Interactive Storytelling

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The Big Question:

What would it take to create the Holodeck?
About Me
About Me

Bachelor of Computer Science (2002-2007)
Masters of Computer Science (2007-2009)
PhD Computer Science (2009 - now)

Carleton University
Canada's Capital University
Why I Care:

I love games with stories
What is Interactive Storytelling?

Story + Interaction
What is Interactive Storytelling?

Story + Interaction

“A story follows an interesting protagonist seeking a clear goal by addressing an ever-escalating set of difficulties.”

Andrew Glassner

Stories have a complex structure, are usually about people rather than things, and involve conflict.

Chris Crawford
What is Interactive Storytelling?

Story + Interaction

Two or more agents that are

Listening
Thinking
Speaking

Chris Crawford
The Interactive Storytelling Spectrum

Fully Traditional Stories

Interactive Traditional Stories

Multiple-Ending Stories

Branching Path Stories

Open-Ended Stories

Fully Player-Driven Stories

Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug
Hey! Games are interactive!
Think of your favourite game story

How much does the plot change?
How does player action change it?
Are major plot points enforced, or player-driven?
Nothing is *that* simple...
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Stories are not usually puzzles
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Stories are not usually puzzles

... Story – Puzzle – Story – Puzzle ...
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Stories are much more than spectacle
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Stories often present events in nonlinear order
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Games are usually focused on violent conflict
Violet rejects Gossip because she does not trust you enough.

Violet

You've been wanting to talk to me a lot lately.
Why not find someone else to bother for a change?
Problems With Story and Games

à la Chris Crawford

Choice in games comes from players, not characters
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

Myth of interactivity: More interactivity makes any experience better.
An interactive experience must be fun, interesting, or both.
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

A player’s time should be respected.
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

Players should not be deceived.
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

A player should have enough information to make an informed choice.
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

Players should not be required to make highly improbable connections or embark on exhaustive searches to collect magic items.
Problems With Story and Games

à la Andrew Glassner

Cut scenes should never show the player’s character acting in ways that can contradict the player’s mental model of the character.
What about technology?

Non-adaptive
- constipated stories
- non-interactive story planning
- guided narrative path
- immersion via ambiguity

Creative explanations
- no explanation
- flashbacks and memories
- brain damage or hallucinations
- time travel
- episodic story
- different framing devices

Narratology-based
- automatic scene properties
- sequence on dramatic principles
- case-based reasoning

Environmental/emergent
- interaction with a complex world
- social/physical space of possibility
What about technology?

Minimally adaptive

Branching structures
- choose your own adventure
- hypertext narrative
- implicit graph from symbolic notation
- side quests
- multiple endings

Narratology-based
- motif context switches on user input
What about technology?

Adaptive

Character driven
- autonomous agents as actors
- high level directorial control of actors

Player modeling
- offer side quests based on style of play
- adapt difficulty according to player skill

Reaction to stats
- player stats affect NPC behaviour

Social interaction
- table top, dungeon master
- alternate reality games
- adaptive virtual worlds with goals
So interactive stories are hard...

Does it matter?
Preferred Storytelling Styles

- No preference, NP, 15.0%
- No story, NS, 4.5%
- Highly Player Driven Storytelling, HPDS, 6.0%
- Branching Path Storytelling, BPS, 20.5%
- Multiple-Ending Storytelling, MES, 24.0%
- Interactive Traditional Storytelling, ITS, 30.0%

Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug
Most Important Story Elements When Buying a Game

Josiah Lebowitz and Chris Klug
Types of Story Enjoyment

M Pohjola

The Audience

Passive reception of narrative
Types of Story Enjoyment

M Pohjola

The Performer

Active performance of a character role within an unfolding story
Types of Story Enjoyment

M Pohjola

The Immersionist

Immersion of the player in the character
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