MUDs: Cyberspace Communities

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Overview

- The Abstraction of Games vs. MUDs
- MUDding: Representation and Movement
- The MUD Environment
- MUD Social Structures
- Competition and Cooperation in MUDs
- Risk and Reward
- Investment in the Community
- Construction of the Community
- Elusive Entities: Avatars and Agents
- The Trouble with Human Metaphors
- Difference between MUDs and Video Games
- Difference between MUDs and 3D
- Questions
The Abstraction of Games vs. MUDs

- Graphs vs. Text
- Sensory vs. Cognition
- Memory Palace vs. MUDs:
  - Internal vs. External
MUDding: Representation and Movement

- Server: Telnet or Gopher
- How to move:
  - typing directions or destinations offered by the game.
- How to know where you are?
  - appears descriptions by the computer’s MUD program.
The MUD Environment

- Recall by memory
- Claustrophobic world
- Illusion of conventional space
MUD Social Structures

- More socializing than navigating
- Problem of longevity
- On-line identity
  - Avatars
Competition and Cooperation in MUDs

- Slash-and-slay games
  - Competition
- Extend social lives
  - Make friends, gain an audience, etc..
Risk and Reward

- Strange environment, occupants not always benign
- Subtleties of meaning lost
- Risk Betrayal
Investment in the Community

- Attention
- Time
- Physical activity
Construction of the Community

- Building is a social act.
- Third place:
  - free to relax, socialize and be ourselves
- Neutral Turf:
  - self-discovery and exploration
Elusive Entities: Avatars and Agents

- In MUD: create your own avatar by typing the description of the avatar.
- Jekyll & Hyde: operate a group of avatars at a time
- Mask: less responsibility, freedom of personal exploration
- Cool example
Examples of Agents

- Julia: a robot that responds to players with words and gestures.

Ace says: “So why not kiss me, Julia?”
Julia says: “Sorry, I’m not into geeks, Ace.”
Ace says: “Julia, I’m not a geek.”
Julia says: “Then lose the pocket protector, Ace.”
The Trouble with Human Metaphors

- Human Worth
- Metaphor
- The Morality Implicit in Their Use
Difference between MUDs and 3D

- Movement: appear from room to room vs. walk between rooms
- Avatar: Description of your own vs. preset avatars
- Social vs. Sensory
- Imagination vs. Visualization
Difference between MUDs and Video Games

- Text vs. Graphs
- Continuous vs. finite duration
- Create your own avatar vs. pre-set avatar lasts for the duration of play

Examples:
- Pick up the key vs. Shooting Gun
Questions

- How should the agent be presented to the user, what characteristics the agent should have, how should it behave?
- How to establish trust and competence in MUDs?