

What did the Bates reading elucidate?

Chapter 3 is useful because even industry people who make games disagree on their categories. Bates, Steve Meretzky and Warren Spector all qualify as major designers. The most vociferous comments were by Warren Spector. This is useful for you to see because it is difficult to categorize some games. Warren's concerns are instructive—don't get crazed about all the genres and subgenres. Your appreciation and approach can be much more organic from the standpoint of growing from within and between genres. Everybody who makes games looks at what other people are doing. In academia, plagiarism is *verboten*. In games plagiarism is a form of flattery.

Some of the student papers' descriptions dealt with the same thing. Students made comparisons to other games to explain their own. That is completely understandable. Chapter 3 was assigned mainly to expose you to the nomenclature of various categories and types of games.

Game Interface

Bates says that the best interface is when the player is unaware that there is an interface. When you build something, there are a variety of things that go into a game, which to a certain extent, only the game creator knows. There is no real way to communicate that to another person. Someone walks in and says your game looks a lot like another game. You as the developer know that it isn't like another game because you know its intricacies, but to the uninitiated the game may well remind them of another one. Unless you have created an entirely new genre, that is to be expected.

The interface of the simplest game, take an FPS for instance, what goes into that? In design you have to choose from the start whether you want it first or third person. Some people are very good at seeing things in one dimension and knowing where they are spatially. Other people may need to see the behind view to make sense of the environment. Think of the art, speed, terrain, camera and engine requirements that you will need to realize your vision. The world order is changed when you are looking behind the protagonist. You will probably need to constrain your world, lest the engine show its limitations. Yet any "herding" will need to be subtle because you can't have people seeing things too early but you don't want them to see the horizon building either. All these things need to be balanced to maintain the "suspension of disbelief". There also has to be a sense of pacing. You will need to consider allowing other people or games to help or influence you (or not), and then to look at all the necessary components to understand their interaction and effect.

All of these things have to be looked at by the designer in a top down manner. You have to look at all the trade offs from the start. Feature creep may set in and that is dangerous because it is always very tempting to put in everything instead of making hard choices and then having the fortitude to leave well enough alone. For example, you want the

design of the interface to be cool. But you also want the interface to do everything: spectacular lighting and reflections, infinite horizon, millions of colors (just for the buttons, etc.!) The game requirements start getting huge. Why do we do it? Because it's there! Because it's your game. This is the danger in building everything from scratch starting with your own interface. Just remember that the player doesn't know you, doesn't care about you, and doesn't want to know all this extraneous information. They don't want to know about the levels of complexity. If you do your job really well, they won't realize all the levels of complexity you carefully crafted. They will just come out of a game saying, "that was really cool." That's if you do it right. If you don't, however, you will be listed as having the intelligence of a newt.

What do you really need for an FPS interface?

- Ability to move around
- Look around
- Shoot
- Jump
- Ammunition
- Switch your weapons

When we talk about interface and these other things, you have to think about how you're going to develop it and how it will look to the user. Too much knowledge is a bad thing sometimes engineers tend to think that users will instinctively know what went into their tradeoff decisions. The truth is users don't and they don't want to know. It is akin to watching TV and wanting to know the physics behind how the signals got into the box. People are interested in the programs, not the science. Same thing with games.

The professor received a whole bunch of emails like, "I'm worried I need more time." Papers don't have to be handed in today. Over the next week, things need to be added to the website. Next week we'll vote on initial concept projects.

Think about two things, how good an idea is it? It isn't required for the idea to be completely novel. Putting a spin on an existing idea to make it better is fine. Once you're past the "how cool is it" gate, you have to do a "forensic" examination. How much gaming time does this have over 8 weeks? Does this have staying power? Look at *Good Will Hunting*. Damon and Affleck wrote a screenplay that was very subtle and somewhat complicated, but it was told really, really well to make the story threads clear. We're going to amplify upon this idea to make your project concepts have that power.

One of the reasons we haven't gone into how to make a pitch is because we need to see what you need to work on and then we'll talk about it. Most students know how to pitch an idea in general, but this type is a little more complicated.

Student Pitches

Students have 3 minutes to pitch their idea.

Alec

“Atonement”

Action RPG. Player controls a soldier. There are two levels of gameplay. When you enter a new area of the town, you have a flashback sequence of when the town was looted. You play thru that sequence and that has an effect on the town in the present. Take a crossroads for instance, if you kill a person at two ends of the streets, you’ll have ghosts there in the present town. This influences gameplay by, you massacre 8 people in an intersection of two streets, and you’ll have a hard time getting thru that intersection in the present day.

Doris

“Kafka Revisited”

The high concept is emancipating Josef K. Question the rules. It is an adventure game. There’s an additional feature, alternate reality gaming elements. This game has transmedia possibilities in cell phones, websites, etc. Josef K’s home and workplace is the settings. Things will look twisted and similar to MC Escher. Your lawyer is the key figure and hidden antagonist. At first you think he’s on your side, but he actually isn’t. Josef K wakes up one morning and he has been charged with a crime that he doesn’t know much about. The idea isn’t completely original; this game is a spin off.

Geoffrey

“Goldworld”

There’s this idea that all cities are built online these electric lines. What if the seven biggest cities in the world vanished. Through these perfectly smooth and round tunnels. These teams to look for these cities found these molten rivers of gold. What if these ancient people were responsible for the vanishing of the cities? It’s like world of Warcraft but without people stabbing you in the back. The adventure of Tomb Raider. You should be able to talk some with your friends while they explore other cities. He wanted to incorporate the community feel of Warcraft but get the storytelling to the forefront. Play for honor, revenge, or profit. You can pick a military team to kill, a bounty hunting team to collect as much gold as possible, or revenge where a regular guy’s family disappeared down the tunnel and he wants to find them. If you get to the end of the game, you should theoretically find out why the cities disappeared.

“Epok”

The earth 30 years down the road, there are certain people like some people have populated the moon, but there are deep divides. There are people living under the water, in the mountains, under the ground, on the moon. They’re all escaping the nuclear fallout. You as the protagonist will choose where you’ll be. You get to decide who you talk to but there’s a theme of “you’re not happy with where you are.” You make inroads with people. Because of the radiation, the people have mutated. The underwater people have developed fins, etc. There really isn’t an end. This has elements of adventure, RPG.

Albert

“Kampai”

World simulator as in you're the head of a nation and are in control of the economic, political, and military arenas. It's kind of like Lords of the Realms. There will be actual event type things instead of wars between nations. There might be a political backlash to a war. There will be newsflashes talking about the events.

Unknown Student

“Bazaar”

It's a metagame and there are games with economics. You can trade your artifacts or things you've won. You trade out the things you won in one game out for another something so that you can go into another game with some power.

Dana

“zeph town”

The game will be based in the late 60s early 70s. You're basically walking thru an area and talking to people. Sometimes they tell you pop culture, and sometimes you collect money. You'll buy concert tickets, music. The point is to buy as much as possible and find clues to get to the magic disco. You'll need the password and location to get in.

Dan

“Un-Earth”

Online 3D game that's similar to the World of Warcraft. People interact with each other and teach each other the language. There's a voice component. They'll speak and type to each other. This is aimed more towards language self learners. This is an intermediate to advanced language learning game.

Dave

“Wargate”

Mass multiplayer RTS. Servers of 100 people, 50 people each team. They assign big armies to fight some place. The goal is to make the battles matter. Players will be rated once their done fighting.

Dante

“Exalted, Prince of the Earth”

Based off “Exalted.” High fantasy, action RPG. The objective is how over the top and powerful you can make your character. “You're fighting 100 guys and that's too much so you pick up a house to crush 20 of them.”

Ash

“dream walkers”

When you dream, you're kind of stuck. There are these people that can walk between dreams and there's this thing called the nexus that connects all dreams. Something is threatening the nexus and it can manifest itself in the waking world as nightmares in the waking world, etc.

Unknown Student

“An Epic Journey”

This game captures the feeling of elation felt when you go through an epic journey. Like when you pulled two all nighters and had to sneak out the window to get your homework off the printer. 3rd person, 3d, action RPG. You have a very big goal and it's very far away.

John

“The Odyssey”

Story based adventure. You're a scientist who's conducting an experiment that goes wrong. You jump into other people's identity and you have clues to the objective. It's like Quantum Leap the TV show.

Unknown Student

“Surreal world”

Like SIM city but has a story line behind of it. Concept for MMR RPG.

David

“Star fighter”

Space combat simulator. Mix between traditional combat game and a flight simulator.

Unknown Student

“Avatar”

Instead of dragons in the fantasy game as opponents, the elves would be the key opposing force. Elves aren't a playable race. The scope is on par with the top online RPGs. The new content will be added on a rotating basis.

Japanese piracy is at its height. You're also looking for ancient treasure. When you come back with the treasure, the shogun finds out.