UNPICKING THE GAMIFIR CALL FOR PAPERS

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GAMIFIR

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Once, I was at a conference on games and artificial intelligence. The keynote speaker began: “I know nothing about games – I don’t play them, I don’t like them.”

He continued: “However, I do know about AI, and I’ve been told some of this stuff may be of interest to you.”

Needless to say, he wasn’t exactly popular among the gamers present...
• I am **not** that man

• I am **worse** than that man

• Not only do I **not know** about information retrieval, I don’t know about **gamification** either

• I’m here because some of gamification’s **core principles** are based on my work with **games** (specifically MMOS)
  
  – That, and I’m **cheap**

• So, what can I **talk** about that will stop you wanting to **lynch** me?
• HERE'S A PICTURE OF A MCDONALD'S

• SADLY I DON'T GET ANY MONEY FOR ADVERTISING THEM...
As I don’t know about your specialisation, I thought I’d better find out
to do this, I looked at the call for papers for this conference
this was actually very informative!
it told me that you don’t know much about gamification either!
– or, indeed, games
I’m therefore going to unpick the CFP, as a way to figure out what central problems you have that need fixing
Gamification is the application of game mechanics, such as leader boards, badges or achievement points, in non-gaming environments with the aim to increase user engagement, data quality or cost effectiveness. A core aspect of gamification solutions is to infuse intrinsic motivations to participate by leveraging people’s natural desires for achievement and competition. While gamification, on the one hand, is emerging as the next big thing in industry, e.g., an effective way to generate business, on the other hand, it is also becoming a major research area. However, its adoption in Information Retrieval (IR) is still in its infancy, despite the wide ranging IR tasks that may benefit from gamification techniques. These include the manual annotation of documents for IR evaluation, the participation in user studies to study interactive IR challenges, or the shift from single-user search to social search, just to mention a few.
• OK, SO IT’S RATHER A LOT TO DO AT ONCE, SO I’LL GO THROUGH IT PIECE BY PIECE
  – RATHER FINICKILY, BUT I’M A PROGRAMMER...

• Gamification is

• IT IS NOW, IT DIDN’T USED TO BE

• IT USED TO MEAN MAKING THINGS THAT WEREN’T GAMES INTO GAMES
  – I HAVE EMAILS FROM 2002 USING IT IN THIS SENSE

• NOW, IT’S MAKING GAMES INTO THINGS THAT aren’t GAMES
  – YOU STOLE OUR WORD!
• the application of game mechanics, such as leader boards, badges or achievement points

• THOSE ARE NOT MECHANICS!
  - NO GAME DESIGNER WOULD CALL THOSE MECHANICS!

• MECHANICS ARE MOVING Parts
  - LIKE CODE, AS OPPOSED TO DATA

• GAMES ARE SYSTEMS COMPRISED OF INTERACTING, DYNAMIC PROCESSES

• INDIAN LOTTERY IS A MECHANIC

• BADGES ARE A TECHNIQUE OR TOKENS
The term “gaming” refers to **gambling**. Slot machines, roulette and betting on horses are examples of gaming.

- There are **gaming** laws overseen by **gaming** bodies that refer to these.
- They don’t refer to dungeons and dragons or grand theft auto 5.

That said, gaming lies on the border between game **rules** and real **laws**.

So this is an area of interest for you.
• environments

• Why the emphasis on non-game environments?

• These techniques can be used within game environments
  – Games can and do have leaderboards, both in-game and out-of-game

• You seem to want to use game-derived techniques for non-game purposes

• That doesn’t mean you can’t use them in games, though
Gamification seems to be being deliberately distanced from serious games – or games for a purpose, transformational games, whatever the in-vogue term is today...

Is this because gamification is different and distinct, or because serious games are passé?

You could argue that serious games form a mere subclass of gamification

Why is it you explicitly rule out using games, then? What does that buy you?
• **AIMS**

  • **with the aim**
  
  • **people use gamification for many other reasons, too**

  • **a lot of effort has gone into using it for marketing and team-building**

  • **getting a gold star at McDonald’s doesn’t make you more engaged, it makes you more respected**

  – at least by McDonald’s employees...

  • **you’re limiting your horizons by focusing on just a few key uses**
• Here’s an advert for Gibbs SR Toothpaste

• The **first** commercial to be broadcast on British TV
  – 8:12pm on September 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1955

• No, **they** don’t pay me either...
to increase user engagement, data quality or cost effectiveness.

FINE, BUT CONSIDER THEIR OPPONENTS TOO

EXAMPLE: IF I WANT TO LOSE WEIGHT, I’M ALREADY ENGAGED WITH THE SUBJECT

GAMIFICATION ALLOWS ME TO PREVENT THE LOSS OF THE ENGAGEMENT I ALREADY HAVE

COULD GAMIFICATION BE USED TO MITIGATE DETERIORATING DATA QUALITY?

I DON’T KNOW, BUT IF SO, IT’S NOT THE SAME AS INCREASING DATA QUALITY
A core aspect of gamification solutions

Unfortunately, it's the same core aspect for all applications

People are extremely good at pattern-matching

If they see your gamification, they'll notice it's the same as everyone else's

Problem: Your badges are worthless

- At least with shoe shop gamification, you can get discounts on shoes...
• **is to infuse intrinsic motivations to participate**

• **THERE ARE TWO RELEVANT INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS INVOLVED HERE**
  - **Fun** – They participate because they think they’ll enjoy it
  - **Worthiness** – They participate because the subject or outcome interests them

• **THIS IS GOOD, AS MOST COMMERCIAL GAMIFICATION USES NEITHER**
  - They use extrinsic motivations, *i.e.* bribery
by leveraging people’s natural desires for achievement

AHA! THIS IS WHERE I AM AN EXPERT!

ACHIEVEMENT IS A NATURAL DESIRE, BUT NOT FOR EVERYONE

IN MMOS, WE KNOW THERE ARE FOUR MAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE WHO PLAY FOR FUN
  – ACHIEVERS
  – SOCIALISERS
  – EXPLORERS
  – KILLERS
You need **all 4 types** for a healthy MMO – even killers!

If you concentrate **only** on achievers, you’ll get **nowhere**

Achievers **like** accomplishing tasks, but those tasks have to be **challenging**

They need to **believe** that tasks are **too challenging** for **some** people

Those people must **not care** if they fail – **socialisers** fit the bill perfectly
• and competition.

• PEOPLE LOVE COMPETITION IF THEY WIN

• IF THEY DON’T WIN, THEY HATE IT

• LEADERBOARDS ALWAYS HAVE THIS PROBLEM
  – “IMAGINE WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO BE NUMBER 1 OUT OF A MILLION PEOPLE!”
  – NO, IMAGINE WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE IF YOU’RE OUT OF THE TOP 100 AND HAVE NO CHANCE OF EVER BEING NUMBER 1...

• SOLUTION: PERIODICALLY CLEAR LEADERBOARDS OR PARTITION THEM
Next Big Thing

• While gamification, on the one hand, is emerging as the next big thing in industry,

• It’s a Bandwagon

• This kind of thing has been going on for decades, only now it has a label

• When I was at school, teachers gave out gold, silver and other-colour stars
  – Interestingly, missing the point that some kids who got gold were upset by it
  – They wanted the same colour as their friends...
• e.g., an effective way to generate business,

• This will be true **only** until gamification becomes **ubiquitous**

• Once it **does**, applications will have to be **creative** to work

• It's like **advertising**

• The **first** tv adverts could **double** sales

• After a while, they had much **less** of an impact because people got used to them

• Now, they have to be **different** to work
on the other hand, it is also becoming a major research area.

I don’t know about “major”, but it is indeed becoming a research area.

In many ways, it already is one, though!

Game designers have a technical term they use to describe the use of extrinsic methods to make people play “cheap psychological tricks”.

Gamification is, fundamentally, psychology.
GOOD NEWS

- However, its adoption in Information Retrieval (IR) is still in its infancy,
- THIS IS A VALID POINT
- INTERESTINGLY, THOUGH, IR IS AHEAD OF MOST OTHER FIELDS HERE
  - GAMIFICATION COULD BE APPLIED IN MANY OTHER AREAS, BUT PRACTITIONERS DON’T REALISE IT YET
- IT MAY BE THAT THERE’S SOMETHING ABOUT IR THAT MAKES IT PARTICULARLY SUITABLE
  - IT COULD BE WORTH WORKING OUT WHAT...
• despite the wide ranging IR tasks that may benefit from gamification techniques.

• I DON'T KNOW WHAT IR TASKS INVOLVE
  – EXCEPT THAT THEY INVOLVE PEOPLE, OTHERWISE THEY'D BE DATA-MINING TASKS

• I WOULD EXPECT THERE IS A LOT THAT CAN BE DONE WITH GAMIFICATION, THOUGH
  – AS INDEED THERE IS WITH GAMES

• MORE PEOPLE WILL TAKE UP GAMIFICATION IF THE PIONEERS – YOU! – SHOW ITS EFFICACY
These include the manual annotation of documents for IR evaluation, the participation in user studies to study interactive IR challenges, or the shift from single-user search to social search, just to mention a few.

OK, so the **rest of the CFP is giving examples of *existing* uses, so people can tell if their work will fit** — fair enough!

There **does** seem to be scope for a lot more here, so you’re in a **good** place
LESSONS

• SO WHAT HAVE I **LEARNED** FROM THIS EXERCISE?

• IR INVOLVES PEOPLE **DOING** THINGS THAT THEY MIGHT NEED **ENCOURAGEMENT** TO DO, SO **GAMIFICATION** **CAN** HELP FIX THAT

• IR IS **AHEAD** OF THE CURVE HERE
  - **POSSIBLY** BECAUSE IT HAS A **SYNERGY** WITH **GAMIFICATION** AT SOMNE LEVEL

• YOU CAN USE **GAMIFICATION** TO DO **MORE** THAN YOU’RE DOING WITH IT AT PRESENT
  - THERE IS **MUCH** AS-YET **UNDISCOVERED** TERRITORY
CONCLUSION

• I HAVE THESE FURTHER OBSERVATIONS...
• GAMIFICATION WILL LOSE EFFECTIVENESS WHEN EVERYONE DOES IT UNLESS YOU’RE CREATIVE
• THERE’S A DISTINCTION BETWEEN GAMIFICATION AND GAMES
  – YOU MAY FIND THAT FOR SOME APPLICATIONS YOU NEED A GAME, NOT GAMIFICATION
• GAMIFICATION IS A BRANCH OF PSYCHOLOGY, NOT GAME DESIGN
  – GAME DESIGNERS ARE ARTISTS, NOT MANIPULATORS
• THERE ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES HERE!