COMS 465: Computer Mediated Communication

Plan

Review
Virtual Worlds & Bots
Preview



Review



Avatar

"At its core an avatar is a simple thing...It is an interactive, social representation of a user" (Meadows, 2008, p. 23).

Identity

"For some players the avatar becomes a purposeful projection or idealization of their own identity, while for others, the avatar is an experiment with new identities." (Nick Yee 2008).









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Channeling uhan The Wired Interview with Wired's patronsaint. By Gary Wolf

Scholars agree that Marshall McLuhan's earliest books were written by him, but there is mystery and uncertainty about who really wrote his subsequent works. MoLuhan would its on a couch, head on a pillow, and spoul ideas, for hours. Scenetimes assistants would transcribe as McLuhan dictated, sometimes they would latar write down what McLahan had said, and sometimes they would write down what they thought McLuhan had said. Somehow books were assembled from these notes and recollections, and then McLuhan signed his name to them. This indefinite manner of creation was never a problem for Mulluhan who often insisted that facts were not as important as fallacies.

The fallacies of this interview with McLuhan are as follows: About a year ago, someone calling himself Marshall McLuhan began posting anonymously on a popular mailing list called Zone (zone@wired.com). Gary Woll began a correspondence with the poster via a chain of anonymous remailers. McLuhan (who would have been 85 this year) said he now lives in a beach town in Southern California named "Parma." (This town does not exist.) One after another, tiny hints, confirmed by third parties close to McLuhan decodes ago. convinced Welf that if the poster was not McLuhan himself, it was a bot programmed with an eerie command of McLuhan's life and inimitable perspective. After many rounds of e-mail, the conversation got down to the ma of the matter. What does McLuhan think about all this new digital technology?

> message create an

> > ly first idea came almost produced

t into a financial petically the audi-I be issued to the

and Michael Stein vs Withrict CARUARY 1995

Wired: Do you still believe that the modium is the meanage?

McLuhan: The real message of media today is ubiguity. It is no longer something we do, but something we are part of. It confronts us as if from the outside with all the sensory experience of the history of humanity. It is as if we have amoutated not our ears or our eyes, but ourselves, and then established a total prosthesis - an automation + in our place.

What happens when you see yourself outside yourself? It is disconcerting, ske a halt of mimors. A character in Dickens is a representation of a social role, but a modern movie actress who tries to play a role will seem old fashioned. To cope with this, actresses have cooled themselves way down, become numb blanks. Thus, Today's stars are totally tranquilized. The smart thing for a get nowaclays is to play rumb. Dumb achiestes used to be in demand, now oursit achiestes an in demand Rigor mortis is de riqueur

Postindustrial men has a network identity, or a net-ID. The role is now a temporary shift of state produced by a combination of environmental factors, like in a neural network. This possibility has always been tatent in the concept of role, but in the machine sge this was perceived as a danger, while today it is simply a game - we no longer see shifting roles as dangerous and taboo and therefore theatrically competing.

"About a year ago, someone calling himself Marshall McLuhan began posting anonymously on a popular mailing list called Zone (zone@wired.com). Gary Wolf began a correspondence with the poster via a chain of anonymous remailers" (Wolf 1996, 129).

2. Opportunities/Challenges

Flame Wars

"The upside of incorporeal interaction: a technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. Online, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants" (Dery, 1994, p. 3).





"By virtue of being physically disembodied from the creator, avatars in the theater of the game space may act in antisocial and even pathological ways— ways in which the 'real' person never would— shooting, maiming, and killing in brutal fashion" (Noveck, 2006, pp. 269-270).

D VIPTUAL WOPLDS and Beth Simone Noveck

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2. Opportunities/Challenges



Alter Ego Auators and their creators



Robble Cooper

2. Opportunities/Challenges

Running Version 1.8.3+47 of LambdaM00

A Rape in Cyberspace

An avatar, named Mr. Bungle, took advantage of and sexually abused other avatars in the textbased virtual world of LambdaMOO. Hidden behind the mask of the avatars, users feel free to engage in antisocial and violent behavior.

, where thousands of people voluntarily
. What these people say or do may not
iting any international city, it is wise
and what you say.
ovided the materials for the buildings of
le for what is said or done in them. In
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ies. The statements and viewpoints
ose of the wizards, Pavel Curtis,
laim any responsibility for them.

hat you ask for permission from all

direct participants before quoting any material collected here.

```
For assistance either now or later, type `help'.
The lag is low; there are 51 connected.
co guest
```

Guests at LambdaMOO are warned that they are accountable for their actions here. In particular, Guests are warned that any

Review



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

"There is a gap between virtual and actual self...and a broadly shared cultural assumption that virtual selfhood is not identical to actual selfhood" (Boellstorff, p. 119).

Today

Virtual Worlds
Castronova - Virtual Worlds
Gaming the System - ch. 3
Bots & Other Things
Gaming the System - ch. 4
Epstein - From Russia with Love





She responded to my e-mail quite affectionately—and also admitted that she really lived in Russia, not California. Normally I find that kind of distance daunting, but her photos were so attractive and her e-mails so warm that I continued to correspond with

Preview

Artificial Intelligence

Kevin Slavin | TEDGlobal 2011 How algorithms shape our world

Artificial Intelligence

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DAVID J. GUNKEL Northern Illinois University, USA

Whether we acknowledge it or not, communication and artificial intelligence (AI) are closely related. On the one hand, communication has been instrumental to both the theory and practice of AI. In particular, it is communication that provides the science of AI with its defining test case and experimental evidence. This is immediately apparent in the agenda-setting paper that is credited with (re)defining machine intelligence, Alan Turing's "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." Likewise the recent development of autonomous machines, learning algorithms, and smart systems introduces new chal-

> communication studies. Dealing with these innovations equire a significant recompiling of the discipline and its ocus, instrumentalist theory of technology, and modern

al intelligence" is a product of an academic conference at Dartmouth College in 1956, it is Alan Turing's 1950 ion," or what is now routinely called "the Turing test," the field. Although Turing begins his essay by proposing n machines think?" he immediately recognizes difficulor this reason, he proposes to pursue an alternative line e describes it, be "expressed in relatively unambiguous

an be described in terms of a game which we call the "imitation ople, a man (A), a woman (B), and an interrogator (C) who may be ays in a room apart from the other two. The object of the game for which of the other two is the man and which is the woman. (Turing,

> nade on the basis of simple questions and answers. The rious questions, and on the basis of their responses to m whether the respondent is a man or a woman. "In not help the interrogator," Turing further stipulates, "the better still, typewritten. The ideal arrangement is to have

a teleprinter communicating between the two rooms" (Turning, 1999, pp. 37-38). In this way, the initial arrangement of the "game of imitation" is, as Turing describes it,

The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy. Klaus Bruhn Jensen and Robert T. Craig (Editors-in-Chief), Jefferson D. Pooley and Eric W. Rothenbuhler (Associate Editors). © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2016 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/9781118766806.vbitect076