Games: More than just fun

Koos de Beer
University of Pretoria
Department of Information Science
What is it that I do

• Multimedia
  – Information Science
  – Visual Design
  – Computer science
  – Web based development
  – How to combine all of the above

• Research focus
  – Game studies
  – Gamification
  – Serious games
  – Game design theory

AND

• Games in education
Why are games important

• Games are:
  – Engaging
  – Interactive
  – Teachers
  – FUN!
• Games create flow!

AND

• A literacy.. ?
What is a Game

• What I consider to be the definition of a game

• Games are:
  – A system containing
  – A collection of activities
  – Guided by artificial rules
  – To overcome obstacles
  – And to achieve specific goals

• Meaning within the Context
What are serious games

- Games for more than just games
- Examples of serious games:
  - Military
  - Scientific
  - Training
- It is still a game
What are persuasive games

• Games designed to modify the behaviour of people
• Take advantage of games as a persuasive medium

Images from http://www.persuasivegames.com/games/
What is Gamification

• Take an existing system
• Make it more engaging
• By adding game elements
“Serious games, persuasive games, news games – these are all terms used for games which let players gain an experiential understanding of real world issues through play.”
– Swain, 2007
The difference between gamification and game design

Games
- Experience them
- Play in them
- Move around within a game context

VS

Gamification
- Existing system
- Use for other purpose than playing
- Not just for fun but for an existing activity
What are Alternate Reality Games

- A game
- A narrative
- Player collaboration
- Community
- Multimedia

This is not a game
What are we doing?

• Targeting a specific group of students
• Create an ARG that is ENGAGING and INTERESTING
• Let them PLAY the game
• Give them CONTROL over events
• Build a FUN game

BUT

• Exercise basic literacy
• Learn through using the library
• Not because an assignment said so but because the players want to see what happens next.
Examples from Nomad – The story

You want weapons?
We're in a library!

Books!
The best weapons in the world!
Examples from the Nomad – Activities and learning outcomes

• Phase 1
  – Use the library

• Phase 2
  – Find books
  – Use cyphers

• Phase 3
  – Research the Nomads work

• Phase 4
  – Explore the library

• Throughout the game...
  – Use social media
  – Use the library resources
  – Engage the library staff