Chapter 99
A Look inside the Current Climate of the Video Game Industry

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ABSTRACT

The issue of the lack of women in the video game industry has been a hot topic for quite some time. For the past twelve years, Game Developer Magazine has published their annual Game Developer Salary Survey, which not only lists the average salaries for each department; but also breaks down each department by gender. By examining the salary surveys for the past four years (2009-2012), an initial assessment can be made on the amount of women working in the game industry, and in what disciplines. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the current climate of the video game industry, and briefly discuss possible causes of the lack of women in this particular field.

INTRODUCTION

While women account for 45% of today's gamers (Entertainment Software Association, 2013), there is still an underrepresentation of women in the game industry. This anomaly does not restrict itself to just one area of the industry, but affects the industry as a whole. While the exact reason for this is still yet to be discovered, even a quick glance at any of the annual Game Developer Salary Surveys make it readily apparent that the video game industry is a male dominated field. Not only is this the issue in the United States, but the industry climate in the UK and Britain are

strikingly similar (Sector Skills Council, 2012). However, before attempting to solve the issue of the lack of women in the game industry, we must first take a closer look at the industry itself. For the past twelve years, Game Developer Magazine has published its annual game developer salary survey. However, while there are twelve years of data that have been collected, only the 2009 through 2012 surveys will be discussed, so that recent data can be used. With a ±3.06% margin of error for the 2009 survey (Sheffield & Fleming, 2010), a ±2.7% margin of error for the 2010 survey (Sheffield & Newman, 2011), a ±2.4% margin of error for the 2011 survey (Miller,

2012) and a ±2.6% margin of error for the 2012 survey (Miller, 2013), all of which are at a 95% confidence level, the surveys acknowledge that the results may be slightly skewed due to the fact that respondents self-report their own salaries. However, the information presented still paints a fairly accurate representation of the current state of the industry. Using this information we will focus on the gender breakdowns in each area to get a better idea of the presence of women in the industry today.

BACKGROUND

The topic of women in the game industry has been a hot topic for some time now. There have been several articles that have discussed this issue, and the opinion the game industry has on the lack of women in the industry. For example, in an interview by Tyler Dukes (2010), IBM Gaming and Interactive Manager Phaendra Boinodiris shared her opinion on the topic. When asked why she thought the industry didn't market appropriately to women, she suggests it is due to the fact that so few women working in these companies, and that if there were more women employees, there would be a bigger shift in the marketing of video games towards a wider audience (Dukes, 2010). This supports the idea that one of the benefits of bringing more women into the industry could provide increased marketability for games. She also goes on to suggest that one reason women are so reluctant to pursue careers in the game industry is the stigma the industry has for being a boy's club (Dukes, 2010), and that making the industry more inclusive could result in new types of games being developed that have never been seen before (Dukes, 2010).

In another article, Mary K. Pratt (2007) talks about how the computer game industry is looking to women for fresh insights. In it, Sheri Graner Ray, game designer and developer at Sirenia Consulting, states "If we want to have [game]

titles that reach a diverse audience, our workforce has to reflect that diversity", (Pratt, 2007, p.1). Again, this suggests that bringing more women into the industry could enable games to appeal to a wider audience. Even the creators of the massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) Eve Online planned to hire on more people in order to bring more women into the workplace, since women only made up 16% of their staff (Pratt, 2007). Peter Gollan, CCP Games director of marketing for North America, agrees that bringing more women into the industry will be beneficial, stating "If you want to bring in content that's more engaging to women, you have to bring in more women" (Pratt, 2007, p.2).

Lastly, Sophia Tong (2008) sat down with several panelists from the Penny Arcade Expo 2008, and talked about some of the challenges facing women in the game industry. The panelists suggested that women who are already in the workplace "need to be respectful of each other and not feel threatened when another female joins the group" (Tong, 2008, p. 1). Linsey Murdock, a game designer at ArenaNet, also feels that "young girls should be encouraged to pursue math and science for potential careers in the game industry [….] We need to show them that it's alright and it's acceptable…it's not geeky or weird" (Tong, 2008, p.2). This suggests that one possible way to increase the number of women in the game industry is to interest them at a younger age, and teach them that it is alright to want to pursue careers in STEM related fields. Even Phaendra Boinodiris believes that this is important as well, and has spoken at elementary and middle schools about this, enforcing the idea that "[If] you encourage young women, young girls to play these games, to design their own games, […] hopefully they'll be able to see why having a field in computer science or math or physics would be interesting" (Dukes, 2010, p.4).

These opinions are only a few of the many voices in the game industry that have spoken out about the issue of the lack of women in the game

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