Games & Gaming in the Digital and Social Media Track, HICSS 58

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Abstract

The Games & Gaming mini-track, now in its ninth year, offers a space in the Digital and Social Media track at HICSS to examine social interactions that are mediated via digital games and games more generally. Computer games, digital games, and mobile games continue to be an important part of the human experience. This year we have a wide variety of paper topics in the mini-track, speaking to the diversity of games and game research.

1. Games & Gaming

We return to the Big Island this year with its beautifully diverse and wide range of ecosystems, mirrored by the wide range of gaming research in the mini-track and across HICSS.

Diverse types of games and play continue as important parts of the human life experience, from infancy to adulthood. Today our playfulness and gaming have greatly expanded in terms of the objects we use for games and the reach we have to play with others—with computers, smart phones, and the internet, we play with people from around the world, perhaps partially in the real world or perhaps with purely digital objects. Games are solo, multiplayer, and massively multiplayer. Some games have playtime of a few minutes, others can take hours per session across years of play. Some games are free, others suggest, allow, or require an economic investment beyond the time spent. Some are played privately, while others are streamed to thousands of viewers around the world.

The digitization of games—a combination of both digital devices and the global connectedness—allows for greater reach of play into lives, across geography, and for research opportunities. Digital traces provide a broad picture of human behavior, and can be analyzed with big data approaches, traditional statistics, or qualitative methods. As such, games and gaming are an important aspect of digital and social media research.

Gaming research spans a wide variety of disciplines, and includes the technological, the economic, and the social and psychological. We have positive hopes for sociality and efficacy, and also fears of game-inspired violence reminiscent of historical media panics. Given humanity's social bend, social aspects have been a major part of gaming research.

The papers this year span a wide range of topics and approaches, reflecting the wide range of games and how we can conceptualize them.

In terms of somewhat new items, we have research that looks at a VR racing game. Basic VR has been around for a while, but the technology is finally getting to an acceptable level and price for consumers. You don't need VR for a feeling of immersion in a game, and there is research studying immersive experiments in Minetest, based on Minecraft, which should be familiar to most gamers.

Video game patches are a topic of another paper, which again should be familiar to many gamers, yet there is not much work on this topic. Less common, or at least less heralded, are shutdowns of videogames. How does this affect players?

There is research that looks at an old, somewhat forgotten, issue in gaming: permadeath, which is most commonly found in roguelike games of the past. But more recently, a new type of game genre has been noticed, although perhaps is has been with us for some time: cozy games. What, exactly, are they?

We are again this year partnering with the *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports* to publish select papers from the mini-track.

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