Preface

INTRODUCTION

Games-based learning (GBL), also sometimes referred to as serious games, is a relatively new field of endeavour that focuses on the exploitation of high-quality computer games and associated software tools for education and training. While computer games have been phenomenally successful within the leisure industry with their inherent ability to motivate, engage and inspire, their application for education and training has had limited success and there remains a number of key challenges that need to be addressed to fully understand and demonstrate the applicability and limitations of this approach. Given that market research suggests that the games-based learning market globally could be worth €500m by 2010, there is a pressing need to address the challenges. However, the research on games-based learning is fragmented and there are still significant gaps in the literature, primarily the lack of empirical and longitudinal studies.

The field of games-based learning show significant promise for overcoming some of the barriers to effective learning for particular groups of learners or particular learning styles. While some potential users are open to the use of computer games for non-entertainment purposes, others are closed and significant work has to be undertaken to demonstrate the effectiveness (or otherwise) of this approach. There are a number of the key challenges that need to be addressed:

- The construction of empirical data to support the assertion that learning with games is effective. While there are studies that review and bring together some of the evidence, this may require further baseline studies that assess the effectiveness and efficacy of games-based learning.
- The investigation of which learners, and in which contexts, games-based learning is most effective. Again this work has begun but much more research is required. There is still a perception that games are fun and not to be used in learning and, although this is changing, more studies that investigate differentiated use of games will help.
- The identification of mechanisms to bring games developers and educationalists together to work together to produce pedagogically-based games-based learning that is effective is key.
- The identification of mechanisms to empower the learner to produce their own content through games. This raises questions as to how the features often provided in a number of game development systems, for creating and editing components such as terrain or physical objects, be extended to include the ability to specify game activities and operations without programming in the formal sense, in order to engage a wide user community in collective learning game development.
- The identification of ways in which tutors can add assessment seamlessly to games-based learning.

- As well as perception shifts on the part of tutors, institutions need to rethink some of their structures to better facilitate games-based learning (for example, to allow for longer periods of learning, informal learning, cross disciplinary learning etc.). This means engaging senior management as to the value of serious games.
- Games technologies are at the forefront of providing multi-sensory immersive human-computer interfaces, and allowing the seamless integration of virtual and physical environments through advances in sensor and display technologies. A key challenge is how these technical developments can be integrated into pedagogical frameworks to allow them to be legitimately used to contribute to the effectiveness of learning.
- Virtual worlds, such as Second Life, are increasingly defining a new paradigm for how online communication, interaction and collaboration take place. Furthermore, they have created new business models of how virtual and real worlds can interact. Clearly it would not be sensible to limit learning experiences within these worlds to simulations of conventional learning methods in reproductions of existing learning spaces. A key challenge is how these systems can be optimally used for learning, including for work-based learning and through the integration of these technologies into business processes.

Thus, the key challenges are strategic, institutional and pedagogic.

MISSION AND MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOK

The mission of this book is to disseminate knowledge on both the theory and practice of games-based learning, and to promote scholarly inquiry and the development/adoption of best practice in this area. The main objectives of the book are as follows:

1. To provide novice readers with an introduction to the major issues surrounding both the theory and practice of games-based learning.
2. To provide an avenue for the publication of cutting-edge research that will inform both novice and expert readers about leading and emerging games-based learning pedagogy, technologies and their applications to teaching and learning.
3. To showcase examples of current and emerging practice in innovative pedagogy, and demonstrate models of the integration of games-based learning in teaching, learning and assessment.
4. To contribute to the development of best practice through the evaluation and documentation of the successes and pitfalls of various techniques, approaches, and strategies.
5. To analyze and critique recent trends and nascent technologies, in order to propose an agenda or "roadmap" for future research and development in the area of games-based learning for teaching and learning.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for the book is broad, ranging from educationalists and researchers at all levels of education and training, particularly those with an interest in how interactive technologies can be utilised to enhance teaching and learning. The book will also be of interest to other researchers, such as social scientists, psychologists, and computing scientists. The book may also be adopted to support educational technology and eLearning courses at a postgraduate level. In addition, the book will be of interest to

companies involved in the development of games-based learning applications as it will provide an insight into the key challenges facing the industry and approaches to tackling these challenges.

Through a combination of theoretical pieces as well as practical cases or examples of "best practice" in the field, the novice reader will benefit from expert knowledge and learn from the experiences of both researchers and practitioners. Experts will stand to gain from reading the book to stay abreast with the latest developments and trends in this still nascent area, and to obtain exposure to diverse perspectives and approaches to games-based learning.

This book provides a holistic and multidisciplinary discussion on how games-based learning has been used to support teaching in learning in both education and training. At the same time, it examines key challenges in games-based learning from both a theoretical and practical experience. The book aims to make a valuable contribution to the literature by bringing together a broad range of pedagogical, technological and strategic issues. The collection of chapters will hopefully promote the international collaboration and exchange of ideas and know how on games-based learning.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In this section, a brief outline of each of chapter is provided.

Section I. Introduction

In Chapter I, Tang, Hanneghan, and El Rhalibi provide an introduction to games-based learning, and discuss some of the basic concepts, pedagogies, and advantages and disadvantages of this approach to teaching and learning. In Chapter II, Whitton examines the rationale for the use of computer games in learning, teaching and assessment within Higher Education (HE). The first part of the chapter focuses on the theory underpinning the use of games-based learning with HE students, examining motivation and engagement, constructivism, collaborative and problem-based learning. The second part of the chapter considers the practical issues of using computer games in actual teaching contexts and presents twelve principles for the design and evaluation of computer games to support learning.

Until recently, Multi-User Virtual Environments (MUVEs) and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) or Learning Management Systems (LMSs) have remained separate, with MUVEs providing a highly interactive, collaborative environment but little content and VLEs providing features for the storage and delivery of online learning content. In Chapter III, Livingstone, Kemp, Edgar, Surridge, and Bloomfield discuss the Sloodle project that is attempting to integrate Second Life with the moodle VLE and to investigate how this might support learning and teaching with the Second Life platform. Continuing the theme of LMSs, in Chapter IV Marty, Carron, and Heraud propose a games-based LMS called the "pedagogical dungeon" equipped with cooperation abilities for particular activities. The chapter explains how to keep awareness of the on-going activities while remaining involved in the game itself, and how to provide the teacher with this awareness in an immersive way, making the teacher more involved in the game when feedback is provided on the activity.

Section II. Design Issues

One of the key differentiators between commercial games and games-based learning is content, which should be integrated in such a way that it provides engaging game play while helping achieve the desired learning outcomes by delivering skills and knowledge effectively to the end user. This ability to inte-

grate content effectively is the key to producing "killer" games-based learning applications that deliver demonstrable learning outcomes, business benefits and overall value. In Chapter V Gómez-Martín, Gómez-Martín and González-Calero provide an introduction to the issues of content integration and present the state of the art in content creation for games-based learning systems, identifying the main challenges to make this technology cost-effective from the content creation perspective. In the subsequent chapter, Seeney and Routledge present lessons learned and case studies that demonstrate why the process of content integration can be so challenging, including the differing experiences from the perspective of three stakeholders (game designer, instructional designer/learning psychologist and subject matter expert), how to manage preconceptions and balance their priorities. The chapter provides advice on how to facilitate this process, capture the correct requirements and create a design that meets and exceeds the expectations of all the stakeholders involved, including the client/customer and the end user.

In Chapter VII McMahon proposes a document-oriented instructional design model to inform the development of games-based learning. The author suggests that the model can form a base for prescribing and managing activities within an industry context but also as a means to teach the instructional design process for serious games within an HE setting. The model defines increasingly granular stages leading to final production documentation for software development. A case study of the initial implementation of the model is discussed in order to contextualise it and provide a basis for future enhancement.

In Chapter VIII Burgos and van Nimwegen argue that games-based learning applications are good environments for improving the learning experience and a key component of the application if the provision of feedback to support decision making and to reinforce the learning process. However, the authors point out that too much feedback can make the learner too dependant on external advice when taking the next action, resulting in a weaker learning strategy and a lower performance. By way of example, a case study is presented of an educational planning task simulation with a control group that did not receive destination feedback and an experimental group that did receive destination feedback. An analysis concludes that in this context too much assistance can be counterproductive.

For some time, users' emotions and behaviours have been considered to obstruct rather than to help the cognitive process. Even if it is now recognized that learners' personalities and learning styles influence greatly their cognitive process, very few systems have managed to profile users and adapt the educational content accordingly. Furthermore, since the introduction of formal education, it has been argued that learning has lost its playful and emotional aspect, whereby information was transmitted through story telling and play. On the other hand, computer games have become a very popular medium and provide a rich sensory and emotional environment in which players can experience a state of flow and are continue playing for an extended period of time. In Chapter IX Felicia and Pitt discuss how computer games can be harnessed to create an educational content that matches users' learning styles and motivations. In this chapter the authors propose the PLEASE model (Personality Learning styles, Emotions, Autonomy, Systematic Approach and Evaluation), which addresses some of educational games design issues (e.g. choice of instructional strategy, type of feedback required, etc.). The model categorizes and profiles users' learning styles in the light of educational and personality theories and defines a set of practical strategies for educational games designers in order to match students' learning styles and provide a user-centred content that is both motivating and educational. The chapter presents experiments carried out to assess the effect of user-centred approaches in educational game design and the results indicate that unless personalities are accounted for in educational games, the educational outcomes could be different or even opposite to the one expected.

In Chapter X Greco suggests that the use of role-playing is becoming prominent in games-based learning due to its positive effects on learning. In this chapter the author defines role-playing games and proposes a five-dimension taxonomy for serious role-playing games, applying it to a small selection of

successful games in five different domains. The intention is to help the reader understand when role-playing should be used, and when it might be useless or detrimental.

In the context of computer games, learning is an inherent feature of computer game playing. Computer games can be seen as multimodal texts that connect separate means of expression and require new kinds of literacy skills from the readers. In Chapter XI Tikka, Kankaanranta, Nousiainen, and Hankala consider how the computer-based learning tool Talarius, which enables students to make their own digital games and play them, lends itself to literacy learning. Talarius also provides the potential to interweave narrative contents into the games made by it. The learning subject is a children's novel and is narrative by its nature. The focus of this chapter is on the relationship between narrative and learning in computer games, in this case, digital board games and explores how narrative functions of the learning tool support learning in game creation and game playing.

In Chapter XII Price discusses an approach to establishing a theoretical basis for the construction of games-based learning immersive environments based upon recognised pedagogical principles. In particular, the chapter considers non-collaborative learning (instructional, teacher-led or autonomous) and consider collaborative learning. The chapter reflects on the matter of various subject domains with reference to the Unreal Tournament 2004 game engine.

Section III. Evaluation

One of the often cited issues with games-based learning is the lack of empirical evidence for the approach. In Chapter XIII de Freitas and Jarvis review some of the key research supporting the use of serious games for training in work contexts. The review indicates why serious games should be used to support training requirements and, in particular, identifies "attitudinal change" in training as a key objective for deployment of serious games demonstrators. The chapter outlines a development approach for serious games and how it is being evaluated. Demonstrating this, the chapter proposes a game-based learning approach that integrates the use of a "four-dimensional framework", outlines some key games principles, presents tools and techniques for supporting data collection and analysis, and considers a six-stage development process. In Chapter XIV Wouters, van der Spek, van Oostendorp examines 28 studies with empirical data from a learning outcome perspective to outline the effectiveness of serious games. The authors conclude that serious games potentially improve the acquisition of knowledge and cognitive skills. Moreover, they seem to be promising for the acquisition of fine-grid motor skills and to accomplish attitudinal change. However, they find from the research that not all game features increase the effectiveness of the game. Following this theme, in Chapter XV Connolly, Stansfield, and Hainey review the literature for evaluation frameworks for games-based learning and identify evaluation measurements that have been taken by other researchers in the field. Based on this work, the authors present an abstract evaluation framework for games-based learning that can be adapted to particular games-based learning interventions. Based on real world experiences using a variety of digital games, Chapter XVI presents a guide for teachers on how to use games-based learning in the classroom. Beginning with a theoretical overview of the change in learning styles and the growing digital divide, the author discusses the impact that games have had on young people. The chapter also provides a practical guide for teachers wishing to integrate games into their classrooms, beginning with an overview of the changing role of the teacher, moving onto preparation guidelines, before finally discussing assessment and practical implementations.

Section IV. Gender and Disabilities

There is no doubt that computer games are extremely engaging and incorporate features that have an extremely compelling, even addictive quality. It is these highly engaging features of computer games that have attracted the interests of educationalists. However, there are many issues that may prevent computer games becoming a primary tool in education. In the fourth and final part of the book we examine two such issues: gender and disabilities. Understanding the relationship between gender and computer games is extremely important for creating computer games that will function as effective educational tools. While traditional computer games are more popular with males than females, females have a more careful and committed approach to learning and may be more willing to try out new methods of learning including computer games. These opposing influences make it difficult to predict how gender will impact on the acceptance of games for learning. In Chapter XVII, Boyle and Connolly explore whether gender has an effect in games-based learning and suggest that developing educational computer games that will appeal to both males and females adds an additional level of complexity to an already complicated process. In Chapter XVIII, Saridaki, Gouscos, and Meimaris examine the issues around the application of games-based learning for students with intellectual disability. The chapter investigates the common grounds between methodologies for Special Education Needs/Intellectual Disability pedagogy on the one hand and games-based learning on the other, as well as to explore the potential of using digital games for such students. The usage of digital games in the learning experience of students with intellectual disability is discussed, the ways in which commercial and educational games support various special needs methodologies and theories regarding intellectual disability pedagogy are examined and findings from the education literature as well as experimental observations and case studies are presented in order to investigate how and to what extent learning-purposed as well as entertainment-purposed games are able to constitute a powerful educational medium for special needs education and its inclusive objectives.

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