

MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

THE ESSEX CONNECTION

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FAMILY TASTER DAY!

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INTRODUCTION

- SO WHAT ARE **MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES?**
- I GUESS THE **SMART** THING TO DO IS TO FIND OUT HOW MANY OF YOU ALREADY **KNOW**...
- SO, WHO HERE KNOWS WHAT A **MMORPG** IS?
- **JUST** AS I THOUGHT...

VIRTUAL WORLDS

- WE ACADEMICS CALL THESE THINGS **VIRTUAL WORLDS**
- **WORLD**: A SELF-CONTAINED ENVIRONMENT
- **VIRTUAL**:
 - **REAL**: THAT WHICH IS
 - **IMAGINARY**: THAT WHICH ISN'T
 - **VIRTUAL**: THAT WHICH ISN'T, HAVING THE **FORM OR EFFECT** OF THAT WHICH IS
- VIRTUAL WORLDS ARE PLACES WHERE THE **IMAGINARY** MEETS THE **REAL**
 - OK, SO THEY'RE ONLINE COMPUTER GAMES TOO...

WHAT ARE VWS?

- VIRTUAL WORLDS ARE **PLACES**
- BEING PLACES, THEY HAVE A NUMBER OF PLACE-LIKE **FEATURES**
 - YOU CAN **VISIT** THEM
 - **OTHER** PEOPLE CAN **ALSO** VISIT THEM
 - AT THE **SAME TIME**
- THEY ARE, HOWEVER, **NOT REAL**
- THIS SEEMS LIKE A MAJOR **DISADVANTAGE**
 - HOW DO YOU **VISIT** SOMEPLACE THAT **ISN'T REAL?**

ANSWER:

- YOU USE AN **AVATAR**



ABOUT AVATARS

- FAR FROM ITS BEING A **DISADVANTAGE**, PEOPLE OFTEN **LIKE** USING AN AVATAR



FURTHERMORE...

- SOME PEOPLE **PREFER** IT TO REALITY



INTERACTION

- THROUGH THEIR AVATARS, PLAYERS OFTEN ENJOY **INTERACTING WITH** EACH OTHER



HOWEVER

- THEY **DON'T** SO OFTEN ENJOY BEING **ACTED ON** BY EACH OTHER...



IN ADDITION

- MOST PLAYERS REGARD VIRTUAL WORLDS AS BEING BASICALLY **GAMES**



BUT OTHERS

- BUT OTHER PEOPLE JUST LIKE THE **THRILL** OF EXPLORING SOMEWHERE **NEW**



SOME THEORY

- WE CAN **PLOT** THESE BEHAVIOURS ON A **GRAPH**:

ACTING



PLAYERS

WORLD



INTERACTING

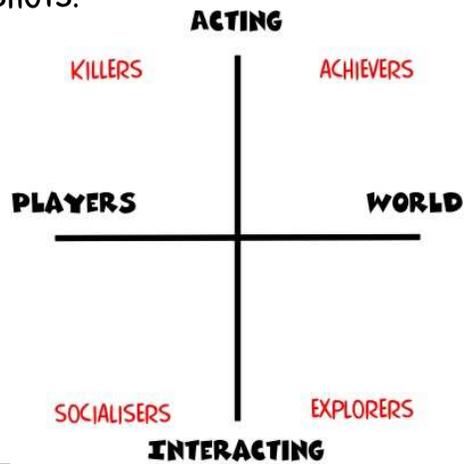
FURTHERMORE

- THIS DISTRIBUTION OF fun APPLIES ACROSS **ALL** VIRTUAL WORLDS



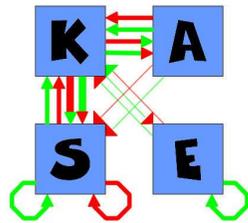
FORMALLY

- OR, IF YOU PREFER IT WITHOUT THE MINI-SCREENSHOTS:



MORE

- THIS **PLAYER TYPES** MODEL CAN BE USED TO HELP **DESIGN** VIRTUAL WORLDS
- DESIGNERS NEED TO ACCOMMODATE **ALL FOUR** TYPES TOGETHER BECAUSE THEY EXIST IN **BALANCE**
- IT TAKES AN ENTIRE 3RD-YEAR LECTURE TO EXPLAIN **WHY**, THOUGH...



VWS & ESSEX

- ESSEX UNIVERSITY HAS A **WORLD CLASS REPUTATION** FOR VIRTUAL WORLD RESEARCH
 - NEXT YEAR, WE'RE AIMING TO START THE FIRST UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN **ONLINE GAMES** ANYWHERE!
- SO **HOW COME?**
 - THERE ARE PLENTY OF **OTHER** KINDS OF COMPUTER GAME, WHY SPECIALISE IN **THIS** ONE?
- TO FIND OUT, WE NEED TO LOOK AT SOME **HISTORY...**

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

- **WORLD OF WARCRAFT, BLIZZARD, 2004:**



STATS

- **WORLD OF WARCRAFT HAS OVER 6,000,000 PLAYERS WORLDWIDE**
 - MORE THAN LIVE IN DENMARK, FINLAND, SLOVAKIA AND ABOUT 80 **OTHER** COUNTRIES...
- **PLAYERS PAY \$15 A MONTH TO PLAY**
 - \$13 IF BUY 6 MONTHS AT ONCE
 - SOMEWHAT **LESS** IN CHINA...
- **IT COST SOMETHING LIKE \$30M TO DEVELOP**
 - I'VE SEEN ESTIMATES BETWEEN \$25M AND \$70M
- **WOW IS BASED ON EVERQUEST**

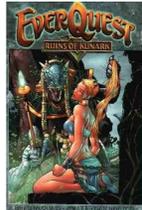
EVERQUEST

- *EVERQUEST*, SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT, 1999



STATS

- *EVERQUEST* HAS AROUND **300,000** SUBSCRIBERS
 - THAT'S STILL MORE PEOPLE THAN **ICELAND!**
 - IT HAD **480,000** AT ITS PEAK
- OVER **\$3,000,000** A MONTH IN SUBSCRIPTIONS
- SUPPORTS **ACTION FIGURES** AND **COMICS**



- *EQ* IS BASICALLY A GRAPHICAL *DIKUMUD*

DIKUMUD

• DIKUMUD, COPENHAGEN UNIVERSITY, 1990

lx2l A barrel has been left here.
An angry-looking statue of Hoturi is standing here.
An angry-looking statue of Priapus is standing here.
A statue of Odin is standing behind the altar.
A Sign for Newbies is here.
You are a guest here until you save yourself.

If you need
to get to your guild, use the guild medallion in your inventory. If you lose
it, pray to the statue of Odin for another.

105m/202e/38hlook
temple of Udgaard

You are inside the small and humble village temple in Udgaard. A simple
stone altar, with strange stone carvings, is placed against the north wall. A
small humble donation room is to the east. The temple exit is south to the
Village Square.

lx2l A barrel has been left here.
An angry-looking statue of Hoturi is standing here.
An angry-looking statue of Priapus is standing here.
A statue of Odin is standing behind the altar.
A Sign for Newbies is here.

105m/202e/38h

STATS

- IN 1994 (IMMEDIATELY PRE-WWW), **10%** OF **ALL** INTERNET TRAFFIC BELONGED TO **TEXTUAL** VIRTUAL WORLDS
- AT LEAST **20** OF THESE ARE **STILL WITH US**
- OVER **1,700** ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 - THE FIGURE HAS HELD STEADY FOR OVER A DECADE
 - MOST OF THESE ARE **FREE** TO PLAY
- SEVERAL **HUNDRED** ARE *DIKUS*
- *DIKUMUD* IS BASED ON *ABERMUD*

ABERMUD

- **ABERMUD, ALAN COX, 1987**

```
Your wimpy value is set to 15. See 'help change' to see what that means.

The Temple Of Paradise
  You stand in the Temple of Paradise, a huge sandstone structure whose
  walls are decorated with ancient carvings and runes, some so old that even
  the priests no longer know their meanings.
  A single set of steps lead south, descending the huge mound upon which the
  temple is built and ending in the forests below.
  A roaring fire burns here. Its flames make the temple sparkle and glitter.
  At your feet a huge sacrificial pit allows you to give valuables to the gods
  in the hope of being rewarded.
  A furled umbrella lies here.

Obvious exits are:
North : Welcome Center
South : Forest Track
Down  : Forest Track

Last login: Wed Sep  7 17:43:26 2005

>
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STATS

- **ABERMUD** WAS DEVELOPED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF (YOU GUESSED) ABERYSTWYTH
- IT SPREAD ACROSS THE NASCENT INTERNET **VERY** QUICKLY
 - BECAUSE IT WORKED ON ANY **UNIX** SYSTEM
- TODAY, ITS AUTHOR IS IN CHARGE OF **LINUX**
 - LINUS THORVALDS = KING
 - ALAN COX = PRIME MINISTER
- **ABERMUD** IS BASED ON *MUD*

MUD

- *MUD*, ROY TRUBSHAW & RICHARD BARTLE, 1978

Narrow road between lands.

You are stood on a narrow road between The Land and whence you came. To the north and south are the small foothills of a pair of majestic mountains, with a large wall running round. To the west the road continues, where in the distance you can see a thatched cottage opposite an ancient cemetery. The way out is to the east, where a shroud of mist covers the secret pass by which you entered The Land. It is raining.

*w

Narrow road.

You are on a narrow east-west road with a forest to the north and Gorse scrub to the south. It is raining. A splendid necklace lies on the ground.

*

STATS

- MUD ISN'T BASED ON **ANYTHING**
 - IT WAS THE **FIRST** VIRTUAL WORLD EVER!
- IT WAS DEVELOPED **HERE** AT ESSEX UNIVERSITY
 - ROY AND I WERE UNDERGRADUATES IN THE COMPUTER SCIENCE DEPARTMENT
- SO **THAT'S** WHY WE STUDY THEM HERE
 - THEY WERE **INVENTED** HERE!
- **NEXT** TIME YOU'RE IN *WOW* OR *RUNESCAPE* OR *SECOND LIFE* OR *FF XI*, YOU CAN SAY YOU'VE BEEN WHERE THEY **ALL BEGAN**

SUMMARY

- VIRTUAL WORLDS TODAY ARE WHERE **MOVIES** WERE IN ABOUT **1920**
- THERE IS **MUCH** MORE TO COME
 - THE POPULATION OF SOUTH KOREA IS 48,000,000, AND OVER 50% HAS PLAYED *LINEAGE* AT LEAST ONCE
 - VIRTUAL WORLDS ARE AFFECTING **VIEWING FIGURES** FOR **TV** PROGRAMMES IN AMERICA
- THEY'RE PLAYED BY PEOPLE OF ALL DEMOGRAPHICS
- AS THE POPULATION BECOMES MORE **GAME-SAVVY**, THESE WORLDS WILL BECOME EVEN **MORE** IMPORTANT

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- IT'S IMPORTANT TO STUDY THESE GAMES FOR *Social Science* REASONS
 - AND LAW, ARCHITECTURE, GEOGRAPHY, LITERATURE, ANTHROPOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA STUDIES REASONS – TO NAME BUT A **FEW**
- THAT'S **NOT** WHY **WE** STUDY THEM, THOUGH
- **WE** STUDY THEM SIMPLY BECAUSE WE WANT **BETTER** ONES!
- WHERE **ELSE** CAN YOU DO THAT?
- VIRTUAL WORLDS REALLY **IS** A *fun* SUBJECT!