



# Interactive Media and Game Development

Frontiers 2008

Mark Claypool



## What Do You Think Goes Into Developing Games?

- Choose a game you're familiar with
- Assume you are inspired (or forced or paid) to re-engineer the game
- Take 1-2 minutes to write a list of the tasks required
  - Chronological or hierarchical, as you wish
- Trade write-ups with another student
- What do we have?





## Outline


- Background (next)
- Tutorial 1
- What is a Game?
- Genres
- Tutorial 2
- The Game Industry
- Game Timeline
- Team Sizes



## Professor Background (Who am I?)


- Dr. Mark Claypool (professor, "Mark")
  - Computer Science
  - Interactive Media and Game Development
- Research interests
  - Networks
  - Audio and Video over Internet
  - Network games





## Student Background (Who Are You?)

- Year
  - Junior, Senior, ...
- Interest:
  - Art or Programming or ...
- Computer Programming
  - (what's a program?) 1 to 5 (hacker!)
- Gamer
  - (casual) 1 to 5 (hard-core!)
- Built any games?
- *Favorite game?*
  - What type of game is it? Why is it fun?
- Other ...



## Course Materials

<http://www.cs.wpi.edu/~claypool/courses/frontiers-08/>

- Slides
  - On the Web
  - PPT and PDF
- Resources
  - Game creation toolkits, documentation, etc.





## Overall Course Structure

- 8:30-10:30
  - Technical/Design aspects of IMGD
    - 2d game, from "scratch"
- 10:30-12:30
  - Communication Workshops
- 1:30-3:30
  - Artistic/Design aspects of IMGD
    - 3d game, Unreal Tournament Mod
- 3:30-4:30
  - Lab



## Technical Course Structure (1 of 2)

- Start around 8:30
- Me: lecture + discussion for 15-30 minutes
- You: work for 30-60 minutes
- Repeat
- Probably more of me talking the first few days, more of you working last few
- During work, TA + Me circulate around for help





## Technical Course Structure (2 of 2)

- Topics
  - Game Design
    - What is a game, what makes it fun, how to design
  - Game Art
    - What is an animation, how to make sprites
  - Game Programming
    - No programming required!
- Use game development tool ... Game Maker
  - Game development environment



## Rough Timeline

- Days 1-5
  - Aspects of game development
- End of day 5
  - Idea for your own game
- Day 6-8
  - Work on game
- Day 10
  - Demo of game ("event")





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## Tutorial 1

- Work through "Devilishly Easy"
  - Sprites
  - Objects
  - Rooms
  - Events
- Catch the Clown





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## What is a Game? (1 of 3)

- Movie? (ask: why not?)
  - no *interaction*, outcome fixed
- Toy? (has interaction ... ask: why not?)
  - no *goal*, but still fun (players can develop own goals)
- Puzzle? (has goal + interaction ... ask: why not?)
  - strategy and outcome is the *same* each time

"A computer game is a software program in which one or more players make decisions through the control of game objects and resources, in pursuit of a goal."





## What is a Game (2 of 3)

- A Computer Game is a *Software Program*
  - Not a board game or sports
  - Consider: Chess vs. Soccer vs. Warcraft
    - Ask: What do you lose? What do you gain?
  - Lose: 1) *physical pieces*, 2) *social interaction*
  - Gain: 1) *real-time*, 2) *more immersive*, 3) *more complexity*
- A Computer Game involves *Players*
  - "No, Duh". But stress because *think* about audience. The game is not for *you* but for *them*.
  - Don't just think about your story or the graphics or the interface, but consider the *players*.
  - Ex: complicated flight simulator (say, you are a flying geek) but audience is beginner



## What is a Game (3 of 3)

- Playing a Game is About *Making Decisions*
  - Ex: what weapon to use, what resource to build
  - Can be frustrating if decision does not matter
  - Want good *gameplay* (next major topic)
- Playing a Game is About *Control*
  - Player wants to impact outcome
  - Uncontrolled sequences can still happen, but should be sparing and make logical
  - Ex: *Riven* uses train system between worlds
- A Game Needs a *Goal*
  - Ex: Defeat Ganandorf in Zelda  
  - Long games may have sub-goals
  - Ex: recover Triforce first, then Sword of Power
  - Without game goals, a player develops his/her own (a toy)







## What a Game is Not (1 of 2)

- *A bunch of cool features*
  - Necessary, but not sufficient
  - May even detract, if not careful, by concentrating on features not game
- *A lot of fancy graphics*
  - Games need graphics just as hit movie needs special effects ... but neither will save weak idea
  - Again, may detract
  - Game must work without fancy graphics
  - Suggestion: should be fun with simple objects

"When a designer is asked how his game is going to make a difference, I hope he ... talks about gameplay, fun and creativity - as opposed to an answer that simply focuses on how good it looks" - Sid Meier  
(*Civilizations, Railroad Tycoon, Pirates*)



## What a Game is Not (2 of 2)

- *A series of puzzles*
  - Most games have them
  - But not gameplay in themselves
  - Puzzles are specific, game systems spawn more generic problems
- *An intriguing story*
  - Good story encourages immersion
  - But will mean nothing without gameplay
  - Example: Baldur's Gate, linear story. Going wrong way gets you killed. But not interactive. Interaction in world all leads to same end.



## Games are Not Everything

- Most important ... *is it fun, compelling, engaging?*
  - And these come from a superset of games
- Computers are good at interactivity
  - Allow for interactive fun
  - *Interactive Media and Game Development* 😊



## Discussion

- What are some examples of interactivity that is fun but not a game?
  - *SimCity* - very compelling, but mostly no goals. More of a toy than a game, but still fun.
- What are some examples of fun graphics and video that are not interactive?
  - *Grim Fandango* - good visuals, story, etc. But need to do puzzles to proceed. Could have skipped to just watch story. Would still have been *fun* without the gameplay.





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## Game Types/Genres

- What are some types of games?
  - Provide examples
- What separates them from others?





## Arcade Games

- Reaction speed are the most important aspect of the game
  - Examples: scrolling shooters, maze games like *Pacman*, paddle games like *Breakout*, *Pong*
- Relatively easy to make
- Normally 2-d graphics
- Good starting point for first game



## Puzzle Games

- Clever thinking is the most important aspect
- Ex: Many maze games are actually more based on puzzle solving rather than on reaction speed
- Other examples include board games and sliding puzzles
- Normally 2-dimensional
- Relatively easy to create
  - Except when played against a computer opponent
  - Artificial Intelligence can be harder
    - Ex: How to program the computer to play chess?





## Role Playing Games

- Steer a character through a difficult world
  - Examples are *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate*
- Development of character to learn new skills, becoming more powerful, and finding additional and better weapons
- Opponents become more powerful as well
- Can create 2-d or 3-d
- Generally harder to make because must create the mechanism of character development
- Also normally need large world
- Good level design is crucial



## Strategy Games

- Real-time (RTS) or turn-based
- Player only indirectly controls the character
  - Tactics less important than Strategy
- Examples include *Age of Empires*, *Warcraft III...*
  - Also, usually "God Games", such as *B&W*
- Generally take a lot of time to create
  - Require many different game objects, each with animated images and specific behavior





## Adventure Games

- Game is about adventure and exploration
  - Story line is rather crucial
- Can be 2-d or 3-d
- Actions easy (just move)
- Difficulty is in making exploration/adventure interesting
  - Interesting, funny, and surprising story line
  - Corresponding artwork
- Artists role crucial



## First-Person Shooters

- 3-d version of many arcade-style games (move and shoot)
- Emphasis is on fast-paced action and reaction speed, not on cleverness and puzzle solving
- Many examples: *Doom, Quake, ...*
- Need to be 3-d
- Relatively difficult to create because of models





## Third-Person Action

- Player directly controls a game character (avatar) through a hostile world
  - Ex: *Tomb Raider*
- Not much emphasis on character development
- Fast action and discovering the game world
- Some have story line, other adventure game aspects
- Can be 2-d or 3-d
- Can sometimes be created easily



## Sports Games

- Real-life sport, made virtual
- Ideas, rules in place
- Making realistic, challenging, fun like sport can be difficult





## Racing Games

- Drive a vehicle, as fast as possible or sometimes for exploration or combat
- Special type of sport game
- Either realistic (ex: *Formula 1*) or focused on fun aspects (*Midtown Madness*)
- Both 2-d or 3-d



## Party Games

- Variety of types
  - Ex: Mario Party, DDR, Karaoke
- Social aspects important with participants in the same space
- Allow for rapid change of turns
- Allow for disparate abilities (beginners and experts, both have fun)







## Simulators

- Try for realistic representation
  - Ex: flight simulators
- Other simulations include world simulation
  - Ex: *simCity* or *simEarth*
- Relatively difficult to create since getting details right a challenge



## Educational Games

- Games are great at teaching ... how to play the game!
- Educational games are designed to teach player knowledge or skill that is valuable outside the game
  - Ex: math, reading, problem solving





## Game Maker

- Can make most any game, but best for:
  - Arcade games
  - Puzzle games
  - 2D
- Given time:
  - Think small, but expand if time
  - Few levels (show core idea)
  - Have *playable* game early
- Can be Party, or Educational, or ...



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## Tutorial 2

- (Making a button in *Game Maker*)
- Make a game from scratch (Pong)
  - Draw graphics (simple) using built-in editor



## The Game Industry

- 60% of all Americans play video games
  - 35% of Americans rated playing computer and video games as *the most fun entertainment activity* for the third consecutive year
  - Over 50% for young people
- Computer/video game industry on par with box office sales of the movie industry
  - \$7-8 Billion/year for U.S. Sales
- Development
  - Costs \$3M to \$10M to develop average game
  - Takes 12-24 months





## Game Studios - Vertical Structure

- Developers
- Publishers
- (Distributors)
- Retailers
  
- Much like a mini-Hollywood



## Developers

- What are some game development studios you know?





## Developers

- *Design and implement games*
  - Including: programming, art, sound effects, and music
  - Historically, small groups
  - Analogous to book authors
- Structure varies
  - May exist as part of a Publisher
  - May be "full-service" developers or may outsource some
    - Motion Capture (to replicate realistic movement)
    - Art and Animation (can be done by art house/studio)
- Many started on PC games (console development harder to break into)
- Typically work for royalties & funded by advances
  - Do not have the capital, distribution channels, or marketing resources to publish their games
  - May seem that developers don't get fair share of profits
  - Can be unstable



## Publishers

- What are some game publishing companies you know?





## Publishers

- *Fund development of games*
  - Including: manufacturing, marketing/PR, distribution, and customer support
- Publishers assume most of the risk, but they also take most of the profits
- Relationship to developers
  - Star Developers can often "bully" Publishers, because publishers are desperate for content
  - Most Developers are at the mercy of the almighty Publisher
- Originally grew out of developers
- Massive consolidation in recent years
- Most also develop games in-house



## Retailers

- What are some game retailers you know?



## Retailers

- *Sell software*
- Started with mail-order and computer specialty stores
- Shift in 80's to game specialty stores, especially chains (today about 25%)
  - *EB Games, GameStop*
- Shift in 90's to mass market retailers (Today 70%) (ask)
  - *Target, WalMart, Best Buy*
- Retailers generally earn 30% margin on a \$50 game
- Electronic download of games via Internet still in infancy
  - Big but not huge (today about 5%)



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## Game Development Timeline (1 of 5)

- Inspiration
  - getting the global idea of the game
  - duration: 1 month (for a professional game)
  - result: treatment document, decision to continue
- Conceptualization
  - preparing the "complete" design of the game
  - duration: 3 months
  - result: complete design document
  - (continued next slide)



## Concept

Define Game Concept

Define Core Game Features

Find/Assign Developer

Estimate Budget & Due Date



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI





## Concept: Van Helsing (1 of 4)



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI



## Concept: Van Helsing (2 of 4)



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI





## Concept: Van Helsing (3 of 4)

(Van Helsing  
Pre-Production)

Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI



## Concept: Van Helsing (4 of 4)

(Van Helsing  
Finished  
Concept)

Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI



## Game Development Timeline (2 of 5)

- Prototypes
  - Build prototypes as proof of concept
    - Can take 2-3 months (or more)
    - Typically done a few months in
  - In particular to test game play
  - Throw them away afterwards
  - Pitch to Publisher
- (Continued next slide)



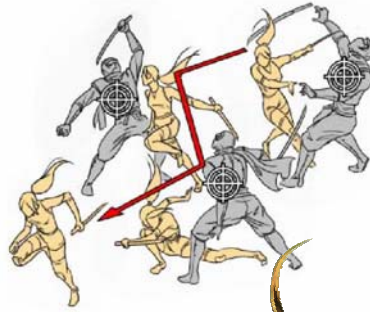
## Prototype or 1st Playable

- [ GDD & TDD = "The Bibles"
- [ Production Budget & Detailed Schedule
- [ Submit Concept to Sony, etc.
- [ Working Prototype, with Game Mechanics
- [ Focus Test



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI

## Prototype: Red Ninja (1 of 3)



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI

## Prototype: Red Ninja (2 of 3)

(Red Ninja  
Pre-  
Production)

Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI





## Prototype: Red Ninja (3 of 3)

(Red Ninja  
Final  
Production)

Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI



## Game Development Timeline (3 of 5)

- Blueprint
  - separate the project into different tiers
  - duration: 2 months
  - result: several mini-specification
- Architecture
  - creating a technical design that specifies tools and technology used
  - duration: 2 months
  - result: full technical specification





## Game Development Timeline (4 of 5)

- Tool building
  - create a number of (preferably reusable) tools, like 3D graphics engine, level builder, or unit builder
  - duration: 4 months
  - result: set of functionally tools (maybe not yet feature complete)
- Assembly
  - create the game based on the design document using the tools; update design document and tools as required (consulting the lead designer)
  - duration: 12 months
  - result: the complete game software and toolset



## Other Development Milestones: Alpha Definition

- At Alpha stage, a game should:
  - Have all of the required features of the design implemented, but not necessarily working correctly
  - Be tested thoroughly by QA to eliminate any critical gameplay flaws
  - Still likely contain a certain amount of placeholder assets
  - (Continued next slide)



## Alpha Definition

- [ Feature Complete
- [ "Localization"  
Begins
- [ Focus Test
- [ Play Testing
- [ Marketing  
Continues



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI

## Alpha: Crash Bandicoot (1 of 2)



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI





## Alpha: Crash Bandicoot (2 of 2)

(Crash Bandicoot)



## Game Development Timeline (5 of 5)

- Level design
  - create the levels for the game
  - duration: 4 months
  - result: finished game with all levels, in-game tutorials, manuals
- Review
  - testing the code, the gameplay, and the levels
  - duration: 3 months (partially overlapping level design)
  - result: the gold master





## Other Development Milestones: Beta Definition

- At Beta stage, a game should:
  - Have all content complete
  - Be tested thoroughly for bugs and gameplay tweaks
  - Be shown to press for preview features
  - (Continued next slide)



## Stages of Development: Beta

- Polish, Polish, Polish
- Game Balancing
- Localization Continues
- Demo Versions



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI

## Other Development Milestones: Gold Master Definition

- At Gold Master stage, a game should:
  - Be sent to the platform holder/s (where applicable) for TRC testing
  - Be sent to press for review
  - Be sent to duplication for production
  - Be backed up and stored
  - (Continued next slide)



## Final/GMC/Gold

- [ The Game is "Done"
- [ Testing, Testing, Testing
- [ Intense Pressure
- [ Submit to Console developers
- [ Manufacturing Timing



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI

## Post-Mortem

- [ Analysis of PR, Marketing
- [ Analysis of Production, Source Code
- [ Archive All Assets
- [ What went **right**, what went **wrong**
- [ Kick-off the Sequel!



Based on notes from Neal Robison, ATI



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## Development Team Size

- As late as the mid-80's teams as small as one person.
- Today, teams today ranging from 10-60 people.
- Programming now a proportionally smaller part of any project
- Artistic content creation proportionally larger
- See Gamasutra, ([www.gamasutra.com](http://www.gamasutra.com))
  - Search for "post mortem"
  - Game data at bottom includes team size and composition

Laird and Jamin, EECS 494, Umich, Fall 2003



## Development Team 1988

- Sublogic's *JET* (early flight sim)
  - Sublogic later made scenery files for Microsoft flight simulator
- 3 Programmers
- 1 Part-Time Artist
- 1 Tester

Total: 5



Laird and Jamin, EECS 494, Umich, Fall 2003



## Development Team 1995

- Interplay's *Descent*
  - Used 3d polygon engine, not 2d sprites
- 6 Programmers
- 1 Artist
- 2 Level Designers
- 1 Sound Designer
- Off-site Musicians

Total: 11



Laird and Jamin, EECS 494, Umich, Fall 2003



## Development Team 2002

- THQ's *AlterEcho*
- 1 Executive Producer
- 1 Producer
- 4 Programmers
- 2 Game Designers
- 1 Writer
- 3 Level Designers
- 3 Character Modelers and Animators
- 1 2d and Texture Artist
- 1 Audio Designer
- 1 Cinematic Animator
- 1 QA Lead and Testers

Total: 19+



Laird and Jamin, EECS 494, Umich, Fall 2003



## Development Teams for Online Games

- Star Wars online (2003?)
- Development team: 44 people
  - 50% Artists
  - 25% Designers
  - 25% Programmers
- 3 Producers
- "Live" Team (starting at Beta, 6 months before done)
  - 8 Developers
  - 50-60 Customer support (for 200K users)
  - 1000 Volunteer staff (for 200K users)

Laird and Jamin, EECS 494, Umich, Fall 2003



## A (Larger) Developer Company Today

- Designing and creating computer games is serious business
  - Large budgets (\$1 million+)
  - Large number of people involved
  - Large risk
- Wisdom
  - Use modern software development techniques
  - Keep creativity where it belongs
    - In the design
    - Not during the programming

