HIDDEN WORLDS

Oregon Game Project Challenge

2015-2016

Challenge Manual

9th Annual Oregon Game Project Challenge

www.ogpc.info

Summary

Theme Statement

Within our world, there are countless things we cannot perceive (or perhaps that we choose not to). Within these gaps of our perception are Hidden Worlds that might be revealed if only we were able or willing to see them.

Overview

This year in OGPC, teams will craft games that explore one or more hidden worlds. It will be up to teams to decide exactly how to interpret the theme. This interpretation can be as literal or figurative as desired. Teams can create whatever sort of game they like, but should strive to make their interpretation of the theme evident in all aspects of their game. The gameplay, story, art, sound and music all should work together to help the player experience a Hidden World.

Details

All around us are a wide range of things that are normally invisible.

The micro- and nano-realms hold all sorts of things, ranging from viruses and cells to fundamental particles and human created nanostructures. Interesting interactions are constantly taking place all around and inside of us at a scale too small to normally notice.

Things don't have to be small to be hidden, though. Our surroundings are filled with invisible, encoded, or abstract information we cannot access. What if people could see information bouncing around on cellphone networks? What if people could see the wavelengths of radiation that pass through solid objects? What if people could hear what others were thinking?

Think about all the things that are hidden from us. Each of those represents an entire new world that we could potentially explore. In the brainstorming process, ask: "What makes this hidden world interesting?", "How could we develop the interesting features about this world into actions and challenges in a game?", "How could we show this world to players?"

Scoring

It is easy to create a game set in a hidden world, but what makes a great (high scoring) game? Think about what it means to be small, or to see hidden things. How would gravity or vision change? Are special tools necessary: microscope, spectrometer, nanoparticles? Does the player jump on sound waves or skip between cells? Do not

picture the game world solely in terms of story, images, or sound effects (although they are also critical!), instead, think about how gameplay is different. Think about goals, tools, enemies/obstacles, to ensure that everything reflects the game world.

Think about it this way. One potential idea would be to create a game in which certain areas of the level cause you to shrink down and interact with miniature objects. This might look very cool, but doesn't necessarily integrate the theme in the gameplay. However, if the player could go back and interact with objects which were formerly normal-sized but are now huge immovable obstacles, this would be an interesting gameplay element inspired by the theme.

Make a game where the rules, story, environment, and player choices all support your hidden world! Be as creative as possible and do lots of brainstorming. Make something great!

Goals

1. To build a game that explores the concept of Hidden Worlds.
2. To meet as many of the OGPC achievements as possible.
3. To make it fun! Even if the finer details of making a game are difficult, it is important to make it fun and keep users engaged.

Specifications

1. Students are encouraged to make a game for whatever platform they have access to, whether it be iOS, Android, Windows, NES, or TI-84.
2. The term "game" is not strictly defined. Teams need not worry about what other people think is or is not a game. Teams will explain their game to the judges and share their vision.
3. Games must incorporate the theme. Judges appreciate creative interpretations of the theme that lead to interesting ideas, but understand that no amount of creative explanation can make Call of Duty Zombies fit the theme.
4. Games must be school-appropriate.
5. Teams must respect copyright law. All assets (primarily graphics and sound) used in games that were not created by the OGPC team for this year's event must be listed with the source and what license they are available under in the game's credits or another document. Check our website for a list of resources where free assets are available. Be advised that "Google image search" is not a source.
6. Games do not have to be finished. Most OGPC achievements require at least a basic, functioning, digital prototype, but a finished and polished product is not necessary to do well.

Judging: Scoring Summary

Overview

Games will be evaluated at the main event by a panel of judges. Judges will look at 5 aspects of the game to determine a score: Programming, Game Design, Art and Assets, Theme and Style, and Professionalism. All of these aspects are important to any game, and we encourage teams to work to meet as many achievements as possible. Earning achievements grants points, which will help the judges determine the winners in each category. In addition to the category awards, there are also several main awards given to teams that display outstanding work in all categories.

Middle School and High School teams compete in separate divisions. Thus, each award will be granted to a middle school team and a high school team.

Each team can only win one award. In the event that a team is the top contender for multiple awards, it will receive the first award in the order listed below, and other teams will be considered for the remaining awards.

Main Awards

The main awards are given to teams that create truly outstanding games. Winning one of these awards implies outstanding work in all categories. Each award winner is carefully selected and judges will revisit teams to ensure that awards are given to most deserving teams.

Best in Show

This award goes to the team that created the best game, considering all categories equally. Games that receive Best in Show excel in all categories, usually holding the top score in at least one.

Judges' Choice

This award is given entirely at the judges' discretion. It could be to break a tie or to recognize a noteworthy game that did not receive an award for whatever reason. This award could also go to a game that the judges thought was really fun or technically impressive regardless of performance in other areas.

Rookie

This award goes to the highest ranking new team (coach and all team members have not participated in OGPC before). Returning teams often know what they're doing from the start, however new teams may need a few months to get a rhythm

down. This award recognizes the hard work of a new team that still manages to shine.

People's Choice

This award goes to the game that the students voted on during the Main Event. The game doesn't have to have won any other awards to be eligible for this award. As long as the people speak, they will be heard! Students are allowed to vote for up to three games as the Main Event goes on and the judges tally them all up at the end to see who won this award.

Category Awards

The five categories are intended to cover all of the important parts of a game. Within these categories, teams will find a wide variety of achievements to ensure a well-rounded game. Teams are awarded a Category Award to recognize hard work in one realm of game design and creation. The following is a basic overview of each category:

Programming

This category focuses on the technical side of creating a game. Games winning the Programming Award display responsible development practices and significant technical knowledge. Choice of platform or programming language does not matter, since all major game-making tools support common programming standards such as use of functions, source control, and documentation.

Game Design

This category focuses on the process of designing a game. Judges look at game mechanics, design documents, and prototypes to see how a team's game evolved and grew over time. The achievements take into account that this is not a process many students have gone through before.

Art and Assets

This category focuses on the way a game looks and sounds, such as sound effects, music, animations, models, and sprites. Judges award more points to teams that create their own assets; however, teams are allowed to use outside assets that are free and publicly licensed (for instance, under Creative Commons). Teams may not commission assets for their game. Teams must provide a list that identifies where assets were obtained and what license they are being used under.

Theme and Style

This category focuses on this year's theme: Hidden Worlds. Judges will evaluate teams on their attempt to follow the theme as they interpret it through game mechanics, art and story. Judges score teams higher for having a consistent story,

character development, and for communicating the theme through mechanics and gameplay rather than only intro, cut-scenes, or static images with text. Students are encouraged to think outside the box and find creative ways of expressing the theme.

Professionalism

This category focuses on students' interactions with each other and with other teams. This award recognizes teams that demonstrate how all members contributed to the development process, demonstrate extensive playtesting, or have an active social media presence. Teams should strive to have a professional presentation and to be respectful of others at the Main Event. Reaching out to other teams (through Facebook or Reddit, for example) to offer help is a great way to show professionalism.

Achievements

Games are scored at the main event via achievements. Each achievement has a point value which contributes to a single scoring category. The full achievement list will be released as soon as possible, so make sure someone on each team is on the email list! In the meantime, here are some of the achievements to take into account:

- Use source control, or backup multiple versions of your source code and other documents on a server (e.g. Git, Google Drive, OneDrive, or your school server).
- Comment or otherwise document the code.
- Write a design document.
- Show updates to the design document that reflect changes in your design.
- Show off a paper prototype of your game (a picture is okay).
- Use a consistent graphical and audio style.
- Story is shown through means other than text or static images.
- Describe what each team member contributed to the project.
- Get people outside the team to playtest your game.
- Maintain a development blog or social media page.
- Finish and release your game online before the day of the Main Event.

Teams: Makeup and Sizing

Overview

Teams are an important part of OGPC. Teams allow students to split work up and produce a better game. Many achievements focus on having a well-balanced team. Students are encouraged to work together to create something awesome!

Team Sizes

Teams work best with somewhere between 2 and 8 people, although no hard limits are enforced. Solo teams will have difficulty with many achievements, particularly in Teamwork. Very large teams may not be able to manage work very effectively, and should consider splitting into smaller teams. No one should feel discouraged from participating in OGPC but it is important to understand that doing this alone or with a huge team could bring more trouble than it is worth.

Team Makeup

Successful teams will have an artist, sound person (music and sound effects), programmer, and a writer, although there are many other roles that could be of great help in creating a game. If students are trying to form a team and cannot find someone to be a writer or artist or some other role, this does not mean that the students are unable to compete – they'll just have to focus on the roles they can fill and try to get the category awards they are still able to get. If a team cannot find an experienced programmer, there are many visual tools and online tutorials to help someone step up to fill that role. The ideal team uses their strengths to create something amazing and supplements their weaknesses with resources from other sources.

School Affiliation

Teams are **not** required to be affiliated with a school. School affiliation can make it easier for teams to find a coach, volunteers, or meeting space but it's not necessary. All interested students are encouraged to form a team. Some teams form through local organizations such as 4H, Boys'/Girls' Club, or a local library. Others are independently organized teams. Looking for a team or a coach in your area? Let us know at info@ogpc.info.

Main Event: What to Expect

Overview

The Main Event is where students get to show off their creations to other students, parents, judges, and industry professionals from all over the state. Students are encouraged to walk around the event to see other games, although they should take turns staying to present their game. When being judged, students should present what they contributed as well as guide the judges through the most interesting parts of their creation.

Judging and Demoing

Students are required to bring whatever hardware and software is required to play their game: Mac, Windows, iOS, Oculus Rift, or custom hardware. Teams should not count on anything being available for use other than power. Judges will also want to see code, so if a team is showing off a mobile app or something similar make sure a computer with the development environment is also present.

Students are not required to move their setup during the event, but teams need to be ready to present their game to the judges and to other teams that drop by. Teams should always be ready to help someone play a level or talk about the game. Everyone has worked hard – now show off!

Age Levels and Fair Judging

Teams compete in separate Middle School and High School divisions at the Main Event. First-year teams at either level are eligible for a special "Rookie" award in addition to the other categories. Teams are encouraged to focus on whatever judging category they are best equipped to deal with. The different category awards allow for teams with outstanding work in only one or two categories to still win an award.

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