Current State of Cross Media Storytelling:
Preliminary observations for future design

Full Paper available at:

Christy Dena
School of Creative Arts,
University of Melbourne, Australia
cdena@unimelb.edu.au

Cross Media Characteristics

- User activity to assemble the 'work';
- Activity is narrative-driven;
- Activity is between channels, and can be within a channel, and between modes.

Jenkins' 'transmedia'

'In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics, and its world might be explored and experienced through game play. Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained enough to enable autonomous consumption. That is, you don't need to have seen the film to enjoy the game and vice-versa.'

(Jenkins, 2003)

Transmedia Example:

The Matrix franchise

Films

Game

Online Game

Animated DVD

Comics

IMAX Release

http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com/

Website

Transfiction

- single-story told over multiple channels;
  - can be simultaneous media usage or alternating between channels.

Transfiction example:

Video/DVD board game

Nightmare (A Couple A' Cowboys, 1991)

Images sourced from: Zombie Reviews + Trade Me

Factors influencing High to Moderate Acceptance + Diffusion

- Immersive Aesthetics: real-world devices, pervasive fiction, no simulations, TING/sub-dermal.

- Collaborative power;

- Application of specialist skills;

- Development of specialist skills;

- High-impact interactivity;

- Transformed patterns;

Factors influencing Low to Moderate Acceptance + Diffusion

- (Experienced) + assessed from a 'mono-media' perspective;

- Intimidating + exhausting activity required;

- Parental wariness of negative media effects: economic manipulation + low-aesthetic judgements;

- Low employment of 'immersive aesthetics';

- Inchoate poetics;

- Anti-commercialisation

Recommendations

The design of content on channels and modes that are diegetic will assist in:

- immersion the persistence of it;
- provide motivation for cross-, inter- and intra- media activity;
- has the potential to reduce negative media effects criticisms such as 'economic manipulation' and 'low aesthetics';
- assist in the development of transfiction and 'interactive storytelling' narrative design.

Story Role

To play a **story role** the channel or mode must be:

- Designed as primary source of information about characters, setting and plot;
- Designed and experienced as an entry-point to the whole multi-channel work;
- The experience of it has a strong impact in story comprehension;
- If collaborative, user participation can impact story creation;
- Consistent information about characters, setting plot;
- Being a product that cannot be separated from a particular fiction;
- Can be self-contained (if transmedia) or one of the primary texts (if transfiction);
- Are familiar and preferred channels.

Storyworld Role

To play a **storyworld role** the channel or mode:

- Has lesser impact on story comprehension;
- Not primary source of information about characters, setting and plot;
- Provides further information about characters, setting and plot that are primary or secondary in the story channel or mode;
- Does not play a direct role in the unfolding plot;
- Augments story comprehension;
- Medium-level influence on comprehension of story;
- Consistent with characters, setting and plot in story channel or mode;
- Allows the fictional world to be accessed in the real world through character identification and scene extension;
- Must perpetuate story channel and not break fictional setting.

Storyworld Product Example

Harry Potter
scarf

Harry Potter
student hat

Harry Potter products available at: http://harrypotter.wbshop.com/catalog

Christy Dena

Research blog at Star of Dena
http://members.optusnet.com.au/christydena

School of Creative Arts,
University of Melbourne, Australia

cdena@unimelb.edu.au