Alternate Reality Gaming

JANE McGONIGAL game studies / game design
University of California @ Berkeley / 42 Entertainment
“Life imitates ARG.”

-ARG player g_rottic

gaming that feels like real life, only MORE ➔
players who feel more capable, more confident more expressive, more engaged and more connected in their real everyday lives
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming?**
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces,
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces,

taking place over several weeks or months,
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, or thousands of players come together online,
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An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, or thousands of players come together online, form collaborative social networks, and work together to solve a mystery or problem…
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, or thousands of players come together online, form collaborative social networks, and work together to solve a mystery or problem …that would be absolutely *impossible* to solve alone.
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

6 key terms that describe ARGs:

- cross-media
- pervasive
- persistent
- collaborative
- constructive
- expressive
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross-media
pervasive
persistent
collaborative
constructive
expressive

Case study: I LOVE BEES (2004)
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

cross media: clues, narratives and missions are distributed via a variety of digital media:
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

cross media: clues, narratives and missions are distributed via a variety of digital media:

- web sites
- emails
- blogs
- MP3s and DVDs
- web cams
- text messages
- instant messages
- networked game consoles
- handheld GPS devices
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pervasive: extending into the real-world, taking place in everyday environments
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming?**

**pervasive:** extending into the real-world, taking place in everyday environments

- physical clues are embedded in everyday environments
- location-specific information is required
- site-specific missions and challenges are given
- public “ubiquitous computing” and personal mobile technologies become essential tools for players
**What is **Alternate Reality Gaming?**

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**cross-media**
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What is *Alternate Reality Gaming*?

**persistent**: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

cross-media
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What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

**persistent**: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- always on
- unfolds in “real-time”
- organic and responsive to players
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

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What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**collaborative:** designed to be absolutely impossible for an individual or small group to solve in isolation

- parse information strategically
- require location-specific information
- massively-scale challenges
- “walk and talk and chew gum” design
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

**constructive:** requires players to build the gaming platform themselves

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What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**Constructive**: requires players to build the gaming platform themselves

- “Batteries Not Included” design
- Communities self-organize
- Communications systems are designed and developed by the players
- Social engineering
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

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Combat Training Exercise
What the freak is this? Read what GameSpot has uncovered: article
OMG!!!11111! one! eleven!11... How do I get in?
Read the instructions from Melissa: Combat Training Exercise (scroll down)
Who are these people? We are the Beekeepers, players of the I Love Bees game.

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To edit your record, click on the link next to your name in the list of Attendees.
(NOTE: this data does NOT imply any confirmed registration with Melissa.)

Mapque  Mapquest  ACME  Terraserver  Topozone  neardex  Topozone  payphone directory  payphone project  stromcarlson  YetAnother

Lat/Long ex. 33.794259 -84.3

Topics

- Announcement: [META] New Coordinates on contactme.html!!!!
  [ □ Goto page: 1, 2, 3 ]

- Announcement: [META] SF Combat Training/ARGFest-O-Con: Check in Here!
  [ □ Goto page: 1 ... 3, 4, 5 ]

- Sticky: [META] Chicago Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  [ □ Goto page: 1 ... 23, 24, 25 ]

- Sticky: [META] New York City Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  [ □ Goto page: 1 ... 9, 10, 11 ]

- Sticky: [META] Austin Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  [ □ Goto page: 1 ... 4, 5, 6 ]

- Sticky: [META] San Francisco Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  [ □ Goto page: 1 ... 9, 10, 11 ]
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**expressive**: requires and inspires user self-expression
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

**expressive:** requires and inspires user self-expression

- user-created web sites and blogs
- player guides
- communications missions
- new languages
- fan art
- mass media interventions
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**expressive:** requires and inspires user self-expression

You are my extraordinary. Near strangers – brilliant, kind, loud, mean, methodical, wildly creative, above all passionate. I don't agree with all of you... no surprise, you hardly agree with one another. But your energy. This community.

By sheer fluke luck, this blog has become a way station for amazing, brilliant, compassionate, crazy people. A clearinghouse for an extraordinary phenomenon. And I don't mean the AI.

I get it now. And I'm here, I'm all in.

P.S. I'm posting a summary of what we've figured out so far in the sidebar. I'll keep updating it as we learn more.
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

expressive: requires and inspires user self-expression
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

expressive: requires and inspires user self-expression

```plaintext
net: !attach act |
drop !attach act |
drop !route proc attach proc net
grope: !probe host crypt weak
!decrypt host decrypt confidence 100 !
probe master sector fail
surg: !invntry primary sector proc proc
invntry 343 working 0 dmg 38 dmg unk 2 broken 102 abs 201 !invntry primary sector mem mem
invntry 678223072849 clear 0.0007 dmg 0.0014 frgm 1.41 abs 98.5879 net: !attach act |
```
What does **Alternate Reality Gaming** accomplish?

**TECHNOLOGICAL CONFIDENCE:**

- Players gain skills and experience using a variety of new media and network technologies.
- Players become confident using these technologies in real-world contexts.
What does Alternate Reality Gaming accomplish?

COLLABORATION SKILLS:

- Players experience the new kinds of collaboration made possible by mobile and ubiquitous network technologies: e.g., ad-hoc, real-time cooperation

- ARGs demonstrate the importance of individual responsibility and contribution within a big group – everybody is uniquely necessary and valued
What does Alternate Reality Gaming accomplish?

COMMUNITY:

- Players feel more connected to and actively engaged with others, both in terms of local community and distributed community.
- Players become a part of “something bigger”
“Life imitates ARG.”