Online Games and Game Like Systems Minitrack

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With over $60 billion in revenue, gaming is the most important entertainment industry of the 21st century, outweighing even TV viewing amongst young people (Zyda 2007). With the innovation of online games, users are now connecting with other gamers every day and creating new communities online. Moreover, the wide reach and effects of games on our societies behooves the research community to engage in seriously study of gaming phenomena.

The purpose of the Online Games and Game Like Systems minitrack is to provide a forum for researchers to discuss the design, use and impact of online games and game like systems (such as serious games and gamified information systems) in various contexts. Topics discussed in this minitrack include game adoption, the psychology of online games, the use of games in organizations, and the changing business of video games.

The papers in this year’s minitrack have two themes. One theme is how players enjoy games. Player motivations are varied and games must find ways to engage different kinds of players. The papers in this minitrack therefore investigate gaming enjoyment in various contexts. The other theme is the negative side effects of gaming. Addiction, aggression and depression are negative effects attributed to gameplay. The paired papers in this minitrack track the causes of the negative side of gaming and examine possible interventions.

The first paper (“It Was More than Just the Game, It Was the Community”: Social Affordances in Online Games by Nicole Crenshaw and Bonnie Nardi) investigates a very important aspect of online gaming – the social dimension. The study reviewed user reaction to the addition of new social tools to the popular online game World of Warcraft. The case study identified that changes to games that are intended to help players may create unintended consequences that destroy old affordances.

The second paper (Understanding Perceived Enjoyment in Mobile Game Context by Jani Merikivi, Duyen Nguyen and Virpi Tuunainen) investigates the factors that affect the enjoyment players get from casual mobile games. Compared to console and PC games, mobile games capture a more varied audience and have become one of the largest drivers of game adoption. The researchers found that ease of use and novelty were the most important were more important than variety, interactivity and challenge for promoting enjoyment in mobile games.

The third paper (Role of Internal Health Belief, Catharsis Seeking, and Self-efficacy in Game Players’ Aggression by Hye Rim Lee, Eui Jun Jeong and Joo Woo Kim) explores how a player’s belief system affect the relationship between gaming and mental health. The study found that games were less likely to increase aggression in gamers’ with positive views of video games.

Lastly, the fourth paper (A Study of Digital Game Addiction from Aggression, Loneliness and Depression Perspectives by Eui Jun Jeong, Dan J. Kim, Dong Min Lee and Hye Rim Lee) looks at a possible negative side of gaming. The researchers studied how people become addicted to gaming. The study identified that anger and loneliness are important factors for addiction; however, depression does not directly influence game addiction but does lead to aggression.

These papers represent a substantial addition to the growing body of research at the interaction of game studies and information systems. We believe that this area has excellent potential for theoretical growth and future breakthroughs.