Game Design

Dragon Age: Dreadwolf

CS 415: Game Development

Professor Eric Shaffer

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BioWare

- BioWare is a Canadian video game developer based in Edmonton, Alberta.
    - Founded by newly graduated medical doctors Ray Muzyka, Greg Zeschuk and Augustine Yip
    - Has offices in Austin Texas as well
- Since 2007, has been owned by American publisher Electronic Arts.
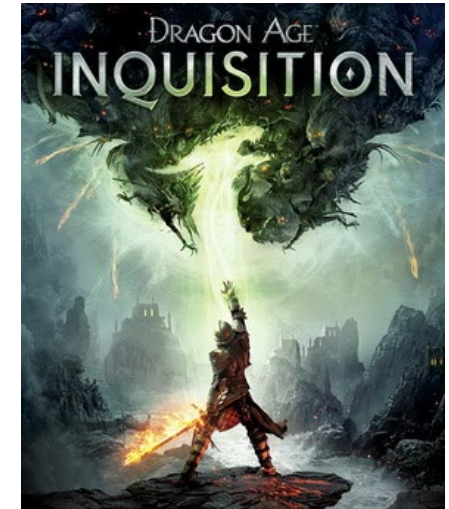- Specializes in role-playing games

1998

2003

2007

2011

2014

Developing Dragon Age: Dreadwolf

Features:
- Single player game
- Different art style
- New action combat system
- Big focus on narrative

Gamplay Influences:
- Star Ware Jedi: Fallen Order
- Last of Us

In development since…2017ish?

Hit Alpha in Oct. 2022

Alpha = fully playable game…but not finished product
- **More features and art still to be added**
- **Playtesting will result in changes**

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Developing Dragon Age: Dreadwolf

High staff turnover…long dev time

Lots of online criticism…people seem anxious to hate on the game

Found Bioware's blog from someone complaining about Bioware

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Game Design 101 Post

- **Systems Designers** work on a variety of features across the game, like skill trees and difficulty levels. Their goal is to create a vision for features that will directly impact the player's experience.

- **User Experience (UX) Designers**, collaboratively with systems designers, take the vision and explore how players will interact with it by creating mock-ups and early user flows.

- **Technical UX Designers** then build it in-engine, working with the systems and UX designers in a constant back-and-forth, keeping the player's experience and usability in mind at all times.

…and more

"There are *many* other kinds of designers, too!"

Gameplay designers focus on creating and balancing the moment-to-moment gameplay

Technical level designers create building blocks for level designers to map out player's journey through locations

Technical UI designers tailor how information is clearly surfaced to the player

Cinematic designers craft scenes for the best storytelling experience

Narrative designers make sure the story's flow of information to the player is a cohesive experience

Skill Trees

"**Skill Trees** are a fundamental part of a deep RPG experience and give our players the ability to customize how their character functions in combat. "
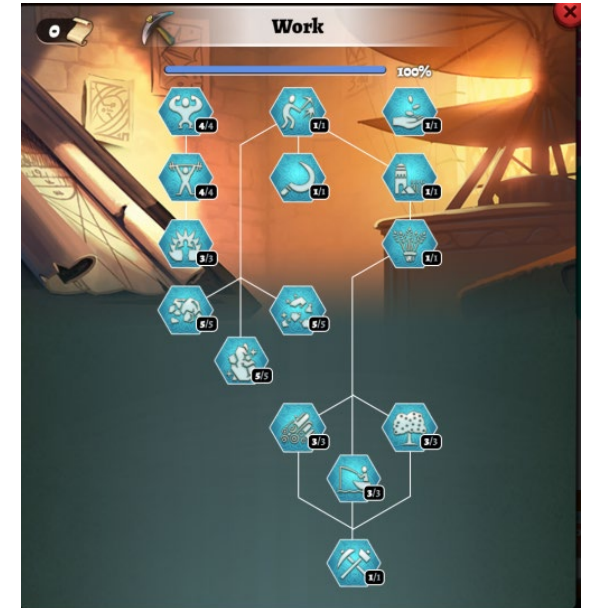
Progression system converts points to character power growth

Starts with a System Designer

Creates 1- page vision doc

Includes player statements and constraints

Lists goals and how the design accomplishes them

Skill Trees

Next: work with UX to prototype a design

Bioware Designer:

Luke, cont.: Once we have enough constraints and player statements together, then we (finally!) start building the design. This is where we start doing prototypes and work with UX to flesh out ideas to see how a design may feel, both as its own entity and how it works with the rest of the game.

Fun fact: I built a very early prototype in Excel for one of the ways we thought about solving the Problem Statements using a lot of buttons and scripting. (Important note: Designers aren't programmers! :))
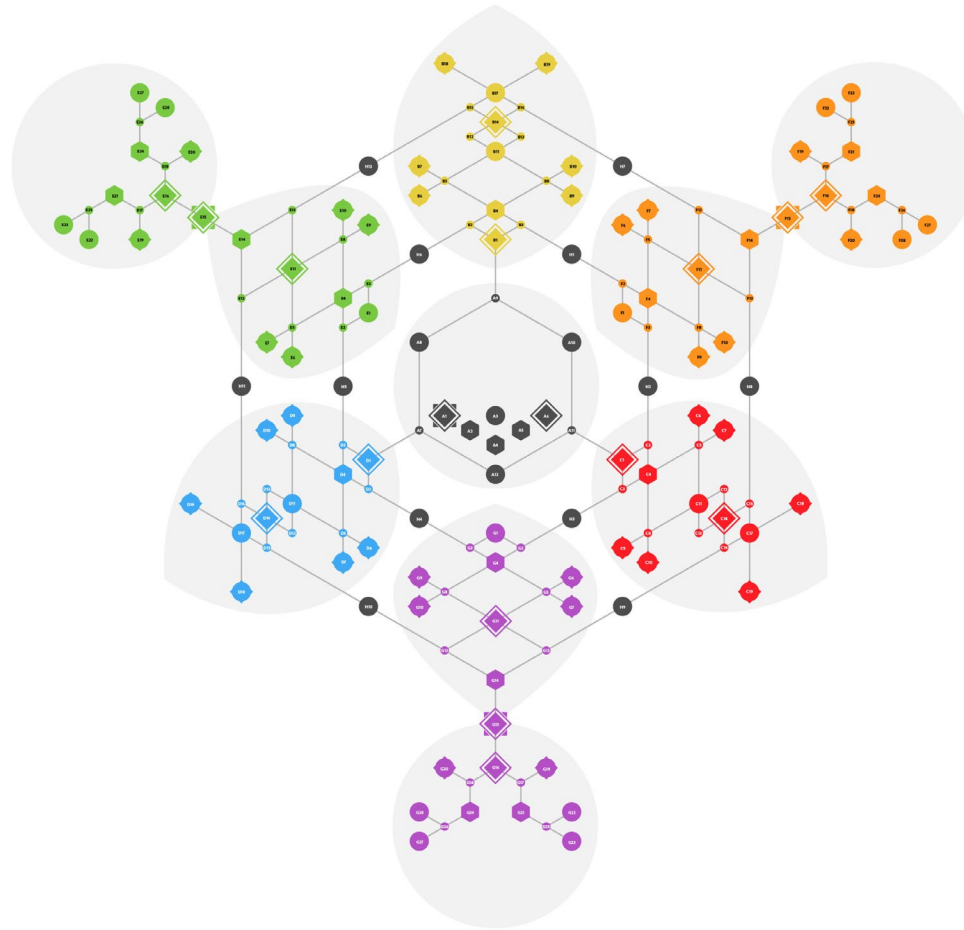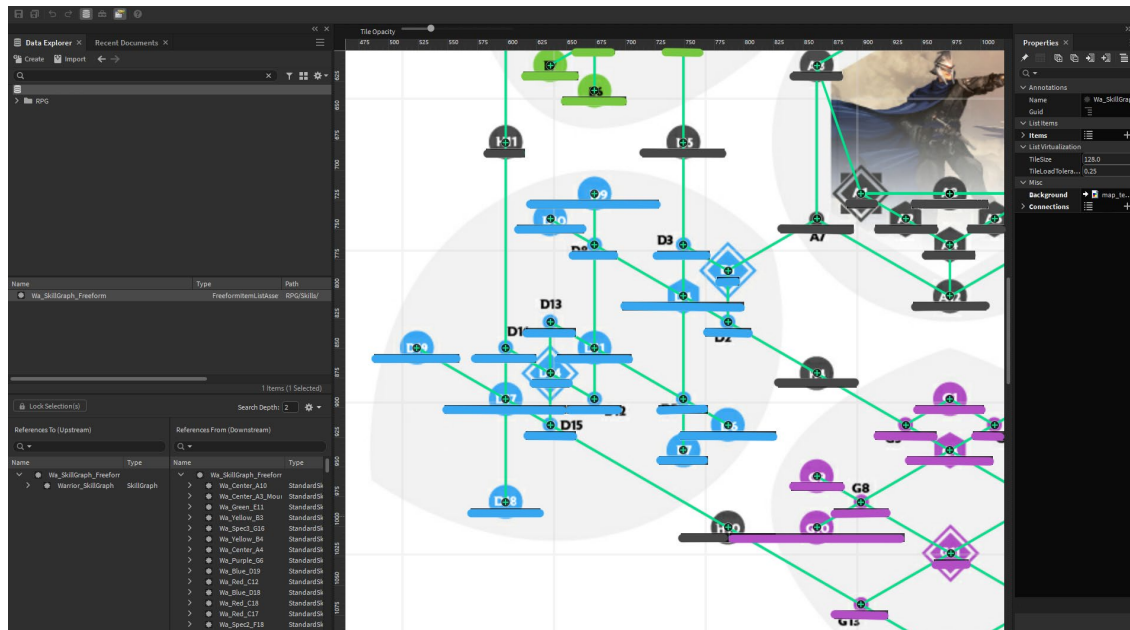
UX Design

- Approach design in from a player-experience perspective

- "Prototyping, iteration, research, and feedback shape the vision for how players will interact with the game—from in-world signs and how the player affects the world to user interfaces and interaction design."

- "We usually start with sketches, interactive wireframes, mock-ups, or in-game prototypes and validate them through testing and multiple rounds of feedback. At the end of the day, it's a process where the system informs the experience design, and the experience design helps shape the system."

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Actual Dreadwolf Skill Tree Prototype!

Technical UX Design

- "From there, another designer jumps in to take the vision and mock-ups and turn them into something tangible in the Frostbite engine."

"But the work doesn't stop once the feature is functional in-game. It's at this point that we can truly start to evaluate how it feels and how it reads to a player. Does the navigation work well? Is the information overwhelming or confusing? Designs change and iteration continues until we find the right balance between the designer's vision and the player experience."

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