Preface

Those in the community of gaming theory and practice have pigeonholed gamification as a term. It is generally considered that it means applying gaming principles to non-gaming environments. Gaming theorists like Richard Bartle, wedded to his dated MUD model of gamers, speak out against gamification with passion, setting out why it never works and how videogames stand in their own right. Those in the area of Serious Games, often try to make themselves appear different to those in the area of gamification. In reality, Serious Games should be called serious gamification, if one sees Serious Games as a practical application of gaming principles to mundane or otherwise serious activities training + gamification. Serious Games are important, yet they are essentially gamified systems with a practical purpose that has been gamified. That is why they are in this book, which presents chapters on issues affected by gamification. This is evident in the first chapter of the second section (chapter 6), which shows how designing Serious Games for people with disabilities is basically dependent on the video game theories that people like Richard Bartle try to claim as their own and distinct from the topic.

On this basis, in addition to its more traditional meaning, one might further extend the definition of gamification to be the intentional application of gaming principles to an environment in such a way that participation within it is more enjoyable so that greater gratification and less discomfort is achieved for the greater good of those that form part of that environment. It is this definition that has led to the specific concentration of chapters for this book.

GAMIFICATION IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Shefali Virkar looks that the roles of gaming in shaping tax administration in Bangalore City in India (chapter 3). To those wedded to the idea of gamification being about video games in environments where video gaming is not used, this chapter may appear to be out-of-place. However, as a former politician on a council with tax varying powers, a former claimant of out-of-work welfare benefits, and a payer of fiscal taxes, I am of the view that the tax and benefits system is an area that needs to be tapped into according to the public policy of whoever is in power. It is an almost certain rule that in any economic system people will seek to maximize economic gain and minimize economic loss. Gamification can be applied to the tax and benefits system to encourage positive behaviors. This includes increasing the wealth and social mobility of those without much whilst preventing those who have too much from hoarding that which they do not need. Janice Anderson (chapter 12) made some interesting theoretical conceptualizations in her chapter, “Games and the Development of Students’ Civic Engagement and Ecological Stewardship.” She found that games or virtual environments that seek to engage students in
a scaffolding way will need to develop intelligent tutors who prompt students to think about the application of scientific concepts learned during game play to issues in their own communities. Thus, Serious Games will have to look beyond their practical application, in a narrow sense, to make greater use of gamification beyond the computer.

GAMIFICATION AND ONLINE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Section 1 focuses on behavioral issues and the links between this and the activism associated with online environments. In the first chapter of this section, I consider the legal issues that those who run Websites that allow for folk gamification – where user-generated content such as social media can have a gaming element to it that can affect the liabilities for those that run a Website. The third chapter on tax administration in India was discussed earlier, and the chapter by Loren Falkenberg and Oleksiy Osiyevskyy (chapter 4) looks at the competing gaming and other strategies in decision making of diverse stakeholders in the publishing industry. The chapter communicates many of the challenges of contemporary corporate culture upon which gamification could play an important role. Being the director of a print and publishing firm, with my first university qualification being in Design and Print, I felt that this chapter communicated many of the challenges of contemporary corporate culture upon which gamification could play an important role. The chapter provides a model for managing competing interests, which can be generalized outside the publishing arena. The fifth chapter, which is the final in section 1, is co-authored by Mark Goode and me. The chapter completes the section nicely by presenting neuro-economic models for understanding and influencing behavior, such as in the environments discussed in the earlier chapters. It shows that an important aspect of any system that seeks to influence the behavior of others is considering the dialogue and narratives of those that use it – to speak the user’s language. Also considered in this chapter are the role of antecedents in online environments and their affects on Website strategies. My chapter, which is the first in this section, looks at how owners of Websites can open themselves up to legal claims if they do not moderate the effect of folk gamification such as pseudo-activism, which is where users encourage others to take part in an activity—such as “sharing” or “liking”—for their own benefit, such as a high number of shares of likes.

Stephanie B. Linek, Birgit Marte, and Dietrich Albert’s chapter, “Background Music in Educational Games: Motivational Appeal and Cognitive Impact” (chapter 16), is an important chapter for understanding how to influence behavior. Although this chapter is in the education and simulation section, the chapter was not able to find either positive or negative effects of background music on learning. However, the chapter shows that background music can be considered as a motivating design element of educational games without negative side effects on learning.

GAMIFICATION FOR E-LEARNING ENHANCEMENT

E-Learning was a significant theme coming out of the chapters in this book, but selecting four of them in this section will help show their important contributions. Stephen Tang and Martin Hanneghan’s chapter, “Designing Educational Games: A Pedagogical Approach” (chapter 11), provides a brief overview of educational games and game-based learning before highlighting theories of learning that is relevant to educational games. The chapter produces a number of guidelines for designing gamified e-learning
systems. Like many chapters in the book, including my own, this chapter considers the concept of flow and the importance this plays in user engagement. Joel Foreman and Thomasina Borkman (chapter 13) provide a very important insight into the work on a Massively Multistudent Online Learning Environment for teaching a sociology curriculum. Forman and Borkman’s long established work in the area of Multi-User Virtual Learning Environments (MUVLE), some of which is considered in this chapter, makes hyped concepts like Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) by Stephen Downs and George Siemens seem like they are trying to teach granny to suck eggs.

Holly Tootell and Alison Freeman present a very important contribution in terms of the application of gamification approaches to early childhood education (chapter 14). The chapter shows how Serious Games, by making use of technologies such as the iPad, could be effective at making compulsory education more fun in ways traditionally not associated with this application of gamification. Göknur Kaplan Akilli provides a brief theoretical framework and a fresh starting point for practitioners in the field who are interested in educational use of games and simulations and their integration into learning environments (chapter 17). This chapter shows how new instructional design and development models are needed to help designers create game-like learning environments that can armor students for the future and build powerful learning into their designs.

GAMIFICATION IN MULTIMEDIA COMMUNICATION

The second chapter in section 3, “From Chaos towards Sense: A Learner-Centric Narrative Virtual Learning Space” by Torsten Reiners, Lincoln C. Wood, and Jon Dron (chapter 15), takes an important look at this. They argue that taking a learner-centered approach in education environments can be more effective at getting an educator’s messages across than other means. An important part of multimedia communication, especially where human-computer interaction principles are applied, is the consideration of factors like attention, perception, and memory. Wen-Hao David Huang and Sharon Tettegah’s chapter, “Cognitive Load and Empathy in Serious Games: A Conceptual Framework” (chapter 2) is therefore an important contribution to the book. Affective computing is an emerging component of multimedia studies, where the effects of emotions of and between people using digital technologies. Their chapter shows that as users of gamified systems, like Serious Games, enjoy the entertaining, playful aspects of interactive games. They argue this includes an enthralling story, appealing characters, lush production values, a sense of social presence, making choices that affect the direction of the game, and assuming the role of a character and playing with a new personality or identity. State-of-the-art affective computing systems can using gaming principles to make the learning and use of emotions more interesting, as in Serious Games, using gamification principles.

CONCLUSION

Gamification is a simple concept of making non-gaming systems more engaging through applying gaming principles to them. Among its critics, it is a buzzword and concepts like video games will long outlast it. However, gamification is a term that is unlike connectivism, MOOCs, and e-learning 2.0, which are simply marketing gimmicks for long-established principles in education that have happened to make their way into electronic learning systems. Gamification existed long before the word was coined. As an
economist, I have argued economics is 90% psychology and 11% mathematics! Nearly every economy or society has gaming principles applied to make life more interesting. Popular culture like Disney’s 1964 film Mary Poppins make reference to mundane tasks like cleaning and finding fun in them in order to make them a game. One might ask whether cleaning with Mary Poppins as one’s nanny would be the equivalent of a Serious Game. The application of gaming principles to any environment that people lack the motivation to use but it is essential for their success could be seen to be done by gamification and result in serious games.

On that basis, unlike historical figures like Richard A Bartle might think, gamification existed before he even picked up a joystick. Any advancement in technology leads to people using it in a new way as part of a gamification process. Whether this is through trying to influence trending on Twitter or by trying to maximize shares of an image on Facebook, humans will always find new ways to make non-gaming environments more interesting through gamification.

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