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CMS.608 / CMS.864 Game Design
Spring 2008

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Exploiting the Constraints of the Medium: Lessons from Table-top vs. Live Action Roleplaying on Computer Games

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Terminology

- Medium – Where is the game played?
- Constraints – What limits does the medium place on the game?
- LARP – Live Action Role Playing
- Boffer – A foam weapon
- Interactive Literature – A highly plot intensive style of LARP
- GM/DM – Game/Dungeon Master

Constraints Make The Game

- The game has to work in the environment
- Chess strategy is based on the size and shape of the board
- Dungeons and Dragons started as a framework for interactive storytelling

Tabletop Roleplaying

- Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
- Runequest
- Call of Cthulhu
- Etc.

Constraints of Tabletop Games

- Small groups
- Paper and pencil
- GM can have secret knowledge about the characters
- Mechanics need to be relatively simple
- All interaction with the world goes through the GM

Assassin

- Aka Killer
- Popular college game

Early Boffer Games

- The party wandered through the woods and fought monsters
- D&D on its hind legs

Evolution of Plot

- It's not just killer any more
- Over time, the plot becomes the game

Moving Away From D&D

- Put the plot in the hands of the players
- Increase competition within the game

Constraints of Live Games

- Time frame is finite
- Players come and go
- The story needs to come to a climax
- Mechanics need to be simple
- Environment plays a big part: college campus, woods, hotel, etc.

Computer Games

- What do they offer?
- What constraints aren't really necessary?
- What are the actual constraints?

Handheld Devices

- What are the constraints?
- What are the benefits?
- How can a game exploit the strengths?