

Chapter 1.2

An Overview of Gaming Terminology

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces and defines commonly used terms and phrases from the world of video gaming. It seeks to bridge the gaps between researchers, gamers, and educators so that a more thoughtful and productive conversation may be had. The authors hope that this appendix adds to the understanding of and appreciation for both consumer-based and educational video games, furthers academic research within this field, and serves as a valuable tool for anyone interested in learning more about video games and related terminology. Fifty-two entries are discussed within this chapter serving as a solid, yet not

all-encompassing, foundation for future inquiry and discussion.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to highlight and explore important terminology used within the sphere of gaming; both educational and consumer-based markets are discussed. The information serving as the foundation of this appendix may also be found at *Clark Aldrich's Style Guide for Serious Games and Simulations* available at <http://clarkaldrich.blogspot.com>. Some terms have been bolstered with extension websites, articles, or studies for optional review by the reader. This list is by no means exhaustive and seeks only to provide a

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foundation of critical terms that have permeated the lexicon of game researchers and players alike.

The dynamic nature of language is inherently expansive and, in these exponential times specifically, simply keeping up with the terms and vocabulary within a given field can be an arduous task. The terms discussed in the following pages are not meant to be the be-all and end-all regarding the language of gaming but rather a starting point for interested researchers, educators, and readers. The intent of the authors is to empower and share so that more informed voices may join the conversation and better direct the future course of gaming research and development.

Advergames

A fairly recent phenomenon within the gaming world is the introduction of the concept of advergames. The term has evolved to encompass both free and pay-for-play games developed by businesses or major companies. The purpose of these games is often to promote a product or service. As Hein (2006, p. 15) puts it, “the allure of advergames for marketers is simple: create a game that consumers might actually want to play, so they will spend an extended period of time with the brand.”

The initial goal of advertisers and companies was to reach the niche market of males aged 13-to-34 through video game content (Stanley, 2006). The success of advergames is growing by the day with more and more companies rolling out titles. A notable and recent advergame found fast food giant Burger King working with Microsoft in order to release a series of Xbox games centered on Burger King characters.

Alignment

Alignment refers to the condition or skill of influencing or creating positive or negative associations between factions, people, or ideas.

Politicians set up activities like PR operations and perform actions like shaking hands or appearing in news clips to seek to form alignment with groups of people. Corporations try to create alignment between consumers and their products, often through branding.

Creating productive alignments is often called “winning the hearts and minds” in a war. Alignment may also be referred to as *faction*.

Alternate Reality Game (ARG)

Alternate reality games can best be thought of as “incredibly complex scavenger hunts, using puzzle solving, trivia, travel and online communities” (Telling, p. 114). Oftentimes, some component of the game takes place in “real” life supplemented by computer interactions of some kind. Online ARGs are growing in popularity thanks in large to the community that not only creates but supports them.

For more information on ARGs, refer to <http://www.argn.com>. This website, *Alternate Reality Gaming Network*, is home to a host of useful information, examples, definitions, and related material all focused on ARGs. The user community is supportive and knowledgeable making the learning curve of this game genre much more manageable.

Asynchronous

A conversation or communication that is either turn-based (where the response comes minutes, hours, or even days after the query, as opposed to real-time), or where one side has much more to say (or information to pass) than the other side. Emails and chat rooms are asynchronous for the first reason, and movie trailer downloads are asynchronous for the second reason.

In casual conversation, asynchronous can mean one-way; this term is the opposite of *synchronous*.

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