CALL FOR PAPERS: PERSONAL AND UBIQUITOUS COMPUTING JOURNAL SPECIAL ISSUE

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Player Experiences in Location Aware Games – Methodological Issues
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Co-edited by Barbara Grüter, Rod McCall, Lynne Baillie and Anne-Kathrin Braun

*Location awareness* is a feature of an increasing part of digital games, which introduce them to everyday life. Such games often come under various names including but not limited to: mobile, pervasive, ubiquitous or augmented reality. However what makes all of them location aware is that the player physically navigates within a game world which blends the real world and virtual elements. This combination significantly changes what players, designers and developers have until now understood about digital games. Furthermore as GPS-enabled phones have become more widely available the number of start-ups developing games within this area has also increased. This has all given rise to the need for researchers to not only focus on prototypes and demonstrate the technology but also to aim for a comprehensive understanding of player experiences in location aware games.

This special issue of Personal and Ubiquitous Computing will focus on the methodological issues in studying player experiences of location aware games. All instances of the iterative research cycle are included from modeling to studying, to understanding the underlying assumptions and remodeling and studying again.

Key questions are: what is the particular nature of the player experiences in a location aware game compared to online games, board games or traditional outdoor-games? How do player experiences unfold as they physically navigate within space? What improves or detracts from the mental and physical presence of a player within a particular location of a mixed game world? If we take into account the permeability of the magic circle when influenced by aspects of everyday life, what impact does this have on player experiences? How can we study location aware player experiences? What indicates experiences for the observer? How do we get access to the phenomena? What methods have to be deployed, adapted, or combined? Is it possible to maintain the standards of scientific work outside the lab in an uncontrollable world? As a result the key objective of this special issue is to advance knowledge and the competencies for modeling and studying player experiences of location aware games.
TOPICS
Topics include, although are not limited to
- Models: what is the nature of location aware players’ experiences, what are the various aspects? How do we model them? What are the methodological implications?
- Methods for studying player experiences: how to study the experience taking into account, the situated, dynamic and distributed nature of location aware games.
- Context of evaluation: what is the purpose of the study? Why do we evaluate the game? Do we want to inspire idea creation for design in the early phases of the development? Do we want to falsify our hypotheses on cause-effect relations of particular game mechanics, and to optimize existing game concepts? Do we study game play in everyday life to gain a deeper understanding of the game within a specific culture or to inform marketing decisions?
- Evaluation criteria: playability, functionality and usability are different, but mutual dependent aspects of the quality of a game. How do we achieve and evaluate that? How do we approach the idea of controlling the unpredictability and complexity of location-aware games when conducting studies in the wild?
- Technologies and tools for evaluation: What technologies and tools support data collection and data analysis of mobile games? What experiences have people applying such methods? What kind of technologies and tools are required?

The special issue has been inspired by the interest in the first workshop on this topic, which was organized in conjunction with HCI2008 “Evaluating Player Experiences in Location Aware Games” (see: http://www.ipcity.eu/?page_id=213). We would like to see a deepening of the discussion and a more thorough analysis of the field. We hope to improve the debate between researchers and practitioners from a variety of scientific, engineering, and design disciplines (e.g. ubiquitous computing, game studies, cultural studies, and HCI) in order to shed light on the current methodological approaches to location aware player experiences, to share experiences and to draw attention to the key issues, challenges, possibilities, limitations and possible solutions.

In order to reach our goals we encourage submissions within the following areas:
- Extended empirical reports from the field describing and analyzing models of player experiences, game concepts, settings, methodological issues foreseen or those which emerged during the evaluation process;
- Theoretical studies of methodological issues, especially the physicality, dynamics and complexity of player activities based on sound empirical analyzes;
- Experience and best practice reports from organizers and producers of location aware games and the methodological quality issues related to evaluation methods, often referred to as quick’n dirty methods.
MORE INFORMATION
For more information see: http://www.pelag09.hs-bremen.de/

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Abstract and outline should be between 800-1600 words in length. Full paper submissions should be no more than 6000 words in length. All Submissions to: http://www.easychair.org/conferences/?conf=pelag09

The review process consists of submission of an abstract and outline of paper, which, if accepted, will be followed by a full paper. A mentoring process is also available to ensure that full assistance can be provided to authors from submission of the abstract through to the completion of the final version based on reviewer's comments.

Authors should accord with the Personal and Ubiquitous Computing authors’ instructions available from: http://www.springer.com/computer/user+interfaces/journal/779.

Information about the format and style required for papers can be found at http://www.springer.com/computer/user+interfaces/journal/779, and templates can be downloaded from ftp://ftp.springer.de/pub/Word/journals.

More information about the Journal of Personal and Ubiquitous Computing can be found at http://www.springerlink.com/content/106503/.

All submissions will be anonymously reviewed by at least three reviewers and the selection for publication will be made on the basis of these reviews.

IMPORTANT DATES

Abstract and outline: 2nd December 2008
Notification and feedback to authors: 19th December 2008
Submission deadline of full papers: 20th March 2009
Notification and reviews to authors: 8th May 2009
Camera ready submission deadline: 12th June 2009
Publication: Autumn 2009

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