Epistemic Gaming in Virtual Worlds – Lessons Learned

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Abstract

This session will focus on the lessons learned from the development and implementation of an Epistemic Game in the virtual world used in a Master’s level Library Science class. Epistemic Games place students within the context of a profession in order to learn as they simulate professional practice. In this case, the students in the class were placed in groups and were asked to take on the roles associated with leadership of a public library (e.g. Director, Head of Youth Services, etc). These groups controlled a virtual library and were presented with a series of weekly, simulated challenges.

Session Description

During the summers of 2011 and 2012 instructors at Appalachian State University incorporated a unique combination of epistemic gaming and virtual worlds to teach a Master’s course in public library management. Epistemic games place participants into the context of a profession in order to teach them the skills associated with that profession in a low-stakes, simulated environment. The Appalachian State University epistemic game served as the centerpiece of a course on public library management, and called for students to play roles associated with managing libraries (e.g. Director or Head of Youth Services). Each student group was provided a virtual library to manage, and was given a series of tasks designed to simulate the week-to-week management of the library. These tasks were given to each group by their instructor who played the role of the city manager.

This session will focus on describing the design and implementation of the course, along with data that was collected on student perceptions of their experience in the class. Additional emphasis will be given to exploring the philosophical foundations of Epistemic Gaming as the basis for courses in general, and the value that having such classes take place in virtual worlds adds.