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DTC 356

04/27/20

URL Link:

<https://dtc-wsuv.org/dmyers19/MyersDimitri_DTC356_Capstone.html>

A Video Game Anthology

This project is a representation of my video game collection. The process included numerous games, so rather than detail and catalog each one it was decided that choosing a few representative games to show the remainder are currently sorted. Furthermore, there are new parameters created to show how the collection could be reorganized and sorted by. This information structure is one that has been inherently a part of my life since I can remember. Because of the complexity of games, this structure seemed fitting to represent the complexity of knowledge that was gained during this course. As Stephen Fortune notes, “The history of databases is a tale of experts at different times attempting to make sense of complexity.” (Fortune, Stephen) While the primary means of filtration and subsequent search relies on a tagging system there are other ways such as date of purchase, alphabetization, and manual folders that have been created. Another aspect is there are both digital and physical games included, while one is simple to use thanks to digital miscellany, the other is limited by physicality or the creation of an index. So, for this project the focus will be on the games that are currently physical but if they were to be organized into a digital space it would go something like this.

The choice was made to use four consoles to represent the collection thus far. These included PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox, and the Xbox One. Each of these consoles has competed against one another, and each offers different benefits. For example, the Xbox lacked stellar graphics or fast load times. However, it also hosted games with time and effort that was reflected with the technology available at the time. Game franchises rose to prominence like today’s Call of Duty games, and Star Wars: The Knights of the Old Republic. Because we work in a digital space and have a close connection with technology these aspects affect the work and social environment of many in this field and others. For some they are just a form of entertainment, for others they are a job, a passion, and a legacy.

The PlayStation 3 was revolutionary because unlike the Xbox 360, its direct competitor, the PlayStation featured free online play. While Sony did not boast the extensive exclusives that Microsoft did, it ensured that users were not charged monthly for a subscription-based service. Another crucial aspect is the visual aesthetic of each console was different. As Raj Joseph states, “Data visualization is a technique that converts complex data into simple, crisp and strikingly interactive images that present the required information.” (Joseph, Raj) Gaming consoles like the Xbox and PlayStation do just that through these video games. Something that could be complex like poverty can be portrayed in many ways in a game and in a way that users comprehend subconsciously. This means that games with the right parameters are an effective learning tool, delivering complex information in a simple manner to the audience prevents things like data overload. It also allows them to think about the issue without applying it directly to themselves.

After building upon the PlayStation 3 and the Xbox 360 respectively the PlayStation 4 and the Xbox One both had new and improved components and were faster than their predecessors. But what made them truly different was the ability to play games from previous consoles including the PS3 and Xbox. This is done again through a subscription known as PlayStationNow, and Game Pass. This also allowed these platforms to further develop their games, creating new subgenres of established ones and offering more lessons on life. Without these improvements the gaming community would surely have dissipated. Things like Dungeons and Dragons would not have rose to prominence and people would be left without a simple form of both entertainment and knowledge that they derive from these games.

The use of digital miscellany as well as the affordances that it gives were paramount to a game collection such as this one. David Weinberger raises a good point, “If only there were a way to arrange the stuff in stores so that every possible interest could be captured.” (Weinberger, pg.9) This is possible using tags. These are often referred to as genres today and within gaming there is an abundance, the most prevalent in this collection are role-playing games, action, first person shooters, multiplayer, cooperative, and adventure games. Tags are important because they create organization out of chaos, they allow the user to categorize ideas, objects, and in this case video games. Without this ability there would be nothing to differentiate between a game like Diablo and that of Call of Duty.

The choices of games to represent the collection were chosen based on the prevalence of games with the same tag. This ensures that the representation is accurate. Another point mentioned in Weinberger’s book, “Adler was not alone in his distrust of what he called ‘alphabetiasis.’” (Weinberger, pg.28) Adler was right not to trust alphabetization since it only allows for sorting one way and is often associated with physicality which is limited by just that. While alphabetization is good for those who know the title of what they are searching for it is better to implement tags so the user can search based on what interests them.

An information structure is often compared to that of a tree because of the various elements that are attached to it and that stem from it. According to Weinberger, “We’ve divided our world into major categories that contain smaller categories that contain smaller ones, branching like a tree” (Weinberger, pg.65) The same can be said for games, there are different games for different consoles. Then there are categories for different types of games followed by subgenres. Without this categorization most of these games would either be irrelevant or simply not specific enough for players to navigate. For example, Oddworld Munch’s Oddysee features two seemingly unrelated individuals who through a simple story work together to save their people. What is not mentioned is the complex series of events and the mechanics associated with the tasks that must be accomplished before beating the game.

With a tag there is a certain degree of information implied by this. As is the case with a first-person shooter. The audience then can expect that the game features both a first-person view as well as weapons of one form or another that are shot. These tags represent a good form of SEO, according to Google “Better searches. Better results.” (Google) By using things like exact phrases, and similar words to describe the thing the user is looking for they can find a game that better fits their needs and or interests. As information structures evolve so too do games. In turn as more games are created so does the need for a methodical and efficient means of finding these games.

A look at the bigger picture tells us that while tags are important to specific users, there is a greater purpose. As Martha Gabriel mentions, “Keywords are the most important part of a SEO strategy” (Gabriel, Martha) So, like anything on the Internet there is a use for miscellany as well as organization. Without organization a physical game collection would resemble a library where all the books are simply piled on the floor. But in a digital space this is not necessarily the output, rather there would be a lot of scrolling involved with finding any one in specific. By allowing users to create their own tags this removes the alienation or disassociation that is often paired with an assortment of objects by someone else, it allows these users to participate and connect with others. Which is the essence of gaming.

There were three major aspects portrayed in this collection that worked as a means of sorting as well as searching. These were a rating system that the Entertainment Software Rating Board implemented, these include E for everyone, T for teen, and M for mature audiences. Furthermore, the use of four major gaming platforms were featured to show their inherent differences. Another aspect was the tagging system that is applied to games, and the flexibility that this offers in a digital space. For example, Diablo III is both a Role-Playing game as well as an action-adventure game. This is because it allows users to mold and shape their character through gameplay. The same can be said about the action and adventure components being directly linked to what the user can do within the game.

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