Tapping into the Gaming Community for Roguelikes

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ABSTRACT

We developed Roguelike Universe as a web scraping algorithm that looks for developer interviews, gaming journal articles, post-mortems, and developer diaries. The findings are turned into data visualisations of roguelike idea networks. However, computer algorithms are not intuitive for complex topics, and can lead to false positives. To speed up the efforts of error correction, we engage the gaming community to discuss the findings of our roguelike idea networks, and propose to open the data as a human-editable format that can be rendered into data visualisations in real-time. This allows the community to directly engage with us in a conversation that may uncover little-known insights, and correct any data they deem to be incorrect. This paper is a work-in-progress that aims to open a conversation about engaging with the gaming community for studies in game history and design.

Keywords

roguelike games, connected ideas, game history, idea network, community insight

INTRODUCTION

Roguelike Universe was developed to investigate the concept of a connected network of game ideas, as shown in Figure 1. Based on the list of roguelike games curated by the Wikipedia community (2016), We chose eighty-five roguelike games that embraced two high-value factors: *permadeath* and *randomly environment generation* (RogueBasin 2008). Our inclusions included traditional roguelikes, roguelite games (Hawkes 2013) and neo-rogue (Garda 2013).

The concept of remixing ideas is not new. Hagen (2012) found recycling of game ideas in industry game development from small to large companies alike. David and Grurin (2000) argues that remediation of culture and media requires an appreciation of different perspectives and insights. For game scholars, tracing the paradigm shift of game design is a life blood of our work. To this end, we developed a web scraping algorithm that looks for developer interviews, gaming journal articles, post-mortems, and developer diaries. The findings for a connected roguelike design network was submitted as a full paper to DiGRA-FDG 2016 conference (Ho et al., pending review), and we hope to discuss the in- progress efforts tapping into the gaming community for human insight.
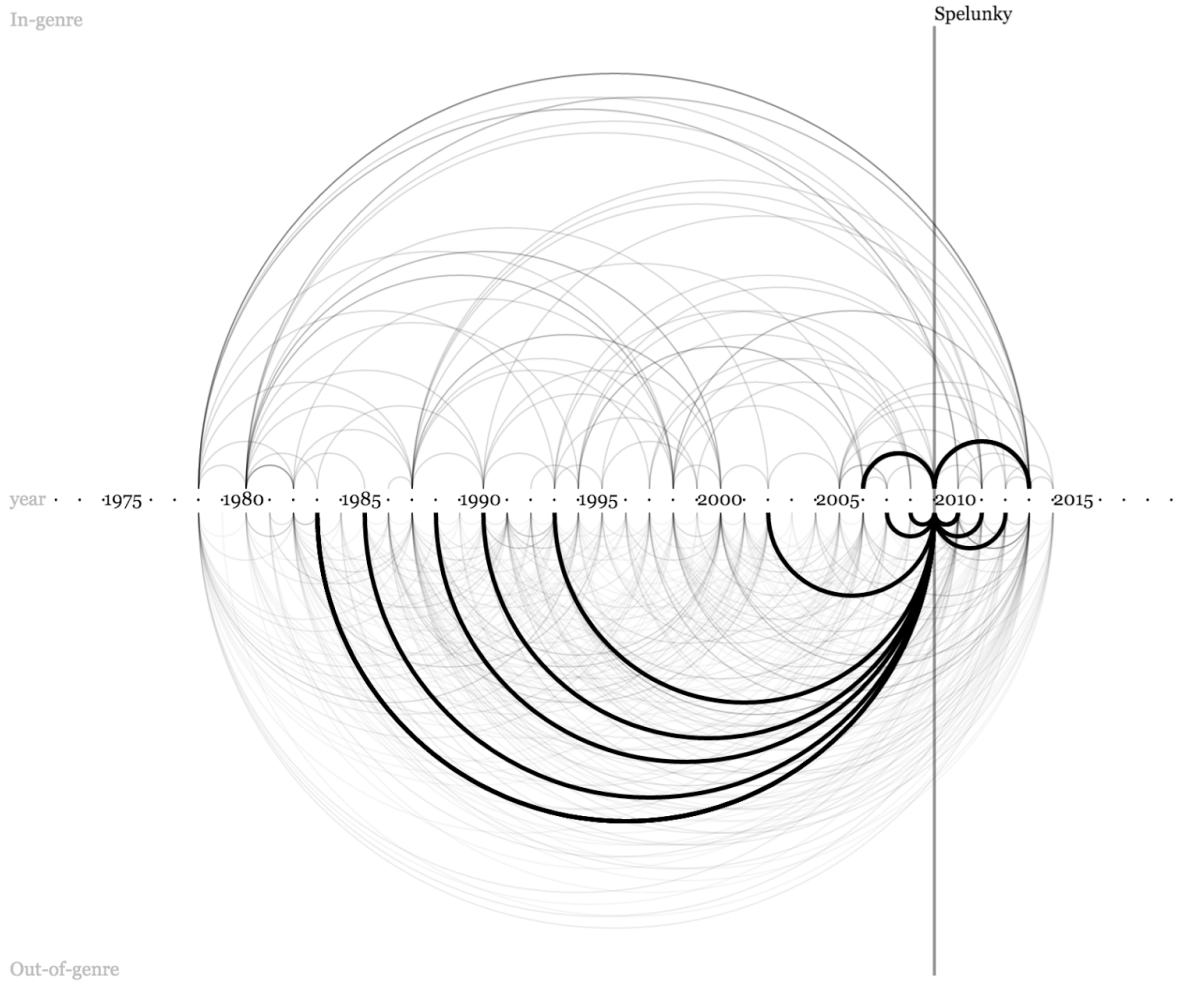
Figure 1: Roguelike Universe Timeline

Algorithms are not perfect, especially when it comes to natural language processing. In our previous design iterations, we often found false positives in our results, and had to tighten our heuristics. Even if the computer program is coded entirely by humans, computers do not have an intuition about games, reasoning, or context, and researchers often fallback to human-generated content (Cambria and White 2014). Computer knows a little about lexical affinity, distance weighting, word occurrences—metrics that can be stored in numbers—but lack the ability to make intuitive connections about complex topics. The logical step is to introduce human intervention at this stage of data gathering.

Our method to involve the community is two-fold: one, we interview gamers who are enthusiastic about roguelike games, as game developers and fan communities tend to have solid grasp of its own history (Watson 2012). By engaging in a gaming conversation with data and visuals generated by Roguelike Universe, we may come to a better understanding of both the fans and little-known history of roguelike games. two, we make the existing data readily available in a human-readable, human-editable format, and

drive the online visualisation in real-time. This allows anyone to see the results after they submit a change, and speed up the error correction in our data gathering efforts.

The result of our study is a user-led discussion and analysis based on the community response. At the conference, we will present the in-progress findings, and the insights gathered from the gaming community. We will invite the audience to an open conversation about ways to further the boundaries of game history. The contribution comes in two levels: the design process to gather community insights as a design research method, and a deeper insight resulted from conducting the design process. This mode of research can be applied by game scholars for future research projects in a similar area of study.

BIO

Graduated from Griffith University with a University Medal for Bachelors of Engineering (Software Engineering with Advanced Studies) with Class I Honours, Xavier currently pursues his Doctor of Philosophy part-time at Design Lab, University of Sydney under the supervision of Martin Tomitsch and at Queensland University of Technology with Tomasz Bendarz. Xavier works full-time as an interactive visualization specialist at CSIRO, supporting scientific research with a hybrid software and interaction design expertise. In his free time, he runs a Melbourne-based meetup called Computer Graphics on the Web, and he plays a lot of video games.

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