 26 September. In 2008 it won the Interactivity Award at the British Academy Television Awards and the Interactive Innovation - Content Award at the British Academy Craft Awards.

The 9 November 2007 episode of *Numb3rs* entitled “Primacy” featured alternate reality gaming, and launched the ARG Chain Factor, which centered on players using a flash-based puzzle game to unknowingly destroy the world’s economy on the whim of one of the characters from the “Primacy” episode.

In January 2008, BBC launched “Whack the Mole”^[85] for the CBBC show *M.I. High*, in which viewers are asked to become M.I. High field agents and complete tasks to capture a mole that has infiltrated the organization.

CBS made an ARG for *Jericho* to promote the series in 2007.

USA Network sponsored a game in 2016 for the TV show *Mr. Robot*, that started with a phone number shown on a box in a video clip.^[86] Prizes were awarded to the first 509 solvers.^[87]

Persistent

ARG are traditionally punctual events, mostly because they first appeared as promotional stunts and as their reactive nature requires massive resources to keep running. However, Alice & Smith, the company behind Funcom and *Warhammer 40,000: Eternal Crusade* started a crowdfunding campaign in 2014 to create a “persistent” ARG (PARG) called *The Black Watchmen*, which would run until players stop subscribing and funding the project. The campaign started with a smaller ARG in which a player flew from Dallas to Montreal to live the final mission in real-life.^{[88][89]} The results of the crowdfunding campaign can be seen on Kickstarter,^[90] and the game was released on Steam in June 2015.

1.1.5 Awards won

ARGs have been recognized by the mainstream entertainment world: The Ocular Effect, an ARG promoting the TV movie *The Fallen* and produced in the autumn of 2007 by Xenophile Media Inc.^[91] was awarded a Prime-time Emmy for Outstanding Achievement for an Interactive Television Program.^[92] Xenophile Media Inc.’s ReGenesis Extended Reality Game won an International Interactive Emmy Award in 2007 and in April 2008 *The Truth About Marika* won the iEmmy for Best Interactive TV service.^[93] The British Academy of Film and Television Arts recognizes Interactivity as a category in the British Academy Television Awards.

Likewise, *Year Zero* was widely heralded following its release. Such acclaim is signified in the ARG’s Grad Prix Cyber Lions award, viewed as “the most prestigious of all advertising awards,” at Cannes.^[94] Adweek published

a quote from the selection committee on the award decision, explaining that “42 Entertainment’s [viral campaign for Nine Inch Nails] impressed the jury because of its use of a variety of media, from outdoor to guerrilla to online, and how digital [media] can play a central role of a big idea campaign.”^[95]

In turn, *Why So Serious* also won a Grand Prix Award,^[96] alongside a Webby for interactive advertising.^[97] World Without Oil was recognized for its achievements, too, earning the Activism award at the 2008 SXSW Web Awards.^[98]

Project Architeuthis, created for the U.S. Navy as a recruiting device for its cryptology division, won numerous awards, including the 2015 Warc Grand Prix for Social Strategy.^[99]

1.1.6 See also

- Legend tripping
- List of alternate reality games
- Live-action game
- Pervasive game
- Transmedia storytelling
- Transreality gaming
- Verisimilitude

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1.1.8 External links

- **ARGology** – International Game Developers Association Alternate Reality Game Special Interest Group

1.2 History of alternate reality games

Alternate reality games are a modern genre of games involving various media to tell stories, often accompanied with puzzles. Most of these games are either independently run, used as a corporate model, or used as a viral campaign by a company.

1.2.1 Before 2001: Influences and precursors

Due to factors like the curtain, attempts to begin games with “stealth launches” to fulfill the TINAG (This Is Not a Game) aesthetic, and the restrictive non-disclosure agreements governing how much information may be revealed by the puppetmasters of promotional games, the design

process for many ARGs is often shrouded in secrecy, making it difficult to discern the extent to which they have been influenced by other works. In addition, the cross-media nature of the form allows ARGs to incorporate elements of so many other art forms and works that attempting to identify them all would be a nearly impossible task far beyond the scope of this article.

Possible inspirations from fiction and other art forms

G. K. Chesterton's 1905 short story “The Tremendous Adventures of Major Brown” (part of a collection entitled *The Club of Queer Trades*) seems to predict the ARG concept, as does John Fowles's 1965 novel *The Magus*. Ludic texts such as the popular *Choose Your Own Adventure* children's novels may also have provided some inspiration.

The plot of the British television drama serial *The One Game*, broadcast in 1988, was entirely based on the concept of the ARG (referred to as a “reality game” in the script).

William Gibson's novel *Pattern Recognition* includes a recognizable example of a modern ARG, although it was published after the development of the genre began in earnest. Reader-influenced online fiction such as AOL's *QuantumLink Serial* provides a model that incorporates audience influence into the storytelling in a manner similar to that of ARGs, as do promotional online games like Wizards of the Coast's *Webrunner* games. **Live action role-playing games** (LARPs) are a major influence on the ARG concept, particularly those such as played by UCLA's Enigma group, the MIT Assassin's Guild, and Dead Earth Productions (a horror LARP company in the San Francisco Bay Area during the late 1980s to the mid-1990s), although most notably White Wolf's “Vampire: The Masquerade.” LARPs have often extended into the real world, where players can encounter actors and clues that further a real-time gaming plot.

Other possible antecedents include performance art and other theatrical forms that attempt to break Brecht's “fourth wall” and directly engage the audience.

Early examples of major ARGs or proto-ARGs prior to 2001

Early examples of an ARG style games were Ong's *Hat/Incunabula* and *Dreadnot*.^[1]

Dreadnot was a (non-commercial) ARG produced with a grant from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and published on *sfgate.com* in 1996. It included most of the aforementioned design principles. The game included working voice mail phone numbers for characters, clues in the source code, character email addresses, off-site websites, real locations in San Francisco, real people (including then-Mayor **Willie Brown**), and of course a fictional

mystery.

'Ong's Hat/Incunabula was most likely started sometime around 1993, and also included most of the aforementioned design principles. Ong's Hat also incorporated elements of legend tripping into its design, as chronicled in a scholarly work titled "Legend-Tripping Online: Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong's Hat".^[2] Some scholars disagree on the classification of the Ong's Hat story.^[3]

In 1997, a year prior to the release of the Douglas Adams computer game *Starship Titanic*, The Digital Village launched a web site purporting to be that of an intergalactic travel agency called Starlight Travel, which in the game is the *Starship Titanic's* parent company. The site combined copious amounts of Monty Python-esque writing (by Michael Bywater) with ARG-type interactivity. When a site visitor filled out a personal information form, including email address and "favorite frog" (from a convenient - and long - drop-down list), approximately one week later, a spam email for something other than Starlight Travel would arrive, and would include a reference to the specific frog the visitor had selected. Another example involved a series of three emails; the first called the reader's attention to a password-protected intranet for the Starlight Lines company,^[4] the second urged the reader to delete unread any future emails, as confidential information was being erroneously emailed, and the third revealed the confidential password for the restricted site: "1".

The marketing for the 1999 movie *The Blair Witch Project* resembled ARGs in many ways (and some of its makers went on to create the 2005 Audi promotional ARG *Art of the Heist*), expanding the world of the movie online, adding backstory, and treating the fiction as reality through real-world media such as fliers and a fake documentary on the Sci-Fi Channel. However, perhaps in part due to the subject material and the absence of overt meta-communications that this was fiction, it also resembles an internet hoax or attempt to create an urban legend.

Pervasive play games like the Go Game and the Nokia Game also incorporated many elements similar to ARGs (although they tended to lack the narrative element central to ARGs) and prefigured the public play components of large-scale corporate ARGs like *I Love Bees*, *Art of the Heist* and *Last Call Poker*.

Electronic Arts' *Majestic* (video game) was developed at roughly the same time as the Beast, although it launched after the Beast had concluded. Featuring phone calls, emails and other media that involved players in a multiplatform narrative, the game was eventually cancelled due to lack of players. Factors ranging from the fee required to play to *Majestic's* unfortunate timing and subject matter in relation to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center to the absence of the TINAG principle (e.g. in-game phone calls were preceded by an announcement that they were part of the game) have been cited to explain its failure.

1.2.2 The Beast and its influence

In 2001, in order to market the movie *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* and a planned series of Microsoft computer games based on the film, Microsoft's Creative Director, Jordan Weisman, and another Microsoft game designer, Elan Lee, conceived of an elaborate murder mystery played out across hundreds of websites, email messages, faxes, fake ads, and voicemail messages. They hired Sean Stewart, an award-winning science-fiction/fantasy author, to write the story. The game, dubbed "the Citizen Kane of online entertainment" by Internet Life,^[5] was a runaway success^[6] that involved over three million active participants^[7] from all over the world during its run and would become the seminal example of the nascent ARG genre. An early asset list for the project contained 666 files, prompting the game's puppetmasters to dub it "the Beast", a name which was later adopted by players.^[8] A large and extremely active fan community called the Cloudmakers formed to analyze and participate in solving the game,^[9] and the combined intellect, tenacity and engagement of the group soon forced the puppetmasters to create new subplots, devise new puzzles, and alter elements of the design to keep ahead of the player base.^[10] Somewhat unusually for a computer-based game, the production engaged equal numbers of male and female participants,^[11] and drew players from a wide spectrum of age groups and backgrounds.

Influences on the development of the Beast

Due to the influence the Beast exerted over the form of later ARGs and the willingness of its creators to talk about its development, its sources of inspiration are both particularly relevant to the evolution of the modern ARG and somewhat more verifiable than other possible antecedents. Elan Lee, one of its creative principals, cites the 1997 movie *The Game* as an inspiration, as well as the Beatles' "Paul is dead" hoax. Sean Stewart, another of the three principal designers, notes that designing and running an ARG bears some similarities to running an RPG, and the influence of that particular game form is further suggested by the fact that Jordan Weisman, the game's third main designer, was also the founder of leading RPG company FASA. He also noted that the sort of "creative scavenging" behavior the Beast depended on has its antecedents outside the arts: the Beast just "accidentally reinvented science as pop culture entertainment."

The player community

Although the Beast ran for only three months, it prompted the formation of a highly organized and intensely engaged community that remains active^[12] years after the game concluded. Perhaps more significantly, it inspired a number of its participants to create games adapting and expanding the model, extending it from an anomalous one-

time occurrence to a new genre of entertainment and allowing the community to grow even after the Beast itself concluded. Members of the Cloudmakers group went on to form ARGN, the primary news source for the genre, and Unfiction, its central community hub, as well as designing the first successful and widely played indie ARGs, such as LockJaw and Metacortechs, and corporate efforts such as Perplex City.

1.2.3 2002–2003: Community and genre growth

The years immediately after the Beast saw independent developers who had played it extend the form from a one-time occurrence to a new genre of gaming, and the formation of an ever-growing community devoted to playing, designing and discussing ARGs.

Grassroots development

Under the influence of the Beast and enthusiastic about the power of collaboration, several Cloudmakers came together with the idea that they could create a similar game. The first effort to make an independent Beast-like game, Ravenwatchers, failed,^[13] but another team soon assembled and would meet with success. With very little experience behind them, the group managed, after nine months of development, to create a viable game that was soon seized upon eagerly by the Cloudmakers group and featured in *WIRED* Magazine.^[14] As players of the Beast, members of the Lockjaw development team were extremely aware of the community playing the game and took steps to encourage the tight bonding of the player base through highly collaborative puzzles, weekly Euchre games, and the inclusion of player personas in the game. While the numbers never rivaled those of The Beast, with absolutely no funding or promotion, the game proved both that it was possible for developers to create these games without corporate funding or promotion, and that there was interest in the ARG form beyond a one-time audience for a production on the Beast's scale. Lockjaw marked the start of the ARG as a genre of gaming, rather than simply a one-time occurrence.

Shortly before Lockjaw's conclusion, players discovered a game that seemed to revolve around the movie *Minority Report*. Despite speculation to the contrary, the game (known as *Exocog*) was not an official promotion for the film, but an experiment in interactive storytelling by Jim Miller.^[15] Inspired by the independent Lockjaw effort, Dave Szulborski introduced *ChangeAgents*, a spinoff of EA's failed *Majestic* ARG, to the ARGN audience, then followed it with two additional installments. During this time, Szulborski also created a successful grassroots game not based on the *Majestic* universe, called *Chasing the Wish*. Just before the release of the third and the final *Matrix* movie, the team that developed Lockjaw

launched *Metacortechs*, an ARG based on that universe. The fan fiction effort was very successful, reached a larger and more active player base than many professionally produced games, and was at first assumed by many to be an officially sanctioned promotion for the movie. Metacortechs was followed by an ever-increasing number of grassroots ARGs.

In the wake of these successful, low-budget independent ARGs, an active "grassroots" development community began to evolve within the genre. While the quality of the grassroots games continues to vary wildly, amateur storytellers, web designers, and puzzle creators continue to provide independently developed ARGs for the active player community.

Community development

The term Alternate Reality Gaming was first used by Sean Stacey, one of the moderators of the Lockjaw player community, in the Trail for the game. Stacey and Steve Peters, another of the moderators, created the two websites that have become the central hub of the ARG community: ARGN and UnFiction. Due to their efforts, when Lockjaw ended, the players had a new community resource allowing them to assemble to play the games that were soon to follow. Unfiction now boasts over 13,000 members, and ARGN employs a staff of 15 volunteer writers to report on new games and other topics of interest to the community, and produces a weekly netcast.

1.2.4 2004–2006: Massive-scale commercial games and mainstream attention

After the success of the first major entries in the nascent ARG genre, a number of large corporations looked to ARGs to promote both their products, and to add their companies' images by demonstrating their interest in innovative and fan-friendly marketing methods. To create buzz for the launch of the Xbox game *Halo 2*,^[16] Microsoft hired the team that had created the Beast, now operating independently as 42 Entertainment. The result, *I Love Bees*, departed radically from the website-hunting and puzzle-solving that had been the focus of the Beast. *I Love Bees* wove together an interactive narrative set in 2004, and a *War Of The Worlds*-style radio drama set in the future, the latter of which was broken into 30- to 60-second segments and broadcast over ringing pay-phones worldwide.^[17] The game pushed players outdoors to answer phones, create and submit content, and recruit others, and received as much or more mainstream notice than its predecessor, finding its way onto television during a presidential debate,^[18] and becoming one of the New York Times' catchphrases of 2004.^[19] A slew of imitators,^{[20][21]} fan tributes^[22] and parodies^{[23][24]} followed.

The following spring, Audi launched *The Art of the Heist*

to promote its new A3. Roughly a year after *I Love Bees*, 42 Entertainment produced *Last Call Poker*, a promotion for Activision's video game *Gun*. Designed to help modern audiences connect with the Western genre, *Last Call Poker* centered around a working poker site, held games of "Tombstone Hold 'Em" in cemeteries around the United States—as well as in at least one digital venue, *World of Warcraft*'s own virtual reality cemetery^[25]—and sent players to their own local cemeteries to clean up neglected grave sites and perform other tasks.^[26]

At the end of 2005, the International Game Developers Association ARG Special Interest Group was formed "to bring together those already designing, building, and running ARGs, in order to share knowledge, experience, and ideas for the future."

1.2.5 2005–2006: The rise of the self-supporting ARG

As the genre has grown, there has been increasing interest in exploring models that provide funding for large-scale ARGs that are neither promotions for other products or limited by the generally small budget of grassroots/indie games. The two major trends that have emerged in this area are support through the sale of products related to the game, and fees for participation in the game. A third possible model is one using in-game advertising for other products, as in *The LOST Experience*, but at this time no large-scale game has attempted to fund itself solely through in-game advertising.

The first major attempt (other than EA's failed *Majestic*) to create a self-supporting ARG was *Perplex City*, which launched in 2005 after a year's worth of teasers. The ARG offered a \$200,000 prize to the first player to locate the buried Receda Cube and was funded by the sale of puzzle cards. The first season of the game ended in January 2007, when Andy Darley found the Receda Cube at Wakerly Great Wood in Northamptonshire, UK. *Mind Candy*, the production company, has also produced a board game related to the ARG and plans to continue it with a second season beginning March 1, 2007. Whether the model was a success is unknown at this time, although *Mind Candy*'s acceptance of corporate sponsorship and venture capital suggests that the puzzle cards alone are not enough to fully fund the ARG at this time.

In March 2006, Elan Lee and Dawne Weisman founded edoc laundry, a company designed to produce ARGs using clothes as the primary platform. Consumers decipher the codes hidden within the garments and input the results into the game's main website to reveal pieces of a story about the murder of a band manager.

Reviving the pay-to-play model, Studio Cypher launched the first chapter of its "multiplayer novel" in May 2006. Each "chapter" is a mini-ARG for which participants who pay the \$10 registration fee receive earlier access to information and greater opportunities to interact with

characters than non-paying participants. VirtuQuest, a well-known corporate team, also attempted a pay-to-play model with *Township Heights* later in the year, but despite initial enthusiasm on the part of the ARG community, the game was not well-received due to the design team's use of player Hybrid-Names based on their real life names. Also the short run time frame was not appreciated by some seasoned players.

In June 2006, *Catching the Wish* launched from an in-game website about comic books based on its predecessor, 2003's *Chasing the Wish*. 42 Entertainment released *Cathy's Book*, by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman, in October 2006, shifting the central medium of this ARG from the internet to the printed page. The young-adult novel contains an "evidence packet" and expands its universe through websites and working phone numbers, but is also a stand-alone novel that essentially functions as an individually playable ARG. Neither the cost of creating the book nor sales figures are available (although it made both American and British bestseller lists) to determine whether the project was successfully self-funded.

It is difficult to judge the efficacy of self-funded ARG models at this time, but it seems likely that exploration of ways to fund large-scale ARGs without using them as marketing for other products will continue as the genre grows.

1.2.6 2006 onward: New developments

2006 produced less large-scale corporate ARGs than past years, but the ARG form continued to spread and be adapted for promotional uses, as an increasing number of TV shows and movies extended their universes onto the internet through such means as character blogs and ARG-like puzzle trails, and as an increasing number of independent/grassroots games launched, with varying levels of success.^[27] *lonelygirl15*, a popular series of videos on YouTube, relinquished an unprecedented amount of control to its audience by recognizing a fan-created game as the "official" ARG.

2007 got off to a strong start immediately, with Microsoft's *Vanishing Point* to promote the launch of Windows Vista. The game was designed by 42 Entertainment and, due in part to many large-scale real world events, such as a lavish show at the Bellagio Fountain in Las Vegas as well as a prizes of a trip into space^[28] and having a winner's name engraved on all AMD Athlon 64 FX chips for a certain period of time,^[29] received large media attention.^[30] It was followed almost immediately by a promotion, also rumored to be a 42 Entertainment production, for the release of the Nine Inch Nails album *Year Zero*, in which fans discovered leaked songs on thumb drives in washrooms at concerts.^[31] *Monster Hunter Club*, a promotion for the U.S. release of the movie *The Host*, launched by sending action figures and other items to prominent members of the ARG

community.^[32] *Perplex City* concluded its first season by awarding a \$200,000 prize to a player who found the game's missing cube.^[33]

Television tie-ins and “extended experiences”

Even before the development of the ARG genre, television sought to extend the reality of its shows onto the web with websites that treated the world as real, rather than discussing it as fiction. An early example was Fox's *Freakylinks*, developed by *Haxan*, creators of the *Blair Witch Project*, who would later go on to develop the well-known ARGs *The Art of the Heist* and *Who Is Benjamin Stove*. *Freakylinks* employed a website designed to look like it had been created by amateur paranormal enthusiasts to generate internet interest in the show, which gathered a cult following but was canceled after 13 episodes.^[34] In September 2002, following a successful initial foray into ARG-like territory with 2001's *Alias* web game,^[35] ABC brought alternate reality gaming more definitively to the television screen with the show *Push, Nevada*. Produced by *Ben Affleck* and *Matt Damon*, the show created a fictional city in Nevada, named Push. When advertising the show, they advertised the city instead, with billboards, news reports, company sponsors, and other realistic life-intruding forms.^[36] During each episode of the show, highly cryptic clues would be revealed on screen, while other hidden clues could be found on the city's website. Unfortunately, the show was cancelled mid-season, and all of the remaining clues were released to the public. Clever watchers eventually figured out that the show would still be paying out its \$1 million prize during *Monday Night Football*. The last clue was revealed during half-time, prompting those fortunate enough to have solved the puzzle to call a telephone number. The first person to call received \$1 million.^[37] In October 2004, the *ReGenesis* Extended Reality game launched in tandem with the Canadian television series *ReGenesis*. Clues and stories from the series sent players online to stop a bioterrorist attack.^[38]

In 2006, the TV tie-in ARG began to come into its own when there was a surge of ARGs that extended the worlds of related television shows onto the internet and into the real world. As with *Push, Nevada*, ABC led the way, launching three TV tie-in ARGs in 2006: *Kyle XY*,^[39] *Ocular Effect* (for the show *Fallen*)^[40] and *The LOST Experience* (for the show *LOST*).^[41] ABC joined with *Channel 4* in the UK and Australia's *Channel 7* in promoting a revamped web site for *The Hanso Foundation*. The site was focused on a fictitious company prevalent in the storyline of the TV series, and the game was promoted through television advertisements run during *LOST* episodes. *Ocular Effect* was launched in collaboration with *Xenophile Media* and *Double Twenty Productions*.

NBC followed suit in January 2007, beginning an ARG for its hit TV series *Heroes*^[42] launched through an in-

game reference to the website for *Primatech Paper*, a company from the show, which turned out to be real. Text messages and emails led players who applied for “employment” at the site to secret files on the show's characters.^[43]

1.2.7 See also

- [List of alternate reality games](#)

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1.3 The Game (1997 film)

The Game is a 1997 American mystery thriller film directed by David Fincher, starring Michael Douglas and Sean Penn, and produced by Propaganda Films and PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. It tells the story of a wealthy investment banker who is given a mysterious gift: participation in a game that integrates in strange ways with his everyday life. As the lines between the banker's real life and the game become more uncertain, hints of a large conspiracy become apparent.

The Game was well received by critics like Roger Ebert and major periodicals like *The New York Times*, but had middling box-office returns compared to the success of Fincher's previous film, *Se7en*.

1.3.1 Plot

Nicholas Van Orton, a wealthy investment banker, is estranged from both his ex-wife and his only sibling, his younger brother, Conrad. He remains haunted from having seen his father commit suicide on the latter's 48th birthday. For Nicholas' own 48th birthday, Conrad presents Nicholas with an unusual gift—a voucher for a "game" offered by a company called Consumer Recreation Services (CRS). Conrad promises that it will change his brother's life.

Nicholas has doubts about CRS, but he meets club members who enjoyed the game. He goes to CRS's offices to apply and is irritated by the lengthy and time-consuming series of psychological and physical examinations required. He is later informed that his application has been rejected. Soon Nicholas begins to believe that his business, reputation, finances, and safety are at risk. He encounters a waitress, Christine, who appears to have been endangered by the game. Nicholas contacts the police to investigate CRS, but they find the offices abandoned.

Eventually, Conrad appears to Nicholas and apologizes, claiming that he, too, has come under attack by CRS. With no one else to turn to, Nicholas finds Christine's home. He soon discovers that she is a CRS employee and

that her apartment was staged. Christine tells Nicholas that they are being watched. Nicholas attacks a camera, and armed CRS troops begin to swarm the house and fire upon them. Nicholas and Christine are forced to flee. Christine tells Nicholas that CRS has drained his financial accounts by using the psychological tests to guess his passwords. In a panic, Nicholas calls his bank and gives a verification code to check his account balance—zero. Just as he begins to trust Christine, he realizes she has drugged him. As he loses consciousness, she admits that she is actually part of the scam and that he made a fatal mistake by giving up his verification code.

Nicholas wakes up to find himself entombed alive in a cemetery in Mexico. He sells his gold watch to escape. He returns to find his mansion foreclosed and most of his possessions removed. He retrieves a hidden gun and seeks the aid of his ex-wife. While talking with her and apologizing for his neglect and mistreatment, he discovers that Jim Feingold, the CRS employee who had conducted his psychological tests, is an actor working in television advertisements. Nicholas locates Feingold and forces him to find CRS's real office, whereupon he takes Christine hostage. Nicholas demands to be taken to the leader of CRS. Attacked by CRS troops, Nicholas takes Christine to the roof and bars the door behind them. The CRS troops begin cutting through the door. Christine realizes that Nicholas's gun is not a prop and is terrified. She frantically tells Nicholas that the conspiracy is a hoax, a fiction that is just part of the game, that his finances are intact, and that his family and friends are waiting on the other side of the door. He refuses to believe her. The door bursts open, and Nicholas shoots the first person to emerge—his brother Conrad, bearing an open bottle of champagne. Distraught, Nicholas leaps off the roof, just as his late father did.

Fincher intended to make *The Game* before *Se7en*, but when Brad Pitt became available for *Se7en*, that project took priority.^[4] The success of *Seven* helped the producers of *The Game* get the larger budget that they wanted. Then, they approached Michael Douglas to star in the film. He was hesitant at first because of concerns that PolyGram was not a big enough company to distribute the film. However, once on board, Douglas' presence helped get the film into production.^[4] At the 1996 Cannes Film Festival, PolyGram announced that Jodie Foster would be starring in the film with Douglas.^[7] However, Fincher was uncomfortable with putting a movie star of her stature in a supporting part. After talking to her, he considered rewriting the character of Conrad as Nicholas' daughter so that Foster could play that role. However, the actress had a scheduling conflict with the Robert Zemeckis film *Contact* and could not appear in *The Game*. Once she left, the role of Conrad was offered to Jeff Bridges but he declined and Sean Penn was cast instead.^[7] Deborah Kara Unger's audition for the role of Christine was a test reel consisting of a two-minute sex scene from David Cronenberg's *Crash*. Douglas thought it was a joke but when he and Fincher met her in person, they were impressed by her acting.^[9]

Filming

Principal photography began on location in San Francisco, despite studio pressure to shoot in Los Angeles which was cheaper.^[8] Fincher also considered shooting the film in Chicago and Seattle, but the former had no mansions that were close by and the latter did not have an adequate financial district. The script had been written with San Francisco in mind and he liked the financial district's "old money, Wall Street vibe".^[8] However, that area of the city was very busy and hard to move around in. The production shot on weekends in order to have more control. Fincher utilized old stone buildings, small streets and the city's hills to represent the class system pictorially. To convey the old money world, he set many scenes in restaurants with hardwood paneling and red leather. Some of the locations used in the film included Golden Gate Park, the Presidio of San Francisco, and the historic Filoli Mansion, 25 miles south of San Francisco in Woodside, California, which stood in for the Van Orton mansion.^[8]

For the visual look of Nicholas' wealthy lifestyle, Fincher and the film's cinematographer Harris Savides wanted a "rich and supple" feel and took references from films like *The Godfather* which featured visually appealing locations with ominous intentions lurking under the surface.^[10] According to Fincher, once Nicholas left his protective world, he and Savides would let fluorescents, neon signs and other lights in the background be overexposed to let "things get a bit wilder out in the real world".^[10] For *The Game*, Fincher employed a Technicolor printing process known as ENR which lent

a smoother look to the night sequences. The challenge for him was how much deception could the audience take and "will they go for 45 minutes of red herrings?"^[11] To this end, he tried to stage scenes as simply as possible and use a single camera because "with multiple cameras, you run the risk of boring people with coverage".^[11]

The scene where Nicholas' taxi drives into the San Francisco Bay was shot near the Embarcadero, with the close-up of Douglas trapped in the back seat filmed on a soundstage at Sony Pictures studio in a large tank of water.^[12] The actor was in a small compartment that was designed to resemble the backseat of a taxi with three cameras capturing the action.^[13] Principal photography lasted 100 days with a lot of shooting done at night utilizing numerous locations.^[14]

1.3.4 Release

The Game was released on September 12, 1997, in 2,403 theaters, grossing \$14.3 million during its opening weekend. It went on to make \$48.3 million in North America and \$61.1 million in the rest of the world for a worldwide total of \$109.4 million.^[15]

On September 18, 2012, The Criterion Collection released *The Game* on DVD and Blu-ray, making it spine #627 of the collection.^[16] They had originally issued the film on Laserdisc in 1997.^[17]

1.3.5 Reception

The film review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes reports 71% positive reviews based on 52 surveyed critics and an average score of 7.4/10. The site's consensus reads: "The ending could use a little work but this is otherwise another sterling example of David Fincher's iron grip on atmosphere and storytelling."^[18] Metacritic rated it 61/100 based on 19 reviews.^[19] Roger Ebert gave the film 3.5 stars out of 4, praising Douglas as "the right actor for the role. He can play smart, he can play cold, and he can play angry. He is also subtle enough that he never arrives at an emotional plateau before the film does, and never overplays the process of his inner change".^[20] In her review for *The New York Times*, Janet Maslin wrote, "Mr. Fincher, like Michael Douglas in the film's leading role, does show real finesse in playing to the paranoia of these times".^[21] Time magazine's Richard Corliss wrote, "Fincher's style is so handsomely oppressive, and Douglas' befuddlement is so cagey, that for a while the film recalls smarter excursions into heroic paranoia (*The Parallax View*, *Total Recall*)".^[22] In his review for *The Washington Post*, Desson Howe wrote, "It's formulaic, yet edgy. It's predictable, yet full of surprises. How far you get through this tall tale of a thriller before you give up and howl is a matter of personal taste. But there's much pleasure in Fincher's intricate color schemes, his rich sense of decor, his ability to sustain suspense over long periods of

time and his sense of humor”.^[23] *Entertainment Weekly* gave the film a “B+” rating and Owen Gleiberman wrote, “Emotionally, there’s not much at stake in *The Game* — can Nicholas Van Orton be saved?! — but Douglas is the perfect actor to occupy the center of a crazed Rube Goldberg thriller. The movie has the wit to be playful about its own manipulations, even as it exploits them for maximum pulp impact”.^[24] In his review for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Mick LaSalle wrote, “At times *The Game* is frustrating to watch, but that’s just a measure of how well Fincher succeeds in putting us in his hero’s shoes”.^[25] However, *Rolling Stone* magazine’s Peter Travers felt that “Fincher’s effort to cover up the plot holes is all the more noticeable for being strained ... *The Game* has a sunny, redemptive side that ill suits Fincher and ill serves audiences that share his former affinity for loose ends hauntingly left untied”.^[26]

A sequence from the film deemed to be the most thrilling was ranked #44 on *Bravo's The 100 Scariest Movie Moments*.^[27]

1.3.6 See also

- Twist ending
- Alternate reality game
- Simulacra, for a discussion of the simulated environment and simulated drama of *The Game*

1.3.7 Notes

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1.3.9 External links

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- *The Game* at Box Office Mojo
- *The Game* at Rotten Tomatoes
- *The Game* at Metacritic

1.4 Dave Szulborski

Dave Szulborski (June 23, 1957 – April 23, 2009) was the first professional independent *alternate reality game* developer, and an authority on ARGs. His books on the subject are used today in curricula on alternate reality games and transmedia storytelling. His independent games included *ChangeAgents*, *Chasing the Wish*, and *Urban Hunt*. He holds the Guinness World Record for Most Prolific ARG developer.

1.4.1 Biography

Szulborski started his transmedia career as a beta tester for *Majestic*, an early attempt at pervasive gaming from Electronic Arts. He spun off his first games, called *ChangeAgents*, in that universe. One of the first independent ARG developers, Szulborski became well known for his work on indie games *Chasing the Wish* and *Urban Hunt*. He wrote *This Is Not a Game*, the first book on alternate reality games, and launched a career into professional ARG design with his contributions to *Art of the Heist*.

Later in his career, he created ARGs, puzzles, and stories for projects as varied as marketing campaigns and military training exercises. He was also a public speaker and contributing author on the topic of interactive storytelling.

Szulborski died in April 2009 of leukemia. Before his death, his battle with the illness prompted friends and fans of his work to create *Folding the Wish*, a project to send him a thousand origami cranes.

Dave has a son, Tyler David Szulboski.

In 2012, Szulborski was posthumously awarded the Guinness World Record for Most Prolific ARG Developer.^[1]

1.4.2 Bibliography

Alternate reality games

- 2001: *Majestic* – beta tester, content creator through BIOS program – Electronic Arts
- 2001: *ChangeAgents* – Creative Chip - independent
- 2001: *ChangeAgents* – Operation Mindset - independent, done as part of *Majestic*'s BIOS Program and featured on their website and in their newsletter
- 2002: *ChangeAgents* – Out of Control - independent
- 2003: *Chasing the Wish* – independent
- 2004: *Urban Hunt* (*Dread House*) - independent
- 2005: *ARGTalk* - independent

- 2005: *Art of the Heist* – for Audi, McKinney-Silver, Chelsea Digital, GMD Studios
- 2006: *Who is Benjamin Stove?* – for General Motors, Campbell-Ewald, GMD Studios
- 2006: *Catching the Wish* – independent
- 2007: *Unnatural Selection* (Monster Hunter Club) – for The Host movie, ARGStudios, Magnolia Pictures
- 2007: Helical Training program - an ARG based training program for BBN Technologies and the U.S. military (DARPA and JFCOM)
- 2008: *Holomove* – for Microsoft Visual Studio
- 2008: McCann Erickson, @radicalmedia

Books

- 2005: Author, *This Is Not a Game: A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming* (ISBN 1411625951)
- 2006: Author, *Through the Rabbit Hole: A Beginner's Guide to Playing Alternate Reality Games* (ISBN 978-1-4116-4828-9)
- 2006: Creator, *Chasing The Wish (comic)* (OCLC 123130948)
- 2007: Contributor, *Space, Time, Play* (ISBN 376438414X)
- 2008: Contributor, *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment, Volume 2* (ISBN 0240805100) and *Branding Only Works on Cattle* (ISBN 0446178020)

Television work

- 2006: *Danger Game* TV Show pilot with Superfine Films (NYC)

Non-ARG marketing campaigns and online games

- 2006: *Hedgegames* – for HP and DreamWorks for *Over the Hedge* film – Campfire Media
- 2006: Santa Barbara International Film Festival Podcasting official website design
- 2006: *The Missing Gnome* interactive components for Travelocity – McKinney-Silver
- 2007: *Fairy Tale Ransom* – M&M'S and DreamWorks for *Shrek the Third* – G2 Interactive
- 2007: *Rise of the Chevy Autobots* – Chevrolet, DreamWorks, and Paramount for the 2007 *Transformers* movie - Campbell-Ewald

- 2007: The President's Book Blog – Disney for the 2007 film *National Treasure 2: Book of Secrets*
- 2008: Starburst Brand And Skittles Brand “Summer Fever Search Party” – for G2 Interactive and Skittles
- 2008: Vroengard Academy – Random House and Deep Focus for the 2008 book release *Brisingr*
- 2008: Red Seal puzzle – HBO and Campfire for the HBO TV series *True Blood*
- 2008: No Known Survivors – Electronic Arts and Deep Focus for the 2008 video game *Dead Space*

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1.4.4 External links

- The World According to Dave Szulborski
- Dave Szulborski's ARGFest Memorial on YouTube
- T580: Interactive Storytelling and Game Design
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1.5 Ready Player One

Ready Player One is a 2011 science fiction and dystopian novel by Ernest Cline and it is his first novel. In 2012, the book received an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association division of the American Library Association^[1] and won the 2012 Prometheus Award.^[2]

Cline sold the novel in June 2010, in a bidding war to the Crown Publishing Group (a division of Random House).^[3] The book was published on August 16, 2011.^[4] The audiobook is narrated by Wil Wheaton, who also happens to cameo in the story as the Vice-President of the OASIS Player's Council.^[5]

A film adaptation, directed by Steven Spielberg, is currently in production, and slated to premiere in spring 2018.

1.5.1 Setting

In the year 2044, the world is gripped by an energy crisis and global warming, causing widespread social problems and economic stagnation. To escape the decline their world is facing, people turn to the OASIS -a virtual reality simulator operated with a visor and haptic gloves. It functions both as an MMORPG and as a virtual society, with its currency being the most stable currency in the world. It was created by James Halliday, who has recently died. His will left a series of clues, mostly relating to 80s pop culture, that will guide those who use OASIS towards an Easter Egg within the virtual reality world. The first person to find the Easter Egg would inherit Halliday's fortune and control of the OASIS itself.

1.5.2 Plot

Wade Watts is a teenager living with his aunt in the stacks, a poverty stricken district constructed by stacking trailers on top of each other. He attends school within the OASIS but lacks the virtual currency or XP levels to travel to other locations. He is a 'gunter' (an egg hunter) who spends all of his spare time researching films, songs, TV series and videogames from the 80s and 90s to aid his hunt. The hunt has been going on for five years, yet no one has been able to find the first key. Then, Wade, who goes by the avatar name Parzival, stumbles upon a *Dungeons and Dragons* reference in the first clue and after defeating an NPC character at *Joust*, is given a key which unlocks a gate. This gate places him in a simulation of the film *WarGames* in which he has to recreate the lines of the lead character. After clearing the gate, he is awarded points and his avatar's name appears on the previously empty leaderboard.

His avatar becomes famous within the OASIS, as does his friend Aech and another gunter named Art3mis who

clear the gate shortly after him. He takes advantage of his fame, endorsing virtual products for credits, and develops a tentative relationship with Art3mis. He is approached by a corporation (IOI) who want to control the OASIS and after he refuses, they unsuccessfully attempt to assassinate him.

The hunt for the egg continues and more keys are discovered and gates are cleared. Wade loses both his place at the top of the leaderboard and his friendship with Aech and Art3mis, becoming increasingly isolated. Art3mis opens the second gate and obtains the Jade key, followed by Aech who also gives Parzival a hint about its location. IOI who had been monitoring the locations of Art3mis and Aech using purchased items on the OASIS also discover its location. Shortly after, Parzival, Daito and Shoto also reach the gate's location. Daito is killed by IOI operatives in real life as he is helping Shoto open the second gate.

Eventually the final gate is discovered by IOI who are unable to open it. IOI barricade the location, in order to prevent gunters from accessing the final gate. so Wade infiltrates the real world headquarters of IOI and hacks their databases. He enlists the help of all the gunters in the OASIS to launch a coordinated assault on the corporate forces, during which all the avatars are killed before Parzival solves the final puzzle with the help of Aech and Art3mis. He clears the gate and claims the egg, awarding him control of the OASIS, including the ability to switch it off. In real life, he and Art3mis finally meet in person and kiss.

1.5.3 Characters

- **Wade Owen Watts/Wade3/Parzival:** the protagonist, a poor orphan from the “stacks” surrounding metropolitan *Oklahoma City*. Wade names his OASIS character Parzival after *Percival*, the Arthurian knight famous for his quest for the *grail*, and dedicates his life to finding James Halliday's Easter egg.
- **Helen Harris/Aech:** Wade's best friend, fellow gunter, and rival in the quest to find the egg. Though her OASIS avatar, Aech, is depicted as an athletic white heterosexual male, Harris is in fact a large African-American *lesbian*. Harris grew up in *Atlanta, Georgia*, and both she and her avatar are about the same age as Wade.
- **Samantha Evelyn Cook/Art3mis:** a famous gunter and blogger from *Vancouver, British Columbia*. Wade has a huge cyber-crush on her, which is complicated by their competition in search of the egg. She chose her avatar's name from the Greek goddess of the hunt.
- **Nolan Sorrento/IOI-655321:** a high-ranking official of Innovative Online Industries, the multinational corporation that serves as an Internet service

provider for most of the world and hopes to take over and monetize the OASIS. Sorrento is head of IOI's Oology (the science of searching for Halliday's Easter egg) Division, and serves as the primary antagonist of the novel.

- **Toshiro Yoshiaki/Daito and Akihide Karatsu/Shoto:** Japanese gunters who work as a team in their quest for the egg. They have a generally tense, but sometimes-friendly relationship with Parzival, Aech, and Art3mis. These five are referred to as The High Five, since they were the first five to obtain the first key.
- **James Donovan Halliday/Anorak:** creator of OASIS, the Anorak's Invitation and the Anorak's Almanac. He is based on the personalities of *Howard Hughes* and *Richard Garriott*.^{[6][7]}
- **Ogden “Og” Morrow:** Co-creator of the OASIS and best friend of James Halliday. He is among the few in the world who is rich and can afford luxuries that most people cannot. His appearance and personality are described as being “a cross between Albert Einstein and Santa Claus.” Despite being rich, he is humble and respects his deceased friend's game and the hunt for the egg. He ultimately quit his job at Gregarious Simulation Systems, concerned that people were using it to escape reality. Instead, he and his wife Kira created free educational games. He had a falling-out with Halliday and the two men remained estranged until shortly before Halliday's death. His backstory somewhat parallels that of *Steve Wozniak* and his eventual relationship with *Steve Jobs*. Og lives in *Oregon* and owns a set of very advanced OASIS consoles and immersion rigs.

1.5.4 Reception

Ready Player One was a *New York Times* bestseller and the paperback is in its 17th printing. It was praised by such publications as *Entertainment Weekly*, *The Boston Globe*, *The A.V. Club*, CNN.com, io9, and *Boing Boing*, to name a few. *USA Today* wrote that the novel “undoubtedly qualifies Cline as the hottest geek on the planet right now.”^[8] NPR said that the book was “ridiculously fun and large-hearted”. Cline “takes a far-out premise and engages the reader instantly” with a “deeply felt narrative [that] makes it almost impossible to stop turning the pages.”^[9] On the other hand, *The New York Times* said “The book gets off to a witty start” but noted that it lacks at least one dimension, stating that gaming had overwhelmed everything else about this book.^[10]

The book has been translated into at least 21 languages, including Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Georgian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Latvian, Mandarin, Norwegian, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, and Turkish.

1.5.5 Additional editions

Lacero is a fan-fiction story by **Andy Weir** which was published in the 2016 edition of *Ready Player One*, making it canonical to the book's fictional universe. It deals with the history of Nolan Sorrento and functions as a precursor to the main novel.^{[NB 1][11]}

1.5.6 In other media

Easter egg hunt

Ten months after the first edition release, Cline revealed on his blog that *Ready Player One* itself contained an elaborately hidden easter egg. This clue would form the first part of a series of staged video gaming tests, similar to the plot of the novel. Cline also revealed that the competition's grand prize would be a **DeLorean**.^[12] The game *Ultimate Collector: Garage Sale* by Austin-based developer **Portalarium** was featured in one part of the contest.^[13] The final stage of the contest was announced on August 1, 2012, and was to set a world record on one of several classic arcade or **Atari 2600** games. This was completed on August 9, 2012 by Craig Queen, who set a new world record in *Joust*. He was awarded the DeLorean on the TV show *X-Play*.^[14]

Film adaptation

Main article: **Ready Player One (film)**

The film rights were purchased by **Warner Bros.** on the same day Cline finalized his publishing deal with Random House, one year prior to the novel's publication. Dan Farah brought the project into the studio and is producing it with **Donald De Line**. Cline adapted his novel into a screenplay.^[15] Over the years, **Eric Eason** and **Zak Penn** assisted Cline with rewrites.^[16]

Steven Spielberg signed on to direct in March 2015.^[17] Spielberg and **Kristie Macosko Krieger** of **Amblin Partners** also joined Deline and Farah as producers. Warner Bros. initially announced a release date of December 15, 2017.^[18] On February 9, 2016, the release date was pushed back to March 30, 2018, to avoid competition with *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*.^[19] The movie began production in the spring of 2016 and is being filmed in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

On September 1, 2015, *The Wrap* reported that **Olivia Cooke**, **Elle Fanning** and **Lola Kirke** were on the shortlist for the role of **Art3mis**, along with two unnamed actresses, and **Justin Kroll** tweeted that **Nick Robinson** was an early favorite of Spielberg for **Parzival**.^{[20][21]} On September 11, 2015, it was reported that Cooke was cast as **Samantha**.^[22] On January 6, 2016, *The Hollywood Reporter* reported that **Ben Mendelsohn** was in talks to play **Nolan Sorrento**.^[23] In early 2016, the movie launched a

worldwide casting call for the roles of **Wade Watts**, **Daito**, and **Shoto** in the project.^[24] On February 24, 2016, *Deadline* reported that **Tye Sheridan** was cast as **Wade** in the film.^[25] On March 17, 2016, *The Hollywood Reporter* reported that **Simon Pegg** was in negotiations for the role of **OASIS** co-creator **Ogden Morrow**, better known by his **OASIS** avatar: the **Great and Powerful Og**.^[26] April 13, 2016, *Variety* reported that **Mark Rylance** has joined the cast as **OASIS** creator **James Donovan Halliday**.^[27] On June 1, 2016, *The Hollywood Reporter* reported that **T.J. Miller** has joined the cast to play an unnamed role. Originally, rumors had started to spread that he would be taking on the role of an annoying online Internet troll named **i-R0k**, but he will instead be taking on an unnamed role. A description of the character has been revealed as "a bounty hunter with an amusing personality."^[28] On June 5, 2016, *Variety* reported that Japanese singer-actor **Win Morisaki** is cast as **Toshiro Yoshiaki**, also known as **Daito**.^[29]

On June 9, 2016, *Variety* stated that Spielberg's regular collaborator **John Williams** is planning to compose the film's score.^[30]

Screenwriter **Zak Penn** tweeted on July 1, 2016 that the first week of filming was completed.^[31]

1.5.7 See also

- **Simulated reality**
- **Simulated reality in fiction**

1.5.8 Notes

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1.5.10 External links

- Quotations related to Ready Player One at Wikiquote
- Ernest Cline page for the book
- Tumblr blog for the book
- Excerpts from the book

Chapter 2

Examples of ARGames

2.1 List of alternate reality games Music

This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.

- No Love Deep Web by Death Grips

An alternate reality game (ARG) is an interactive narrative that uses the real world as a platform, often involving multiple media and game elements, to tell a story that may be affected by participants' ideas or actions.

This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.

2.1.1 Media with ARG themes

Films

- *The Game*
- *Existenz*
- *The Dark Knight*
- *Cloverfield*
- *Super 8*
- *Devour*
- *10 Cloverfield Lane*

Books

- Pattern Recognition by William Gibson
- Penny Dreadful by Will Christopher Baer
- Halting State by Charles Stross
- Little Brother by Cory Doctorow
- Cathy's Book and Cathy's Key by Sean Stewart, Jordan Weisman, and Cathy Brigg (illustrator)
- John Dies at the End (novel) by David Wong
- Mr. Mercedes by Stephen King
- Ready Player One by Ernest Cline
- This Is Not a Game by Walter Jon Williams

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2.2 I Love Bees

I Love Bees (also known as *ilovebees* or *ILB* for short) was an **alternate reality game** (ARG) that served as both a real-world experience and **viral marketing** campaign for the release of developer Bungie's 2004 video game *Halo 2*. The game was created and developed by 42 Entertainment. Many of the same personnel had previously created an ARG for the film *A.I.* titled *The Beast*. *I Love Bees* was commissioned by Microsoft, *Halo 2*'s publisher.

I Love Bees was first advertised by a hidden message in a *Halo 2* trailer; players who investigated the titular website discovered that the pages appeared to be hacked by a mysterious intelligence. As players solved puzzles, audio logs were posted to the *ilovebees.com* site which gradually revealed more of the fictional back-story, involving a marooned **artificial intelligence** stranded on Earth and its attempts to put itself back together. 250,000 people viewed the *ilovebees* website when it was launched in August 2004, and more than 500,000 returned to the site every time the pages were updated. More than three million visitors viewed the site over the course of three months, and thousands of people around the world participated in the game. *I Love Bees* won numerous awards for its innovation and helped spawn numerous other alternate reality games for video games.

2.2.1 Overview

Alternate reality games or ARGs are designed to involve fans of video games or other media in a form of **viral marketing** which CNET described as encompassing "real-life treasure hunting, interactive storytelling, video games and online [communities]".^[1] *I Love Bees* began when jars of honey were received in the mail by people who had previously participated in **alternate reality games**. The jars contained letters leading to the *I Love Bees* website and a countdown.^[2] At around the same time, theatrical trailers for *Halo 2* concluded with the Xbox logo and a URL, Xbox.com, that quickly flashed a link to *ilovebees.com*,^[3] ostensibly a hacked site related to **beekeeping**.^[2]

Both events, not connected publicly for several weeks, caused the curious to visit the website *ilovebees.com*. The site, which appeared to be dedicated to honey sales and beekeeping, was covered in confusing random characters and sentence fragments. Dana, the ostensible webmaster of the *ilovebees* site, created a **weblog** stating that something had gone wrong with her website, and the site itself had been hacked.^[4] Suspecting that this was a mystery that could be unraveled, *Halo* and ARG fans spread the link and began to work on figuring out what was going on.

The gameplay of *I Love Bees* tasked players around the world to work together to solve problems, with little or no direction or guidance.^[5] For example, the game presented players with 210 pairs of **global positioning system** coordinates and time codes, with no indications to what

the locations referred to.^[5] Players eventually figured out the coordinates referred to pay phones and the times to when the phones would ring; one player in Florida stayed by a phone while **Hurricane Frances** was minutes away in order to recite answers to prerecorded questions.^[6] Other phone calls were made by live persons known as "operators"; these calls allowed players to interact with the characters of the games in spontaneous and occasionally humorous ways.^[7] Other players treated the corrupted data on *ilovebees.com* as encrypted files to decipher, or used image files found on the web server to solve puzzles.^[6] After players completed certain tasks, they were rewarded with new installments to an **audio drama** which revealed the reasons for the *ilovebees.com* malfunction.^[6]

Over time, the game's mechanisms for contacting players grew more complex. Players were sent messages via email, called on their cell phones, and travelled to arranged meetings between players and characters.^[8] The game culminated by inviting players of the game to visit one of four cinemas where they could get a chance to play *Halo 2* before its release and collect a commemorative DVD.^[9]

2.2.2 Plot

The game's plot begins with a military spaceship crashing to Earth in an unknown location, leaving the craft's controlling **artificial intelligence** or AI damaged. This AI, known as the "Operator" or "Melissa" (from the Latin for "very sweet," etymologically akin to Latin *melis*, "honey"), is not alone; other AI programs share its system. In an effort to survive and contact any surviving allies, Melissa transfers herself to a **San Francisco**-area web server, which happens to host a bee enthusiast website known as *I Love Bees*. To the distress of Dana Awbrey, the website's maintainer, Melissa's attempts to send signals began to appear largely as codes, hidden in images or other text, interfering with the operation of the *I Love Bees* site and corrupting much of the content.^[10]

Dana, attempting to regain control over the corrupted website, accidentally erases data which comprises part of Melissa's memory. Furious, Melissa lashes out at the webmaster, obtaining pictures of her using the webcam on her computer and promising to take revenge. Alarmed, Dana announces that she is removing herself from the situation and is taking a previously planned trip to China earlier than expected.

All AI units contain a program called SPDR, short for System Peril Distributed Reflex. As SPDR attempts to fix Melissa, random dumps from Melissa's memory began to spill into the website, largely detailing Melissa's history and revealing the presence of a malicious Trojan-horse virus known as the "Pious Flea." The Spider tries to erase the Flea but is outwitted, as Melissa erases the Spider instead of the Flea.^[10] The Flea continues to overwrite

Melissa's programming with its own mysterious goals, with it eventually being revealed that it is actually an espionage AI more properly called the Seeker, built by the Covenant.

With the assistance of other characters revealed by audio chapters, the fictional protagonists break into a secure military installation and manage to deactivate a Forerunner device which is implied to begin the firing sequence of the *Halo* installations. However, the price paid for the deactivation is a powerful energy transmission alerting the Covenant to the location of Earth.^[10] Whole again, Melissa sees how she has been manipulated by the Pious Flea, and returns to her time. *I Love Bees* ends with the Covenant invading Earth, corresponding to a major plot point in *Halo 2*.^[8]

Due to Bungie's commitment to the development of *Halo 2* during *I Love Bees*' run, they were unable to assist 42 Entertainment with story creation, and so the ARG's story is only tangentially related to the main *Halo* storyline.^[11] The events of *I Love Bees* were, therefore, originally not considered to be *Halo* canon. In a 2006 interview, however, Bungie's content manager Frank O'Connor expressly confirmed that *I Love Bees* is part of "things that we embrace as canon."^[12] References to elements of *I Love Bees* have since appeared in the 2006 *Halo* Graphic Novel^[13] and the 2009 *Halo* Encyclopedia,^[14] both of which are official canon.

2.2.3 Development



Jordan Weisman, CEO of 42 Entertainment

I Love Bees' developer, 42 Entertainment, was founded by Jordan Weisman, the former creative director for Microsoft's Xbox division. 42 Entertainment had previously created the first ARG, *The Beast*, which had been used to promote the movie *A.I.* Other members of the *I Love Bees* team included Sean Stewart, a World Fantasy Award-winning author who served as *I Love Bees*' writer, and Jim Stewartson, *I Love Bees*' technical lead who produced the first commercial 3D game delivered by the internet.^[15] Weisman stated that the goal of *I Love*

Bees was to utilize every person who interacted with the game, and to use any electronic resource to do so: "If we could make your toaster print something we would. Anything with an electric current running through it. A single story, a single gaming experience, with no boundaries. A game that is life itself."^[16]

42 Entertainment conceived *I Love Bees* as a radio drama, and used the pay phones as a way to excite players. Chris Di Cesare, Microsoft's director of marketing, stated that the radio drama's similarities with *War of the Worlds* was intentional, and that "[ILB] remains true to the radio drama tradition of Orson Welles that we were shooting for and also allowed us to tell the story in an unorthodox way."^[8] In order to prevent non-players from being scared by the sounds of gunfire from the pay phones, 42 Entertainment established passwords that had to be repeated.^[17] Stewart described writing for the game as more enjoyable than writing printed fiction, both for the money and the unique experience of ARGs as opposed to other media:

The audiences that we built for those campaigns are having a different experience. They're having a collective experience in which they literally bring different pieces, one to the next, swap them back and forth, gossip about them. They have an element of cocreation and a collaborative nature that doesn't really have an analog that I've been able to think of in the arts.^[18]

2.2.4 Reception

I Love Bees is credited with helping drive attention to *Halo 2*; former *Electronic Gaming Monthly* editor Dan Hsu stated in an interview that "*I Love Bees* really got existing gamers and other consumers talking about the universe of [Halo]."^[19] Billy Pidgeon, a game analyst, noted that *I Love Bees* achieved what it had been designed to do: "This kind of viral guerrilla marketing worked... Everyone started instant messaging about it and checking out the site."^[20] *I Love Bees* not only received coverage from gaming publications, but attracted mainstream press attention as well.^[21] At its height, *ilovebees* received between two and three million unique visitors over the course of three months.^[21] 9,000 people also actively participated in the real-world aspects of the game.^[22] The players of *I Love Bees* themselves were quite varied. The target demographic for the promotion was younger males, but one player noted that even middle-aged men and women were engaged in the game.^[23]

I Love Bees received several awards for its innovation.^[19] The design team was one of the recipients of the Innovation Award at the 5th annual Game Developers Choice Awards.^[24] *I Love Bees* was also announced as the winner of a Webby Award in the Game-Related category,^[25]

presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences.

Legacy

Along with 42 Entertainment's previous ARG known as *The Beast*, *I Love Bees* is credited with bringing greater attention to the fledgling marketing form; *I Love Bees* not only helped assuage fears by marketers about the costs of ARG failure, but attracted interest from other game developers in using alternate reality games to promote their own products.^[26] Before *I Love Bees*, *The Guardian* stated that "ARGs were destined to join Letsbuyit.com and *Barcode Battlers* in the e-dustbin of nice ideas that never really caught on"; the explosion of broadband internet access and a renewed interest in codes allowed *I Love Bees* to become wildly successful.^[27] Bungie would later use another ARG called "Iris" to promote *Halo 2*'s sequel, *Halo 3*.^[28]

I Love Bees also attracted attention in the wider discussion of user-based marketing and cooperation. Author Charles Leadbeater argued that *I Love Bees* was an example of "We-Think" collective thinking; Leadbeater noted that after the "puppet masters" began the game, *I Love Bees* "displayed all the characteristics of a mass movement, propelled into existence in a matter of weeks simply by collective enthusiasm guided by a few cyberspace 'avatars'".^[29] The game proved successful with gamers, as well as attracting nontraditional players who had no experience with *Halo* before joining the game.^[10]

2.2.5 See also

- *Iris*, Bungie's *Halo 3* ARG
- **Radio drama** — the genre of the audio files released as part of *I Love Bees*.

2.2.6 References

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2.2.7 External links

- Official website (static mirror: ilovebees.co)
- Halopedia's I Love Bees article
- Netninja ILB archive
- All text revealed in-game, in chronological order
- Audio drama MP3 clips compiled into full chapters
- Audio drama MP3 clips organized by scene
- Audio drama transcriptions

2.3 Evidence: The Last Ritual

In Memoriam 2 (known as *Evidence: The Last Ritual* in the US, *In Memoriam: Le Dernier Rituel* in France) is an adventure game for Windows platform, and is notable for its Alternate Reality-style gameplay, in which the player receives e-mails from other in-game characters, including the game's main antagonist, as well as being asked to find a lot of information and clues to the games' puzzles on the internet, both from real websites, and from specially-created websites that have been mixed in with other "real-world" domains. In addition to these, the French version of the game (only within France) offers (for a one-time fee) to send SMS messages to the player directly to their mobile phones, as well as the ability to call any of the characters and have a real phone conversation with them.

2.3.1 Plot

The game finishes the same story previously started in *Missing: Since January*. Jessica Moses is searching for her missing brother, Adrian; who suddenly disappeared six years ago. Jack Lorski, the journalist who had been previously kidnapped in **Part I** of the game is found dead, with a large portion of his torso removed. A couple of weeks later, the authorities received another DVD from the Phoenix full of clues, murders and Jessica's movie with different riddles and enigmas. In order to stop him, the authorities have copied the disk hundreds of times for distribution to help with the case.

Jessica is contacted by Adrian, who had been estranged from the family for several years. She and her compatriot Sharon travel to New England in search of him. After

meeting with a police officer in charge of Adrians missing persons case and a former roommate, whom Adrian had studied graphic design with, Jessica becomes concerned that Adrian had become involved in some kind of criminal activity. After discovering a secluded cabin were Adrian had been staying, they are led to a Catholic splinter sect known as the OSCS. Jessica visits the groups headquarters, discovering the building is abandoned with the exception of a squatter. They then visit an ex-cult member, who fills them in on life in the cult as brutal and oppressive.

Prior to this, though presented in tandem, Jack Lorski is working with a Portuguese police officer, investigating several apparently random murders of elderly men. After discovering a link between them and a group known as Manus Domini, Jack is convinced the killer is the reemergent Phoenix. They then discover the body of a much younger man near an abandoned copper mine, with his heart torn out. After seeing pictures of the man, Jack is initially convinced that it is the Phoenix himself, but finally agrees that it was only the Phoenix's disciple, Adrian, the computer programmer for the initial CD as well as the lion's share of the programming of the current game. Jessica and Sharon receive a message from Adrian asking to meet him at Ouren castle after dark. Jessica is knocked out and Sharon is abducted. Jessica is confronted with the fact that her brother was murdered trying to warn her away from the castle, and is put in protective custody. Jack and the police are presented with evidence that the Phoenix will be performing another ritual murder at a different castle, and rush to capture him. The realize, after finding a women's severed hand, that it was ruse. Upon returning to the safe house, they find Jessica missing and the entire household guard dead.

At this level in the game, lines of code begin running through various portions of the puzzles. This is, revealed by emails, a spyware program, written by Adrian and the Phoenix, to decode Book XIV using the distributed computing system created by the duplication of the game disc. An ICPA programmer creates a tracer program to pinpoint the Phoenix's current location, believed to be in Scotland, by identifying his IP address. Then the player is tasked with discovering the Phoenix's username and password, which was hidden, by Adrian, in the various films of the CD, as a failsafe in the event of his death.

The Phoenix's location is tracked to northern Scotland, where Sharon's mutilated body is discovered, along with additional victims from the surrounding countryside. Gerde Hanke, the profiler from the previous game, tracks the Phoenix to his hideout, an excavated warehouse. After cracking the Phoenix's password, the player is given access to the warehouse's surveillance system, and guides Gerde through a series of gates meant to be similar to and symbolize the interior of a pyramid tomb. Upon reaching the culmination, a new security system is accessed. The body of "Osiris", assembled from the various body parts of the Phoenix's victims, lies hanging against a wall, with

Jessica slumped on the floor nearby. Gerde enters and is attacked, presumably by the Phoenix. He knocks the person out as the room catches fire. Grabbing Jessica's prone form, he dashes from the room, presumably leaving the Phoenix to burn alive. Following the end of the plot, an email is sent to the player from a helper who infrequently contacts the player and is strongly hinted at being the actual Phoenix, still alive.

The puzzles are similar in nature to those of the previous game, with incorporations from newer services and websites, such as Google Earth and Mapquest. Several features are carried over from the previous game, such as the 8 mm film that was central to the previous game, as well as many improvements, including the ability to replay video clips that had previously been seen, which frustrated many fans who operated under the premise that the clips contained clues, but could only be viewed once.

2.3.2 Cast

- Jack Lorski: Olivier Chenevat
- Gerd Hanke: Stephane Cornicard
- Jessica Moses: Sabine Crossen
- Manuela Ortiz: Marta Domingo
- Sharon Berti: Susanna Martini
- Fernando: Fernando Nascimento

2.3.3 Other games in series

E:TLR is the sequel to *Missing: Since January*, which was released in France (where it had been developed) in October 2003, then in the US in June 2004.

2.3.4 External links

- (French) Trailer for *In Memoriam 2*
- (French) Official website for *In Memoriam: Le Dernier Rituel*
- (English) Official website for *Evidence: The Last Ritual*
- (French) Official Community Site for the Players

2.4 The Beast (game)

The Beast is an alternate reality game developed by Microsoft to promote the 2001 film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. Entry points to the game embedded into the film's promotion centered on the fictional **Jeanine Salla** and the death of her friend **Evan Chan**. In 2142, Jeanine learns

that Evan was murdered and her investigation uncovers a network of murders of humans and **artificial intelligences**. The game launched on March 8, 2001 and continued running past its initially scheduled end date on June 29, the film's release date.

Players were led through a network of websites created by **Warner Bros.**, registered to fake names, and further clues were given in subsequent promotional materials and events for the film. The game drew a large, tight-knit player base who created online groups dedicated to the game, most prominently the **Yahoo! Group Cloudmakers**. *The Beast* was described as "unprecedented even by Hollywood standards" and is considered among the most influential early alternate reality games.

2.4.1 Game

The Beast centers around the fictional Jeanine Salla, who investigates the death of her friend Evan Chan and discovers a cover-up involving a string of murdered humans and **artificial intelligences**. Players were led through a network of over forty websites created by **Warner Bros.** via clues left in trailers, print ads, posters, telephone messages, and live promotional events for the film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*. The game launched on March 8, 2001 and continued running past its initially scheduled end on June 29, the release date for the film.

Premise

Set in 2142, roughly forty years after *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, Evan Chan is said to be killed in a boating accident aboard his artificial intelligence-enhanced boat Cloud-maker. Dr. Jeanine Salla receives a cryptic message revealing he was murdered and leads an investigation. She discovers that he was having an **affair** with Venus, a companion bot reprogramed to kill Evan, and that the ensuing **cover-up** triggers further murders of humans and artificial intelligences. Simultaneously, the Mann Act is brought before the **legislature** and the president and ultimately put to **referendum** to decide if artificial intelligence will be treated equal to human citizens.

Plot development

Clues to the game were distributed through trailers, print ads, posters, telephone messages, and live promotional events for the film *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*^[1] and even in graffiti in public restrooms in major cities throughout the United States.^[2] Online, the game was presented through numerous websites in text, photograph, video, and audio based formats.^[2]

Players entered the game through one of three entry points, called "rabbit holes" by the development team, centering on Dr. Jeanine Salla: trailers and posters cred-

ited Jeanine Salla as the production’s “sentient machine therapist”,^{[3][4]} a phone number hidden in another trailer ultimately led to Jeanine,^[3] and a promotional poster sent to technology and entertainment media outlets had a code stating, “Evan Chan was murdered. Jeanine is the key.” *The Beast* was launched on March 8, 2001; however, only roughly one hundred players discovered the game in the first few weeks.^[3]



Harry Knowles brought broad attention to *The Beast* with an *Ain't It Cool News* article about Jeanine and the websites referencing her.

In April, Harry Knowles of *Ain't It Cool News* received an email from a claviusbase, a reference to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, urging he search the internet for Jeanine Salla. He obliged and discovered numerous websites registered to the same IP address, including one for a Bangalore World University, founded in 2028 and claiming to be Jeanine’s employer.^[4] He posted an article about the websites to the *Ain't It Cool News* website on April 11, drawing 25 million hits to *The Beast* websites that day^[3] and over 22,000 messages about *The Beast* to *Ain't It Cool News* over two months.^[4] CNN stated that Knowles’ article was believed to be the first written about the game.^[4]

In May, during a presentation of *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, producer Kathleen Kennedy and actor Haley Joel Osment accepted a question from a presumed planted audience member about their experience working with Jeanine Salla, and Kennedy afterward distributed business cards for Jeanine containing another game clue.^[1] Later that month, “Anti-Robot Militia” rallies in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles were staged with actors pretending to protest artificial intelligence.^{[1][5]}

Jeanine Salla and other characters of *The Beast* are listed in the film’s closing credits.^{[6][7]}

Cloudmakers and player base

Cloudmakers, named after the boat on which Evan was murdered, is a Yahoo! Group and website dedicated to

the game. The Cloudmakers website was described to be the among the first dedicated to the game.^[8] Though the total number of players was uncertain, the Cloudmakers group was said to include a majority of the player base.^[4] Before the film’s release 4,500 to nearly 5,000 users were registered to the group’s message board.^{[1][4]} The founder of the website stated in June 2001 that the discussion list generated tens of thousands of messages weekly.^[8] The game was being developed as it was played. While most players came to the plotlines after they had been solidified, the Cloudmakers group was constantly on the cutting edge of the game, pushing the game’s developers and influencing the plot. Warnings and messages sent by Cloudmakers members to characters in the story regularly turned up in the plot, and designs/blueprints and databases produced by the group were referenced by and even featured on in-game websites and magazines (as were the efforts of a smaller group, *Sphere Watch*). After the game, the Puppetmasters admitted that they relied on the vast storehouse of knowledge amongst the Cloudmakers and other player groups to be able to meet any puzzle the designers created. For instance, a puzzle near the end of *The Beast* required that the players understand lute tablature, and sure enough there were Cloudmakers who could solve it.

2.4.2 Creation and production

Though *The Beast* does not directly reference *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, the film’s producer Kathleen Kennedy stated that the game’s intention was develop the film’s fictional setting and create a foundation for a series of video games released over five years as part of a “very elaborate long term project with Microsoft and Xbox”.^[9] The project was estimated to cost over \$1 million to produce.

Jordan Weisman created the original concept, and it was further designed and developed by Elan Lee. Science fiction writer Sean Stewart was brought to the project as head writer.^[8]

The game was originally scheduled to end with the release of the film on June 29, 2001, but it continued running throughout the summer.^[3] Ultimately, fifty websites with a total of about one thousand pages were created for the game.^[4] To prevent a connection between the websites and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* promotion, the websites were registered to various individuals with the surname Ghaepetto, a reference to Mister Geppetto, and under fake phone numbers and addresses.^[1] The game’s creators later became known as the “Puppetmasters”.^{[4][5]} Microsoft also initially denied involvement in the game’s development, though this was believed to be part of maintaining the integrity of the game’s intrigue.^[4]

Pete Fenlon served as content lead. The name *The Beast* was actually the design team’s internal appellation which remained undisclosed until the Puppetmasters the game’s end; at the time players referred to this endeavor as the

A.I. webgame or, simply, *The Game*. The narrative visual content fell to director/dp Tarquin Cardona and producers Rudy Callegari and Bob Fagan.

2.4.3 Reception and legacy

The game was described by the *Los Angeles Times* as “one of the most elaborate movie promotions ever conceived” that is “unprecedented even by Hollywood standards”.^[1] *The Atlantic* cites it as the “first truly successful alternate reality game”,^[5] and *Polygon* stated it was the first of its kind.^[2] *The Beast* was compared to *The Blair Witch Project*’s marketing campaign,^{[4][9]} though Knowles felt *The Blair Witch Project*’s campaign was more successful due to the broader appeal of the concept and the longer lifespan of the footage.^[4]

Knowles believed that the game’s popularity placed pressure on director Steven Spielberg and the studio to produce a film innovative enough to match the interest in the game, stating that the production’s secretiveness raised expectations.^[4] Despite its success, the game failed to draw an audience to *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, which domestically grossed less than its budget.^[5]

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2.4.5 External links

- The Cloudmakers Yahoo group

- “Strange A.I, Sites Online”
- Nettribution - “Kubrick lays Easter Egg from Grave”

2.5 Majestic (video game)

Majestic is one of the first alternate reality games (ARGs), a type of game that blurs the line between in-game and out-of-game experiences. It debuted on July 31, 2001. While noted for its unusual concept, it did not fare well commercially.

2.5.1 Gameplay

Majestic was a science fiction thriller based on a *Majestic* 12 shadow government conspiracy theory. As an ARG, the game was played by phone, email, AOL Instant Messenger, BlackBerry messages, fax, and by visiting special websites. Gameplay frequently involved the player receiving clues that they would use to solve puzzles and unravel the story. All the messages were automated, with limited dialogue options, but AIM provided some interactive conversations. As an option to warn unsuspecting members in the same house you could enable a warning at the beginning of each phone call, and a small message on the top of all faxes. When this option was enabled, each phone call would begin with a woman saying “*This is a phone call from the video game Majestic*”, before the regular, prerecorded message. Some of the clues were videos featuring the game’s cast. One of the more widely recognized actors was Joe Pantoliano, who portrayed Tim Pritchard in the game’s final episode.

The game’s tagline, “It plays you”, emphasized the nature of ARGs and the game’s suspense. One of the first things the player experienced in *Majestic* was news that the game had stopped, yet they would receive messages suggesting that there was a conspiracy behind the stoppage. *Majestic* was said to have been inspired by *The Game*, a 1997 movie that featured something like an ARG and repeatedly confused the main character into thinking he was not playing. This game was also inspired by the “Area 51 caller” on Art Bell’s *Coast to Coast AM*.^[1]

The game comprised five episodes: A pilot episode was free to try but the four remaining episodes required players to join EA.com’s Platinum Service, which cost \$9.95 USD per month. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, EA paused the service because of the game’s subject matter.^[2] EA discontinued *Majestic* on April 30, 2002 citing too few players.^[3] There were 5 episodes per Season. The game was cancelled before Season 2 could be released.^[4] Retail copies of the game included the game on CD-ROM, a copy of Internet Explorer and AIM, and some bonus music tracks in MP3 format. Also included was the first Season’s subscription.

The game’s interface consisted of a small applica-

tion named the “Majestic Alliance Application”, which served as both a “friends list” (when playing for the first time, the game randomly selected other players who were at the same “level” as you, in game progress, and added them to your Majestic Alliance Application as “allies.” This enabled you to send and receive *instant messages* to and from other players for help) and to *stream* music related to what web page or section of the game you were at. Different web pages and different parts of the game triggered different music. The music was broken down into multiple genres such as *techno*, *industrial*, and *ambient*. The game would choose an appropriate genre for a particular section, and stream it. The track played would be random. Certain sections of the game featured the same track, such as the music heard when logging into the game.

The game took place in real time. If a character said that they would contact the player the next day at a particular time, they would. The game was meant to be played casually. In order to keep a player from going through the game’s entire content in one day, progress was limited each day. Once a player had accomplished the goals for the day, they were placed on “Standby”, in which no progress could be made until they were taken off “Standby.”

2.5.2 Anim-X

Anim-X was the name of a fictional *video game developer* created by Electronic Arts as part of *Majestic*.^[5]

Anim-X is officially credited to this day as the creator of *Majestic*, although in reality EA developed the game entirely in-house at EA’s *Redwood Shores studio*. Anim-X was represented in *Majestic* promotional videos by actors playing the company’s two (fictional) lead developers, “Brian Cale” and “Mike Griffin.”

The story of the game begins with Cale’s death and the destruction of the Anim-X offices. Players then received an email from EA regarding the official shutdown of *Majestic’s* servers. Of course, the shutdown is only part of the game’s fictional storyline and the game progresses, with players helping the surviving Anim-X employees to unravel the conspiracies surrounding the game.^[6]

2.5.3 Reception

Majestic was recognized as the “Best Original Game” at E3 in 2001 and one of the five “Game Innovation Spotlights” at the *Game Developers Choice Awards* in 2002. IGN questioned some of the suspension of disbelief required by the plot, but praised the ambition of the game, and the large potential it had and scored it 7.5/10.^[7]

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 - *GameSpot’s collection of Majestic videos*

Chapter 3

Other Resources

3.1 Transmedia storytelling

“Transmedia” redirects here. For a related process, see [Transmediation](#).

Transmedia storytelling (also known as **transmedia narrative** or **multiplatform storytelling**, **cross-media seriality**^[1]) is the technique of **telling a single story or story experience** across multiple platforms and formats using current digital technologies, not to be confused with traditional cross-platform **media franchises**, **sequels**, or adaptations.

Henry Jenkins, author of the seminal book *Convergence Culture*, warns that this is an emerging subject and different authors have different understandings of it. He warns that the term “transmedia” *per se* means “across media” and may be applied to superficially similar, but different phenomena. In particular, the concept of “transmedia storytelling” should not to be confused with traditional cross-platform, “transmedia” **media franchises**,^[2] or “**media mixes**”.

From a production standpoint, transmedia storytelling involves creating content^[3] that engages an audience using various techniques to permeate their daily lives.^[4] In order to achieve this engagement, a transmedia production will develop stories across multiple forms of media in order to deliver unique pieces of content in each channel. Importantly, these pieces of content are not only linked together (overtly or subtly), but are in narrative synchronization with each other. In his latest book,^[5] Nuno Bernardo shows TV and film producers how to use transmedia to build an entertainment brand that can conquer global audiences, readers and users in a myriad of platforms.

3.1.1 History

The origins of the approach to disperse the content across various commodities and media is traced to the Japanese marketing strategy of **media mix**, originated in early 1960s.^{[1][6]} Some, however, have traced the roots to *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) written by Samuel Richardson and even suggest that they go back further to

the roots of earliest literature.^[7]

By the 1970s and 1980s, pioneering artists of **telematic art** made experiments of collective narrative, mixing the ancestors of today’s networks, and produced both visions and critical theories of what became transmedia.

With the advent of mainstream Internet usage in the 1990s, numerous creators began to explore ways to tell stories and entertain audiences using new platforms. Many early examples took the form of what was to become known as **alternate reality games** (ARG), which took place in real-time with a mass audience. The term ARG was itself coined in 2001 to describe The Beast, a marketing campaign for the film *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence*. Some early works include, but are not limited to:

- **Ong’s Hat** was most likely started sometime around 1993, and also included most of the aforementioned design principles. **Ong’s Hat** also incorporated elements of **legend tripping** into its design, as chronicled in a scholarly work titled *Legend-Tripping Online: Supernatural Folklore and the Search for Ong’s Hat*. ISBN 978-1628460612^[8]
- **Dreadnot**,^[9] an early example of an ARG-style project, was published on [sfgate.com](#) in 1996. This ARG included working voice mail phone numbers for characters, clues in the source code, character email addresses, off-site websites, and real locations in San Francisco.
- **FreakyLinks** (link to archived project at end of article), 2000
- *The Blair Witch Project* – feature film, 1999
- *On Line* – feature film, 2001
- *The Beast* – game, 2001
- *Majestic* – video game, 2001

The **Macaulay Honors College**, part of **CUNY**, New York, established a New Media Lab focusing on Transmedia Storytelling and content, under the direction of **Robert Small**.

3.1.2 Current state

See also: [List of augmented reality software](#) § Games

As of 2011, both traditional and dedicated transmedia entertainment studios are beginning to embrace transmedia storytelling techniques in search of a new storytelling form that is native to networked digital content and communication channels. Developing technologies have enabled projects to now begin to include single-player experiences in addition to real-time multiplayer experiences such as alternate reality games. While the list of current and recent projects is too extensive to list here, some notable examples of transmedia storytelling include:

- *Slide*, a native transmedia experience for Fox8 TV in Australia.
- *Skins*, a transmedia extension of the Channel 4/Company Pictures TV show by *Somethin' Else* in the UK.
- *Halo*, a video game series created by Bungie and currently developed by 343 Industries that has evolved to include novels, comic books, audio plays, live action web series and an upcoming live action television series from Showtime.
- *Cathy's Book*, a transmedia novel by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman.
- *Year Zero*, a transmedia project by Nine Inch Nails.
- *ReGenesis*, a Canadian television series with a real-time transmedia (alternate reality game) extension that took place in sync with the episodes as they aired.
- *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a web series adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* with Twitter and Tumblr accounts.
- *Pandemic*, an independent film and event created by Lance Weiler.^[10]
- *MyMusic*, transmedia sitcom by Fine Brothers Productions as part of YouTube's original channels initiative, one of the more robust transmedia experiences.
- *Clockwork Watch*, an independent project, about a non-colonial Steampunk world, told across graphic novels, live events, online and a feature film created by Yomi Aveni.
- *ZED.TO*, a crowdfunded Canadian ARG that simulates the rise and fall of a futuristic Toronto "lifestyle biotech" corporation.
- *Defiance*, a television show and video game paired to tell connective and separate stories.^{[11][12][13]}
- *The HIVE Transmedia Project*, by Daniel D.W. is a sci-fi novella series incorporating QR codes within the text to multimedia and a simulated reality story.
- *Ingress* by Niantic Labs in 2012.^[14]
- *Endgame: Proving Ground*, a web, phone, book, movie & live paid actor campaign of *transreality gaming* by Niantic Labs beginning in 2014.
- Simon Wilkinson has created several transmedia shows, including *Beyond the Bright Black Edge of Nowhere* (2014) and *The Cube* (2015), which both tell the story of a mass disappearance in 1950s America. After seeing the performance, audience members investigate the disappearance online through a series of websites.
- *Star Wars* has grown over the years and includes a large amount of novels, comic books, movies, video games and TV shows.
- The *Assassin's Creed* franchise is full of games, novels and comic book series, all expanding its universe.

In 'Digital State: How the internet is changing everything' (2013), author Simon Pont argues that transmedia storytelling is a theory that is at last starting to find its practical stride. Pont cites Ridley Scott's *Alien*-prequel *Prometheus* (2012), and specifically the three viral films produced by 20th Century Fox as part of the advance global marketing campaign, as vivid executional examples of transmedia storytelling theory.

Where Robert McKee (Story, 1998) argues that back-story is a waste of time (because if the back-story is so good then this is surely the story worth telling), Pont proposes that storytellers like J. J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof have "pretty much lined McKee's argument up against a wall and shot it".^[15] Pont goes on to argue, "Parallel and non-linear timelines, 'multi-verses', grand narratives with crazy-rich character arcs, 'back-story' has become 'more story', the opportunity to add Byzantine layers of meaning and depth. You don't create a story world by stripping away, but by layering".

In 'Ball & Flint: transmedia in 90 seconds' (2013), Pont likens transmedia story-telling to "throwing a piece of flint at an old stone wall" and "delighting in the ricochet", making story something you can now "be hit by and cut by".^[16]

3.1.3 Educational uses

Transmedia storytelling mimics daily life, making it a strong constructivist pedagogical tool for educational uses.^[17] The level of engagement offered by transmedia storytelling is essential to the Me or Millennial Generation as no single media satisfy their curiosity or lifestyle.^[18] Schools have been slow to adopt the emergence of this new culture which shifts the spotlight of

literacy from being one of individual expression to one of community. Whether we see it or not, Jenkins notes that we live in a transmedia, globally connected world in which we use multiple platforms to connect and communicate.^[17] Using Transmedia storytelling as a pedagogical tool, wherein students interact with platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Tumblr permits students' viewpoints, experiences, and resources to establish a shared collective intelligence that is enticing, engaging, and immersive, catching the millennial learners' attention, ensuring learners a stake in the experience.^[19] Transmedia storytelling offers the educator the ability to lead students to think critically, identify with the material and gain knowledge, offering valuable framework for the constructivist educational pedagogy that supports student centered learning.^[20] Transmedia storytelling allows for the interpretation of the story from the individual perspective, making way for personalized meaning-making.^[17]

In 'The Better Mousetrap: Brand Invention in a Media Democracy' (2012), Pont explains, "Transmedia thinking anchors itself to the world of story, the ambition principally being one of how you can 'bring story to life' in different places, in a non-linear fashion. The marketing of motion pictures is the most obvious application, where transmedia maintains that there's a 'bigger picture opportunity' to punting a big picture. Transmedia theory, applied to a movie launch, is all about promoting the story, not the 'due date of a movie starring...' In an industry built on the conventions of 'stars sell movies', where their name sits above the film's title, transmedia thinking is anti-conventional and boldly purist."^[21]

Transmedia storytelling is also used by companies like Microsoft and Kimberly-Clark to train employees and managers.^[22] Gronstedt and Ramos argues: "At the core of every training challenge is a good story waiting to be told. More and more, these stories are being told across a multitude of devices and screens, where they can reach learners more widely, and engage with them more deeply."^[23]

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3.2 Transreality gaming

Transreality gaming, sometimes written as **trans-reality gaming**, describes a type or a mode of **gameplay** that combines playing a game in a **virtual environment** with game-related, physical experiences in the real world and vice versa. In this approach a player evolves and moves seamlessly through various physical and virtual stages, brought together in one unified game space.^[1] Alongside the rising trend of **gamification**, the application of game mechanics to tasks that are not traditionally associated with play, a transreality approach to gaming incorporates mechanics that extend over time and space, effectively playing through a players day-to-day interactions.^[2]

The essential part of transreality gaming is considered to be the fluidity between physical and virtual stages of gameplay, making it more and more difficult to see the distinction between what is allegedly 'virtual' and what is allegedly 'real' while playing.^[3] Looking at a transreality game from that perspective it may also integrate (big) data feeds into the storylines of games as a means to make the gameplay more immersive,^[4] like in the setup of Liping Xie's experimental scientific simulations in which a population of sample individuals search a real-world optimum in a virtual problem space, driven by real world

forces in that space.^[5] Further on it could benefit from new layers of **reality mining**, connected intelligence and **ubiquitous computing** that incorporate machines into our lives^[6] like the **Internet of Things** and **wearable computing** (both using **sensors** that are able to immediately re-create the actual world on and around a player on his or her device), **cryptocurrencies**, **micropayments** and **nanopayments** (for handling transmedial game credits), deployment of **cleverbots**, **mind files** and **intelligent agent systems** (to enhance the natural feel and learning skills of game characters) and games using **kinetics** (through **motion controllers** or through **haptics**).

Different authors have used the adjective 'transreal' as a starting point for the design of **location-based games** (like **pervasive games**,^[7] **mixed reality games**^[8] and **augmented reality games**^[9]) and **cross media games** (like **simulation games**,^[10] **LARP**^[11] and **alternate reality games**^[12]). All of these genres offer game experiences integrated with everyday routines and social networks. Its applications are to be found in **serious games** (education,^[13] awareness,^[14] skill training^[15]), **gamification** (like in production centers,^[16] marketing,^[17] research^[18] and testing^[19]) as well as in **Mobile Multi-player Trans-Reality Games**, **MMTRG** (including gamification of **Foursquare**^[20]), using the actual geolocation of the player in the gameplay, like in games such as **Ingress**, **Pokémon Go**, **Shadow Cities**, **Zombies**, **Run!**, **YouCatch**, **Roads of San Francisco**, **City Race Munich** and **Parallel Kingdom**.

From a broader perspective it is argued that different **location aware** and **transmedial** game formats may also be considered to merely provide a facilitating infrastructure for transreality gaming in a broader sense, positioned as a new way of looking at the design of game spaces, meant to be played across different realities rather than across different media.^{[21][22][23]}

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- The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality (Mark Grimshaw) ISBN 978-0-19-982616-2
- Pervasive Games: Theory and Design (Markus Montola, Jaakko Stenros, Annika Waern) ISBN 978-0123748539
- Interactive Storytelling: Techniques for 21st Century (Andrew Glassne) ISBN 978-1568812212
- This Is Not A Game: A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming (Dave Szulborski) ISBN 978-1411625952
- Beyond Reality: A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming (John W. Gosney) ISBN 978-1592007370
- @Hearts@Minds#Transreality (Harry van Boven; Ed Fennema)

3.3 Pattern Recognition (novel)

Pattern Recognition is a novel by science fiction writer William Gibson published in 2003. Set in August and September 2002, the story follows Cayce Pollard, a 32-year-old marketing consultant who has a psychological sensitivity to corporate symbols. The action takes place in London, Tokyo, and Moscow as Cayce judges the effectiveness of a proposed corporate symbol and is hired to seek the creators of film clips anonymously posted to the internet.

The novel's central theme involves the examination of the human desire to detect patterns or meaning and the risks of finding patterns in meaningless data. Other themes include methods of interpretation of history, cultural familiarity with brand names, and tensions between art and

commercialization. The **September 11, 2001 attacks** are used as a motif representing the transition to the new century. Critics identify influences in *Pattern Recognition* from **Thomas Pynchon's** postmodern detective story *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Pattern Recognition is Gibson's eighth novel and his first one to be set in the contemporary world. Like his previous work, it has been classified as a science fiction and **postmodern** novel, with the action unfolding along a **thriller** plot line. Critics approved of the writing but found the plot unoriginal and some of the language distracting. The book peaked at number four on the *New York Times* Best Seller list, was nominated for the 2003 **British Science Fiction Association Award**, and was shortlisted for the 2004 **Arthur C. Clarke Award** and **Locus Awards**.

3.3.1 Background

Before writing *Pattern Recognition*, the author, **William Gibson**, published seven novels (one co-written) and numerous short stories beginning in 1977. His previous novel, *All Tomorrow's Parties*, was published in October 1999 as the conclusion of the **Bridge trilogy**. *Pattern Recognition* was written between 2001 and 2002 while Gibson was living in **Vancouver, British Columbia**^[1] and released in February 2003. *Pattern Recognition* was originally intended to be a stand-alone novel,^[2] but afterwards Gibson wrote *Spook Country* and *Zero History* which take place in the same universe and use some of the same characters.

Gibson traveled to Tokyo in 2001 to prepare for this new novel, which takes place in London, Moscow, and Tokyo.^[3] He did not travel to London or Moscow but used interviews with friends and internet resources for research.^[4] In September 2001 Gibson had written about 100 pages but was struggling to finish. He stopped writing after watching the **September 11, 2001 attacks** on television and "realized [the novel] had become a story that took place in an **alternate time track**, in which Sept. 11 hadn't happened".^[1] He considered abandoning the novel but a few weeks later re-wrote portions to use the attacks as a motivating factor for the distress the main character feels.^[2] In a 2003 interview he said, "There I was, in the winter of 2001, with no idea what the summer of 2002 was going to be like. ... In the original post-9/11 draft, London felt more like London is feeling right now. Cayce keeps seeing trucks full of soldiers. But I took that out, because as it got closer to the time, it wasn't actually happening."^[1]

3.3.2 Plot summary

Advertising consultant **Cayce Pollard**, who reacts to logos and advertising as if to an **allergen**, arrives in London in August 2002. She is working on a contract with the marketing firm **Blue Ant** to judge the effectiveness

of a proposed corporate logo for a shoe company. During the presentation, graphic designer **Dorotea Benedetti** becomes hostile towards Cayce as she rejects the first proposal. After dinner with some **Blue Ant** employees, the company founder **Hubertus Bigend** offers Cayce a new contract: to uncover who is responsible for distributing a series of anonymous, artistic film clips via the internet. Cayce had been following the film clips and participating in an online discussion forum theorizing on the clips' meaning, setting, and other aspects. Wary of corrupting the artistic process and mystery of the clips, she reluctantly accepts. Cayce is not entirely comfortable with **Ivy's** chat group called "Fetish:Footage:Forum" (or F:F:F), as shown by the following excerpt:

There are perhaps twenty regular posters on F:F:F, and some much larger and uncounted number of **lurkers**. And right now there are three people in Chat, but there's no way of knowing exactly who until you are in there, and the chat room she finds not so comforting. It's strange even with friends, like sitting in a pitch-dark cellar conversing with people at a distance of about fifteen feet.^[5]

A friend from the discussion group, who uses the handle **Parkaboy**, privately emails her saying a friend of a friend has discovered an encrypted **watermark** on one clip. They concoct a fake persona, a young woman named **Keiko**, to seduce the Japanese man who knows the watermark code. Cayce, along with an American computer security specialist, **Boone Chu**, hired to assist her, travels to Tokyo to meet the man and retrieve the watermark code. Two men attempt to steal the code but Cayce escapes and travels back to London. Boone travels to **Columbus, Ohio** to investigate the company that he believes created the watermark. Meanwhile, **Blue Ant** hires **Dorotea** who reveals that she was previously employed by a Russian lawyer whose clients have been investigating Cayce. The clients wanted Cayce to refuse the job of tracking the film clips and it was **Dorotea's** responsibility to ensure this.

Through a completely random encounter Cayce meets **Voytek Biroshak** and **Ngemi**, the former an artist using old **ZX81** microcomputers as a sculpture medium, the latter a collector of rare technology (he mentions purchasing **Stephen King's** word processor, for example). Another collector, and sometime 'friend' of **Ngemi's**, **Hobbs Baranov**, is a retired cryptographer and mathematician with connections in the **American National Security Agency**. Cayce strikes a deal with him: she buys a **Curta calculator** for him and he finds the email address to which the watermark code was sent. Using this email address Cayce makes contact with **Stella Volkova** whose sister **Nora** is the maker of the film clips.

Cayce flies to Moscow to meet **Stella** in person and watch **Nora** work. **Nora** is brain damaged from an assassination attempt and can only express herself through film. At

her hotel, Cayce is intercepted and drugged by Dorotea and wakes up in a mysterious prison facility. Cayce escapes; exhausted, disoriented and lost, she nearly collapses as Parkaboy, who upon Cayce's request was flown to Moscow, retrieves her and brings her to the prison where the film is processed. There Hubertus, Stella and Nora's uncle Andrei, and the latter's security employees are waiting for her. Over dinner with Cayce, the Russians reveal that they have been spying on her since she posted to a discussion forum speculating that the clips may be controlled by the **Russian Mafia**. They had let her track the clips to expose any security breaches in their distribution network. The Russians surrender all the information they had collected on her father's disappearance and the book ends with Cayce coming to terms with his absence while in Paris with Parkaboy, whose real name is Peter Gilbert.

3.3.3 Characters

- **Cayce Pollard** – A 32-year-old woman who lives in New York City. She pronounces her given name “Case” although her parents named her after **Edgar Cayce**. She uses her interest in marketing trends and fads, and her psychological sensitivity to logos and advertising, in her work as an advertising consultant. Her sensitivity becomes a phobia towards older corporate mascots, especially the **Michelin Man**. She wears only black, gray or white, usually **Fruit of the Loom** shrunk cotton T-shirts (all tags removed) with Levis jeans (with the trademarks filed off the buttons) or skirts, tights, boots, as well as a **Buzz Rickson MA-1 bomber jacket**.
- **Hubertus Bigend** – The 35-year-old founder of advertising agency *Blue Ant*. He was born in Belgium but educated at a British **boarding school** and at Harvard University.
- **Dorotea Benedetti** – The representative of the graphic design company. She has a background in **industrial espionage** and is secretly hired to encourage Cayce to leave London without accepting Bigend's offer to track the film clips.
- **Bernard Stonestreet** – A representative of the advertising agency *Blue Ant*.
- **“Parkaboy”/Peter Gilbert** – Cayce's friend from the online discussion forum. He lives in **Chicago** and describes himself as a “middle-aged white guy since 1967”.
- **Boone Chu** – A Chinese-American living in **Washington State**, but raised in **Oklahoma**. He had a failed start-up company specializing in security. He is hired to assist Cayce in the search for the maker of the footage.

- **Voytek Biroshak** – A blond man born in **Poland** and raised in **Russia**. He acquires and sells antique calculators to raise funds for an exhibition on **Sinclair ZX81** computers.
- **Damien Pease** – A 30-year-old friend of Cayce whose flat she stays at while in London. He is a video director shooting a documentary on **WWII battle-ground** excavation near **Stalingrad**.
- **Hobbs Baranov** – A former **NSA cryptographer** and **mathematician**. He collects antique calculators and sells **intelligence** as he squats near **Poole** with a **Gypsy** group.
- **Ivy** – Creator of website, discussion group, and chatroom **Fetish:Footage:Forum** that Cayce frequents. The website's intention is to discuss the anonymous film postings.

3.3.4 Style and story elements

The novel uses a **third-person narrative** in the present tense with a somber tone reminiscent of a “low-level post-apocalypticism”.^[6] Cayce's memories of the **September 11, 2001 attacks**, which briefly use the future tense,^[7] are told by Gibson as “a **Benjaminian** seed of time”, as one reviewer calls it, because of the **monistic** and lyrical descriptions of Cayce's relationship to objects with the attacks in the background.^[8] Two **neologisms** appear in the novel: *gender-bait* and *mirror-world*. Gibson created the term *mirror-world* to acknowledge a locational-specific distinction in a manufactured object that emerged from a parallel development process, for example opposite-side driving or varied electrical outlets. *Gender-bait* refers to a male posing as a female online to elicit positive responses. The term *coolhunter*, not coined by Gibson but used in the marketing industry for several years, is used to describe Cayce's profession of identifying the roots of emerging trends.^{[9][10]}

The September 11, 2001 attacks are used as a **motif** representing a break with the past with Cayce's father, who disappears during the attacks, as the personification of the 20th century. Gibson viewed the attacks as a nodal point after which “nothing is really the same”.^[11] One reviewer commented that in “Gibson's view, 9-11 was the end of history; after it we are without a history, careening toward an unknown future without the benefit of a past—our lives before 9-11 are now irrelevant.”^[12] Cayce's search for her father and Damien's excavation of the German bomber symbolize the **historicist** search for a method to interpret people's actions in the past. Coming to terms with her father's disappearance may be interpreted as a requiem for those lost to the 20th century,^[11] something that may have been influenced by Gibson coming to terms with the loss of his own father.^[2]

The film clips are a motif used to enhance the theme of the desire to find meaning or detect patterns. They are

released over the internet and gain a cult following, in the same way that the *lonelygirl15* videoblog gained an international following in 2006.^[13] Corporate interest in the footage is aroused by its originality and global distribution methods. The characters debate whether the anonymous clips are part of a complete narrative or a work in progress, and when or where they were shot. This enigmatic nature of the footage is said to metaphorically represent the nature of the confusing and uncertain post-9/11 future.^[14] The author *Dennis Danvers* has remarked that the footage being edited down to a single frame is like the world compressed into a single novel.^[15] The footage, released freely to a global audience with a lack of time or place indicators, has also been contrasted to *Pattern Recognition* written under contract for a large corporation and which uses liminal name-dropping that definitively sets it in London, Tokyo, and Moscow in 2002.^[16]

3.3.5 Major themes

Pattern recognition

Parkaboy says you should go to new footage as though you've seen no previous footage at all, thereby momentarily escaping the film or films you've been assembling with, consciously or unconsciously, since first exposure. Homo sapiens are about pattern recognition, he says. Both a gift and a trap.

Cayce Pollard, *Pattern Recognition*, pages 22–23.

The central theme throughout the novel involves the natural human propensity to search for *meaning* with the constant risk of *apophenia*.^[17] Followers of the seemingly random clips seek connections and meaningfulness in them but are revealed to be victims of apophenia as the clips are just edited surveillance camera footage. Likewise, Cayce's mother turns to investigating *electronic voice phenomena* after Cayce's father disappears. Science fiction critic Thomas Wagner underscores the desire for meaning, or *pattern recognition*, using a comparison between the film clips and Cayce's search for her father after the attacks:

[T]he very randomness and ineffability of the clips flies in the face of our natural human tendency towards pattern recognition ... [T]he subculture that surrounds "following the footage" ... [is] an effective plot device for underscoring the novel's post-9/11 themes: to wit, the uncertainty of the fabric of day-to-day life people began to feel following that event ... [We] as people don't like uncertainty, don't like knowing that there's something we can't comprehend. And if we can't fit something into an existing pattern, then by golly we'll come up with one.^[18]

Within the marketing world, Cayce is portrayed not as an outside rebel, but rather a paragon of the system. Inescapably within the system, she seeks an *epistemological perspective* to objectively interpret patterns.^{[18][19]} The review in *The Village Voice* calls this search "a survival tactic within the context of no context—dowsing for meaning, and sometimes settling for the illusion of meaning".^[20]

Memory of history

The future is there ... looking back at us. Trying to make sense of the fiction we will have become. And from where they are, the past behind us will look nothing at all like the past we imagine behind us now. ... I only know that the one constant in history is change: The past changes. Our version of the past will interest the future about the extent we're interested in whatever past the Victorians believed in. It simply won't seem very relevant.

Cayce Pollard (echoing the views of Parkaboy), *Pattern Recognition*, page 59.

Using 20th-century relics, such as a *Curta calculator*, an excavated *Stuka*, Hobbs Baranov, and Voytek's planned *ZX81* show, Gibson raises the question of how a contemporary society views past societies. Gibson portrays the past century as dominated by conflict, suspicion, and espionage. Following the disappearance of Cayce's father, a designer of embassy security systems, on September 11, 2001, Cayce is left feeling "ungrieved" until she reviews footage and records of that day tracking his movements until he vanishes.^[21]

Following this line of thought Gibson raises the question of how the future will view today's society. The novel "adopts a postmodern *historicism*"^[16] perspective, through the arguments presented by Bigend, Cayce, and Parkaboy. Bigend and Cayce's view of history are compared to those of philosopher *Benedetto Croce* in that they believe history is open for interpretation when rewritten from the frame of reference of another society. Parkaboy rejects this view, believing that history can be an exact science.^[16]

Originality and monoculture

The book explores a tension between originality and monoculture by focusing on the artist's relationship with a commercialized world and its marketing of free art and consumer products.^[22] Critic Lisa Zeidner argues that the artist's "loyalty and love"^[22] involved with creating originality counters Bigend's assertion that everything is a reflection of something else and that the creative process no longer rests with the individual. Commercialism is portrayed as a monoculture that assimilates originality. The Tommy Hilfiger brand is used as an example, "simulacra

of simulacra of simulacra. A dilute tincture of Ralph Lauren, who had himself diluted the glory days of Brooks Brothers, who themselves had stepped on the product of Jermyn Street and Savile Row ... There must be some Tommy Hilfiger **event horizon**, beyond which it is impossible to be more derivative, more removed from the source, more devoid of soul.”^[23]

One critic points out that the marketing agency Blue Ant is named after the wasp **Blue Ant**: “it’s a wasp with a painful sting. The female hunts for a ground-dwelling cricket. She paralyzes it with a sting and lays her egg on it. The still living yet immobile cricket becomes food for the wasp’s young. What a clever metaphor for the process of targeting, commodifying, and marketing cool.”^[24] On the other hand, as **Rudy Rucker** notes, while new art is constantly threatened by commodification, it is dependent on the monoculture for its launching point and uniqueness.^[25] Gibson’s product positioning language and Cayce’s analysis of consumerist trends show that society is not a victim of consumerism, but rather its creator who helps shape it without ever stepping outside it.^[7] Alex Link argues that rather than a simple attack on consumerism outright, the novel outlines a complex inter-relationship between art, brand design, and terrorism as varying attitudes to history, terror, and community.^[26]

Branding, identity, and globalization

The novel’s language is viewed as rife with labeling and product placements.^[27] Postmodern theorist **Fredric Jameson** calls it “a kind of hyped-up name-dropping ... [where] an encyclopaedic familiarity with the fashions ... [creates] class status as a matter of knowing the score rather than of having money and power”.^[28] He also calls it “postmodern nominalism”^[28] in that the names express the new and fashionable.^[28] This name-dropping demonstrates how commercialism has created and named new objects and experiences and renamed (or re-created) some that already existed. This naming includes nationalities; there are eight references to nationality (or locality) in the first three pages. Zeidner wrote that the novel’s “new century is unsettlingly transitional making it difficult to maintain an individual identity”.^[22] One character argues that “there will soon be no national identity left ... [as] all experience [will be] reduced, by the spectral hand of marketing, to price-point variations on the same thing.”^[29] This is juxtaposed against the footage that contains no hints of time period or location.^[6] Globalization is represented by characters of varying nationalities, ease of international travel, portable instant communication, and commercial monoculture recognizable across international markets. As an example, Gibson writes how one ‘yes or no’ decision by Cayce on the logo will impact the lives of the people in remote places who will manufacture the logos and how it will infect their dreams.^[11]

3.3.6 Genre

[W]e have no idea, now, of who or what the inhabitants of our future might be. In that sense, we have no future. Not in the sense that our grandparents had a future, or thought they did. Fully imagined cultural futures were the luxury of another day, one in which ‘now’ was of some greater duration. For us, of course, things can change so abruptly, so violently, so profoundly, that futures like our grandparents’ have insufficient ‘now’ to stand on. We have no future because our present is too volatile. ... We have only risk management. The spinning of the given moment’s scenarios. Pattern recognition.

Hubertus Bigend, *Pattern Recognition*, pages 58–59.

While some reviewers regard the novel as a **thriller**,^[30] others see it as an example of post-millennial science fiction with stories set in the “technocultural future-present”.^{[6][31]} Some reviewers note that the novel furthers the post-millennial trend in science fiction of illustrating society’s inability to imagine a definitive future^[6] and the use of technologies once considered advanced or academic now commonplace within society and its vernacular.^[32] Gibson said that the only science fiction elements are “[t]he Footage and Cayce’s special talents” but that he “never bought that conceit that science fiction is about the future”.^[33] **Dennis Danvers** explained the use of science fiction as a narrative strategy:

[s]cience fiction, in effect, has become a narrative strategy, a way of approaching story, in which not only characters must be invented, but the world and its ways as well, without resorting to magic or the supernatural, where the fantasy folks work. A realist wrestling with the woes of the middle class can leave the world out of it by and large except for an occasional swipe at the shallowness of suburbia. A science fiction writer must invent the world where the story takes place, often from the ground up, a process usually called world-building. In other words, in a science fiction novel, the world itself is a distinctive and crucial character in the plot, without whom the story could not take place, whether it’s the world of *Dune* or *Neuromancer* or 1984. The world is the story as much as the story is in the world. Part of Gibson’s point ... is that we live in a time of such accelerated change and layered realities, that we’re all in that boat, like it or not. A novel set in the “real world” now has to answer the question, “Which one?”^[15]

These elements, and the use of the September 11, 2001 attacks as a breaking point from the past, led academics to label it a **postmodern novel**. The attacks mark the point where the ‘modern’, that is the 20th-century certainty in

society's advancement towards a better future, changed to the 'postmodern', that is the 21st-century uncertainty in which future will develop. Fredric Jameson finds Gibson using culture as the determinant of change for the first time with this novel, rather than technology. Jameson focuses on the novel's "postmodern nominalism" that uses brand names to refresh old objects and experiences.^[28]

In post-structural literary theory Cayce is compared with the main character, Oedipa Maas, of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* as detectives interpreting clues but with neither the character nor the reader knowing if there actually is a pattern to be found and, if there is one, whether it is real or conspiracy.^[19] Gibson's use of name-dropping brands to create a sense of "in-group style ... of those in the know" is traced back to Thomas Pynchon's 1963 novel *V*.^[28] Gibson's writing style is said to be similar to Raymond Chandler's detective stories^[30] and Alfred Hitchcock's thrillers that used MacGuffins (the identity of the maker of the footage, in this case) to drive the story.^[25] Gibson's social observations are influenced by the works of Naomi Klein and Malcolm Gladwell.^[34]

While markedly different from his previous writing, in that it is not set in an imaginary future with imaginary technologies, *Pattern Recognition* includes many of his previous elements, including impacts of technology shifts on society, Japanese computer experts and Russian mafia figures.^[35] In common with Gibson's previous work, Paul Di Filippo found the following in *Pattern Recognition*: "the close observation of the culture's bleeding edge; an analysis of the ways technology molds our every moment; the contrasting of boardroom with street; the impossibility and dire necessity of making art in the face of instant co-optation; the damaged loner facing the powers-that-be, for both principle and profit".^[36]

3.3.7 Reception

Pattern Recognition was released on February 3, 2003 as Gibson launched a 15-city tour.^[24] The novel was featured on the January 19 cover of *The New York Times Book Review*. In the American market it peaked at number four on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for hardcover fiction on February 23 and spent nine weeks on *USA Today*'s Top 150 Best-Selling Books peaking at number 34.^{[37][38]} In the Canadian market, the novel peaked at number three on *The Globe and Mail*'s best seller list on February 15 in the hardcover fiction category.^[39] The novel was shortlisted for the 2004 Arthur C. Clarke Award and the British Science Fiction Association Award.^{[40][41]}

Gibson's writing was positively received by science fiction writers Dennis Danvers, Candas Jane Dorsey, and Rudy Rucker.^{[15][25][42]} Rucker has written: "[w]ith a poet's touch, he tiles words into wonderful mosaics"^[25] and Danvers wrote that "no sentence has a subject if it can do without one".^[15] One critic found the prose to be

as "hard and compact as glacier ice"^[20] and another that it "gives us sharply observed small moments inscribed with crystalline clarity".^[32] Gibson's descriptions of interiors and of the built environments of Tokyo, Russia and London were singled out as impressive,^{[28][30][43]} and *The Village Voice*'s review remarked that "Gibson expertly replicates the biosphere of a discussion board: the coffee-shop intimacy, the fishbowl paranoia, the splintering factions, the inevitable flame war".^[20] Lisa Zeidner of *The New York Times Book Review* elaborated:

As usual, Gibson's prose is ... corpuscular, crenelated. His sentences slide from silk to steel, and take tonal joy rides from the ironic to the earnest. But he never gets lost in the language, as he sometimes has in the past. Structurally, this may be his most confident novel. The secondary characters and their subplots are more fully developed, right down to their personal e-mail styles. Without any metafictional grandstanding, Gibson nails the texture of Internet culture: how it feels to be close to someone you know only as a voice in a chat room, or to fret about someone spying on your browser's list of sites visited.^[22]

Filled with name-dropping of businesses and products, such as MUJI, Hotmail, iBook, Netscape, and G4, the language of the novel was judged by one critic to be "awkward in its effort to appear 'cool'" ^[44] while other critics have found it overdone and feared it would quickly date the novel.^{[18][36]} The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* review commented that the "constant, unadulterated 'hipster-technocrat, cyber-MTV' lingo [is] overdone and inappropriate"^[27] On the technology, Cory Doctorow found Gibson's use of watermarks and keystroke logging to be hollow and has noted that "Gibson is no technologist, he's an accomplished and insightful social critic ... and he treats these items from the real world as metaphor. But ... Gibson's metaphorical treatment of these technologies will date this very fine book".^[45]

Some critics found the plot to be a conventional "unravel-the-secret"^[18] and "woman on a quest"^[15] thriller.^[22] Toby Litt wrote that "[j]udged just as a thriller, *Pattern Recognition* takes too long to kickstart, gives its big secrets away before it should and never puts the heroine in believable peril".^[17] The conclusion, called "unnecessarily pat"^[46] by one critic, was compared by Litt with the "ultimate fantasy ending of 1980s movies – the heroine has lucked out without selling out, has kept her integrity but still ended up filthy rich."^[17] The review in the *Library Journal* called the novel a "melodrama of beset geekdom" that "may well reveal the emptiness at the core of Gibson's other fiction", but recommended it for all libraries due to the author's popularity.^[47]

3.3.8 Publication history



Book covers for the (top left to right) North American (paperback), British (hard cover), British (paperback), Dutch, French, (bottom left to right) Spanish, Portuguese, German, Japanese, and Polish releases

The hardcover edition, released in February 2003, was published by the Penguin Group imprint G. P. Putnam's Sons. Berkley Books published the trade paperback one year later, on February 3, 2004, and a mass market paperback in February 2005. In the UK the paperback was published by Penguin Books a year after its Viking Press imprint published the hardcover version. In 2004 it was published in French, Danish, Japanese, German, and Spanish. In 2005 the book was published in Russia. The translation made by Nikita Krasnikov was awarded as the best translation of the year.^[48]

Tantor Media published the 10.5-hour-long, unabridged audiobook on April 1, 2004 and re-released it on January 1, 2005. Voiced by Shelly Frasier, it was criticized by John Adams of *Locus* as being pleasant but with distracting dialects.^[49] The audiobook is available as a digital download from audible.com.

3.3.9 Adaptations

The digital radio station BBC 7 broadcast (now BBC Radio 4 Extra) an abridged version of the novel, voiced by Lorelei King, in five 30-minute episodes in February and October 2007.^[50] Post-punk band Sonic Youth included a track called "Pattern Recognition" on their 2004 album *Sonic Nurse* that opens with the lyric "I'm a cool hunter making you my way".^[51] A film adaptation was initiated in April 2004 with producer Steve Golin's production company Anonymous Content and the studio Warner Bros. Pictures hiring director Peter Weir.^[52] Screenwriters David Arata, D. B. Weiss, and Weir co-wrote the screenplay^[53] but in May 2007, Gibson commented on his personal blog that he believed Weir would not be proceeding with the project.^[54] In 2014 it was announced that Morten Tyldum had been attached to the project.

3.3.10 Footnotes

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3.3.11 External links

- William Gibson Books: *Pattern Recognition*; author's site
- PR-Otaku: Logging and annotating William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*
- Pattern Recognition* at the Internet Movie Database

- Buzz Rickson “Pattern Recognition” Black MA-1 Intermediate Flying Jacket
- Audio interview at CBC Bookclub – *Pattern Recognition* (1hr) from 2003: part one runs 16 min; part two runs 9 min; part three runs 17 min; part four runs 9 min
- Pattern Recognition at Worlds Without End
- William Gibson’s *Pattern Recognition: Jet-Lagged Intimations of the Present* by Jose Angel García Landa, *Social Science Research Network*

3.4 Cathy’s Book

Cathy’s Book: If Found Call (650) 266-8233 is a young adult novel with alternative reality game elements by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman, illustrated by Cathy Brigg. It was first published September 12, 2006 by Running Press.^[1] It includes an evidence packet filled with letters, phone numbers, pictures, and birth certificates, as well as doodles and notes written by Cathy in the page margins.

3.4.1 Synopsis

The book follows a teenage girl whose boyfriend has left her. Wanting to find out why, she follows clues with her best friend. These lead to various explanations.^[2]

In a framing device, young and artistic Cathy left the book for Emma, her best friend, so that the latter can use the clues provided and figure out where Cathy went. The story begins when Cathy is dumped by her boyfriend, Victor. The next morning she notices a strange mark on her arm, but sets it aside as a spider bite. She and Emma later determine that the mark on her arm is in fact a needle mark from a blood test Victor performed on Cathy. While trying to confront Victor about the blood test, she encounters various members of the mythical, immortal, Chinese *Eight Ancestors*, as well as adventure and mystery. It also includes phone numbers which readers can call in order to leave a message for Bianca, Cathy, Victor, Emma, and even Tsao’s business, Airwell Organisation.

3.4.2 Recognition

In November 2006, *Cathy’s Book* debuted at #7 on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for Children’s Books.^[3]

3.4.3 Following

Cathy’s Book has a following online of over 1,000 members

Readers/players discuss their theories online about where Cathy ends up after the book, where Victor is, whether

Cathy’s father is dead or alive, as well as many, many others. Though the book was aimed at an audience of teen girls, the following includes all ages and genders.

3.4.4 Advertising agreements

The book’s authors and publishers agreed to include references to the CoverGirl makeup line in exchange for advertising space on the BeingGirl web site.^[4] The references were deleted in the novel’s paperback version.^[5]

3.4.5 Sequels

Two sequels, *Cathy’s Key* (2008) and *Cathy’s Ring* (2009), have been published.

3.4.6 References

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3.4.7 External links

- <http://www.cathysbook.com/>
- <http://www.cathyskey.com/>
- <http://www.cathysring.com/>

3.5 Cathy’s Key

Cathy’s Key (2008) is a novel continuing the storyline established in the first part of its series, *Cathy’s Book* (2006). The story is written by Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman, and illustrated by Cathy Briggs.

As did its predecessor, the book takes the form of a 216-page journal written by the protagonist, Cathy Vickers. The book immediately picks up after book one of the

series concludes, and follows Cathy in her quest to discover more about the mysterious and dangerous world of the immortals. Although many of the same characters (Emma, Cathy's best friend, and Victor, Cathy's boyfriend) are involved in the plot, there are also new characters introduced that complicate the storyline. For instance, a stranger met on a bus trip has developed by the end of the book into a major character, and new relatives such as Tsao, Victor's father, appear in surprising and sometimes disturbing ways. At its most basic level, the plot involves Cathy attempting to navigate the treacherous world that the immortals inhabit while not imperiling herself or those she loves. Although high school graduation has come and passed and Cathy still doesn't have a job, she manages to keep busy by avoiding lovestruck immortals, trying to help her boyfriend discover the key to immortality, and in her free time delving into the mystery surrounding her father's death.^[1] Although the story ends in another dramatic cliffhanger that leaves much to be resolved, Cathy's saga continues in the third installation of the series, *Cathy's Ring* (2010).

3.5.1 Form

Cathy's Key follows the tradition established by its predecessor in presenting the story in a radically innovative way. Similar to a graphic novel, the text of the story is accompanied by hand-drawn images (created by illustrator *Cathy Briggs*), yet *Cathy's Key* also contains a cache of objects that are related to the plot. For instance, the "evidence package" in *Cathy's Book* contains artifacts such as a wedding invitation, a menu from a restaurant, various letters, a napkin, a death certificate, and four pieces of a ripped photo, among other items.^[2]

3.5.2 Scholarly criticism

The scholarly criticism for the text has tended to focus on its unique form and the opportunities that presents. For instance, Motoko Rich wrote an article in *The New York Times* entitled "Product Placement Deals Make Leap From Film to Books" (2006) that discussed how Stewart had incorporated a lip gloss made by *Cover Girl* in exchange for free advertising on their online website.^[3] Other writers view such a relationship as overly commercialized and effectively commodifying literature, and have written about the effect that this may have on impressionable teen readers and teen writers.^[4] Still more critics have positively focused on the text as adapting digital age characteristics to remain relevant in an increasingly technology-centered age. The term "dynamic hybrid" was coined to describe Stewart's multimedia (phone numbers, web addresses etc.) approach to literature,^[5] while other scholars see the possibility for the text to become associated with gaming networks. Indeed, some even go so far as to classify the work as an ARG, or alternate reality game.^[6]

3.5.3 Book reviews

The reviews for *Cathy's Key* praise the spunkiness of the heroine and its multi-media impact. However, a few readers critiqued the work as having a plot that sometimes seemed disorganized and hard to follow. The book is especially recommended for fans of manga, gaming followers, and reluctant readers, and is categorized within the YA or young adult section of libraries.^{[7][8]}

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Chapter 4

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4.1 Text

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Later, Beck162, Xionbox, Masem, MikeWazowski, Enter Movie, Cbrown1023, Schwenkstar, LessHeard vanU, Signinstranger, CBM, ShelfSkewed, Cydebot, J.D., Jainituos, Lugnuts, Ss112, Mathew5000, Epbr123, Nalvage, Zyrxil, Ravenchase, QuasyBoy, Klapi, Theo84, Leevclarke, Phil153, Andrzejbanas, Elizabennet, Dp76764, GavSalkeld, Allstarecho, Tjwells, JaGa, Hdt83, Lontano, RockMFR, Bongomatic, AVX, JEB215, Sallyrob, Lach Graham, 97198, AmbidextrousMatt, Brianarama, Davinci78, Thismightbezach, Idioma-bot, Vranak, L.A.Nutti, Pleasantville, Manish Modi, Lexein, Lear's Fool, Bovineboy2008, Lots42, Jobu0101, Corvus cornix, Feudonym, Lamro, NinjaRobotPirate, AlleborgoBot, Digital sextant, SieBot, Gzoek, 4frans4, Elcobbola, FrankRizzo2006, Eventhorizon55, Spinnerod, Doctorfluffy, Polbot, Scottkriz, Sirophix, Martarius, ClueBot, Binksternet, Candyhammer, All Hallow's Wraith, WaltBusterkeys, TinyMark, Ndenison, Jappalang, TheOldJacobite, Plumlogan, Trivialist, BlaQ PhoenixX, CowboySpartan, BOTarate, XLinkBot, Cliff1911, SilvoenenBot, PL290, Laszlo Vilsay, LeDiableBrun, Addbot, Roaring Siren, Burnsmyeyes, Darkness2005, Radosław10, Luckas-bot, Joho777, Zjc263, Amirobot, AnomieBOT, Xqbot, GrouchoBot, Drown Soda, Erik9bot, Mr. Comodor, Conrecserv, LtMuldoon, FriscoKnight, HRoestBot, RedBot, DReifGalaxyM31, Arbero, Dutchmonkey9000, SPNKs, Condorjoe, Grayssake, Mobyduck, EmausBot, Siddhartha90, Haon 2.0, MikeyTMNT, Marek Koudelka, Jahub, H3llBot, Polisher of Cobwebs, Plyingfig, TheREALCableGuy, Axelode, ClueBot NG, Osario-enwiki, Helpful Pixie Bot, BG19bot, Revan4000, ChrisGualtieri, EuroCarGT, ChaoDer01, Dexbot, Auss00, Greenbulldozer1999, حبرود, OccultZone, Vikram21mathur, Asher98, Grafpt, Ajwright2014, Nimrodpunk, Lawrence Jose Sinclair, JShanley98, SHERRAH5, KasparBot, GreenC bot and Anonymous: 204

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