Game Development: First Steps

Topics in Game Development
Spring 2008
ECE 495/595; CS 491/591
Development phases

- Concept development
- Preproduction
- Prototyping
- Production

Alpha, Beta, and Gold
- Alpha: playable, even if some assets missing
- Beta: contains all assets; focus on working out bugs
- Gold: ready for release (“going gold”)

Major Creative Documents

- Concept doc (in book: “High Concept Doc” and “Game Treatment Doc”)
- Bibles (for characters, settings, puzzles)
- Flowcharts
- Concept art
- Storyboards
- Dialogue script
- The Design Document (called “game script doc in book”)
Other types of documents

- Technical specs
- Schedule of deliverables (milestones)
- Budget
- Marketing plan
- Test plan
First: The Concept Stage
(includes “Elaboration Stage” from book)

- Premise?
- Who is it for?
- Why entertaining?
- Genre
- Platform
- Player’s role
- Core gameplay
- Setting
The Premise: What is Game About?

- “Log line:” term from TV & movies
- Brief (1-3 sentences) summary of game
- What will hook players?
- Vivid, punchy, exciting
- Indicates characters
- Indicates major challenges
- Often written in 2nd person (“you”) – puts reader into the action
Game Premises:

- Halo
- Guitar Hero
- World of Warcraft
Target audience:  
Who Is Your Game For?

- Age group/generation
- Gender
- Type of gamer (hardcore? casual?)
- Income/education
- Special niche
Game Players – Latest Stats
(from Entertainment Software Association)

- Average age: 33
- 71% over 18!
- Women gamers: 38% of all gamers
What Ratings Are You Aiming For?

- Official ratings giving by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board
- Based on audience, subject matter
  - EC (early childhood) 3+
  - E (everyone) (6+)
  - E 10+ (ten and older)
  - T (13+) some violence, crude humor
  - M (17+) intense violence, graphic sex, gore
  - AO (18+) prolonged violence, graphic sex
  - RP (rating pending)
Most popular games by ratings (units sold)

- 49% received an E
- 32% received a T
- 15% received an M
Why Do People Play?

- To be entertained
- Experienced as fun, as play
- Enjoy challenges
- Act out fantasies
- Escape boring real life
- Adrenaline rush; catharsis
Why will people want to play your game???

- What will make it exciting?
- What will make it special?
- What will make it engaging?
What is the player’s role and goal?

- Who is the player in the game… what character does he/she play?

- What is the player trying to do… what is his/her overall objective?
What kinds of challenges will player face? (Core gameplay)

- Physical obstacles?
- A strong antagonist?
- A series of antagonists?
- Puzzles to solve?
Where will your game be set?

- What kind of world will it be… realistic? Fantasy? Sci-fi?
- What will the major location be?
- What will the time period be?
What is the Genre?

- Genre: a category of game with shared characteristics
- Many genres; no codified definitions
- Some are hybrids or too new to label
- Some major genres:
  - Action
  - Shooters
  - Strategy
  - Role-playing
  - Sports and driving
  - Adventure
  - Puzzle
Some other considerations…
Your Title

- Short
- May indicate type of game
- May indicate what game is about
The Purpose of the Game?

- Purely to entertain?
- Or does it have a pragmatic purpose as well?
- Possibilities:
  - Teaching, training
  - Information
  - Promotion, marketing, advertising
  - Recruiting
  - Community building
The Platform

- Type of hardware or venue game to be played on
- Major types:
  - Arcade
  - Game console
  - Computer
  - Online
  - Handheld
  - Cell phones
- Other types: kiosks, VR, theme park rides, hybrids
Most popular games by platform

Popularity varies by platform:

- **Game consoles**
  - Action: 30.1%
  - Sports: 17.3%

- **Computer games**:
  - Strategy: 30.8%
  - Family & Kids: 19.8%
In sum, the first things to work out are:

- Premise
- Purpose
- Target audience & rating
- Why people will play
- Genre and platform
- Role of player
- Types of challenges
- Setting