

SERIOUS GAMES AND LG2G: A TIMELINE

2002

SERIOUS GAMES

LEARNING GAMES TO GO

The modern age of serious games (those intended to teach or allow an experience as opposed to purely entertain) is launched when the U.S. Army introduces a video game called *America's Army*.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington D.C. launched a "Serious Games Initiative" to encourage the development of games that address policy and management issues. This is an acknowledgement that the term "serious games" has come into wide usage in the gaming community.

2004

The First Serious Games Summit is held as part of the Game Developers Conference, a major assembly for those involved in designing and producing games.

MIT holds its first Education Arcade: Games in Education Conference in Los Angeles in conjunction with the video gaming industry's largest yearly conference.

Nintendo DS launches in North America on November 21.

2005

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Release of the wireless PlayStation Portable (PSP), a competitor for Nintendo's DS.

[Food Force](#), a serious game about world hunger is released by the United Nations' World Food Programme. The game takes participants to a fictional island in the Indian Ocean, where they participate in rescue missions to help starving citizens.

SEPTEMBER ... U.S. Department of Education announces that MPT has received a [Star Schools grant](#), funding the Learning Games to Go project.

OCTOBER ... Serious Games Summit is held in Alexandria, Virginia, an East Coast conference for people who are interested in learning through games. [MIT](#), [MPT](#), and [CTE](#) staff attend.

The National Summit on Educational Games is held in Washington, DC. The Federation of American

OCTOBER ... [Macro International](#) begins surveying teachers to find what topics are particularly hard for pre-algebra students to grasp and on which topics teachers would like additional resources.

MPT begins survey of hand-held platforms with an eye to finding one that would be most useful as the project goes forward.

Scientists, the Entertainment Software Association, and the National Science Foundation sponsored the Summit. MPT staff members were two of the 100 leaders who came together to discuss ways to accelerate the development, commercialization, and deployment of new generation games for learning.

MPT and MIT staff work to identify math content for the game based on national and state standards, as well as advice from noted mathematics education experts.

NOVEMBER ... Microsoft's Xbox 360 goes on sale

The One Laptop Per Child project gains much more attention when Nicholas Negroponte and Kofi Annan unveil a working prototype of the Children's Machine 1 (CM1) on November 16, 2005 at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, Tunisia.

2006

SERIOUS GAMES

LEARNING GAMES TO GO

FEBRUARY ... Staff from the Education Arcade and MPT meet at MIT to begin to talk about beginning thoughts on the game design

MARCH ... *[Darfur is Dying](#)* a serious game, is released, giving players a first person experience the situation 2.5 million refugees in the Darfur region of Sudan face. "Players must keep their refugee camp functioning in the face of possible attack by

Janjaweed militias. Players can also learn more about the genocide in Darfur that has taken the lives of 400,000 people, and find ways to get involved to help stop this human rights and humanitarian crisis.”

APRIL ... MPT and CTE host the first Learning Games to Go Advisory Panel meeting with teachers, educators, and gaming experts.

MPT launches the *Got Game?* site on <http://thinkport.org> to begin to build interest in serious games in general and *Lure of the Labyrinth* in particular

MAY ... The Entertainment Software Association kicks off the [Video Game Voters Network](#) as “a place for American gamers to organize and defend against threats to video games by registering to vote and letting Congress know how important this issue is to the community.”

The Game Critics Awards are announced. Winning all three top categories is Will Wright’s *Spore*, a game that has not been publicly released. Wright created *The Sims*.

MAY ... The Learning Games to Go project launches [Newbie Blog](#), a blog that follows a 46-year old who is trying to figure out how games work and how they can help people learn.

JUNE ... The Games + Learning + Society’s second annual conference held in Madison, Wisconsin

JUNE ... MPT begins to assemble the Advance Team of teachers that will help guide development, test

features talks by gaming leaders such as James Gee. MIT, MPT, and CTE staff attend.

materials, and participate in project evaluation.

JULY ... The University of Maryland, Salisbury, Wicomico County Public Schools, and Seaford (DE) School District hold a conference on hand-held computing. MPT and CTE staff attend.

JULY ... CTE continues research on virtual reality (VR) to see how it can help students become immersed in a game environment. Working in partnership with Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab, CTE is exploring the use of VR as a tool for learning for all kinds of students.

The Education Arcade delivers its first game design document for *Lure of the Labyrinth*. This is the first official planning document for the game and follows months of conferencing.

AUGUST ... A recent U.K. study by the Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute found that about 60% of 11-16 year-old students were in favor of using video learning games in the classroom.

AUGUST ... MPT holds its first Advance Team meeting. In addition to these teachers and project staff, USDoE representatives attend the three-day session, held in Owings Mills, Maryland.

SEPTEMBER ... The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) publish their 40-page document, titled [*Curriculum Focal Points: A Quest for Coherence*](#), saying it will help change the "mile-wide, inch-deep" approach that they say has left most U.S. students without a solid preparation for higher-level mathematics.

SEPTEMBER ... MPT finalizes a contract for game development with [FableVision](#), a Boston media company dedicated to helping all learners discover their potential.

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA)

Advance Team members begin to communicate with each other in a virtual learning community, set up by CTE for them. The community, called the Electronic Learning Community (ELC), helps teachers follow up

announces the downsizing of its previously monumental video-game trade show, the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E³).

on ideas introduced at the Advance Team meeting the month before. The ELC will continue to be the communication hub for the Advance team teachers.

OCTOBER ... The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation announces plans to build the emerging field of digital media and learning, committing \$50 million over five years to the effort. The Foundation will fund research and innovative projects focused on understanding the impact of the widespread use of digital media on our youth and how they learn.

[More details](#)

The Serious Games Summit convenes with a keynote speech by Henry Jenkins, the Director of MIT's Comparative Media Studies and a senior LG2G advisor. Dr. Jenkins introduces *The Lure of the Labyrinth* to this community of game designers, developers, and educators.

NOVEMBER ... Nintendo's Wii is released in the US

Google introduces [Google for Educators](#), a new site offering teachers' guides to twelve Google products as well as numerous lesson plans on a wide range of subjects.

NOVEMBER ... FableVision develops the first character and background sketches for *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

DECEMBER ... Detailed functional specifications for the first puzzle in *Lure of the Labyrinth* are released.

2007

SERIOUS GAMES

JANUARY ... Gamasutra names the Nintendo's Wii Sports the game of the year for 2006.

FEBRUARY ... Over 70 universities have now built virtual campuses within *Second Life*, a virtual environment. "Here, users (called Residents) interact with one another, participating in social activities, and create and trade items."

MARCH ... The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) releases a new draft

LEARNING GAMES TO GO

JANUARY ... MPT holds its second Advance Team meeting at MPT, featuring puzzle play and a lesson built around Celestia, a real-time 3D space simulation featuring a database of over 100000 stars. CTE personnel led this session. Teachers on the Advance Team begin paper play with some of the puzzles that will become part of *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

Design documents and functional specifications for second and third puzzles in *Lure of the Labyrinth* are released by FableVision.

FEBRUARY ... MPT staff, Advance Team teachers, and the Advisory Panel review the first puzzle prototype (The Cafeteria puzzle). This release culminates the first steps in the design process and determines standards that will inform the design process from here on out.

of its [National Education Technology Standards](#) (NETS)

The video-sharing website for teachers [TeacherTube](#), premieres, modeled on the popular YouTube. Its creator, Jason Smith, says the site is a place that will "provide an online community for sharing instructional videos."

At the Serious Games Summit (held as part of the Games Development Conference) a presentation by Scot Osterweil (who leads the MIT team developing *Lure of the Labyrinth*) is rated the best presentation of the conference.

JUNE ... The Lifelong Kindergarten Group at MIT's Media Lab unveils *Scratch*, an easy-to-learn programming language designed to be used by grade-school children.

JULY ... The MacArthur Foundation announces a major grant as part of its digital learning initiative, awarding \$1.1 to a New York City school that will use "game-inspired methods" to teach literacy and other subjects to students in grades 6-12.

The *Stars and Stripes* reports that the some military occupational therapists have begun to use Nintendo's

Wii video game system as part of their treatment for soldiers wounded in America's current wars.

AUGUST ... The first annual Game Developers Conference (GDC) China is held in Shanghai, with more than 700 game professionals in attendance.

SEPTEMBER ... FableVision begins casting for the voices of the characters in *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

NOVEMBER ... *Halo: Contact Harvest*, the fifth book in a series of books based on the widely-popular *Halo* game, debuts as the third most popular book on the New York Times Bestseller List debut, at #3, in its first week of sales, making it the second Halo novel to make the list.

NOVEMBER ... CTE sponsors its first Emerging Technologies Symposium, with attendees from the education and gaming world meeting to “examine the role that immersive simulations, and the cutting-edge technologies surrounding them, can play in the promotion of engaging, inquiry-based learning.”

The first wing of *Lure of the Labyrinth* is completed and released for review by MPT, Advance Team teachers, and the Advisory Panel.

MPT and FableVision begin work on site design, establishing the web site that will be the gateway to *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

DECEMBER... Gamasutra names these games as the best freeware games of 2007:

[Knytt Stories](#)

[Crayon Physics](#)

[Chain Factor](#)
[Clean Asia](#)
[Gesundheit!](#)

2008

SERIOUS GAMES

LEARNING GAMES TO GO

JANUARY ... FableVision begins work on the Administrators Tool that teachers can use to track student progress in the game.

FEBRUARY ... Annual Game Developers Conference held in San Francisco. This conference is the premiere event for game developers and draws thousands from around the world.

FEBRUARY ... During the Advance Team's Winter Institute, teachers get a chance to work with *Lure of the Labyrinth* puzzles to define the ways in which they coincide with pre-algebra curriculum, continuing work on teacher support materials.

MARCH ... On March 13, 2008, the National Mathematics Advisory Panel presents [Foundations for Success: The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel](#) to the President of the United States and the Secretary of Education.

MARCH ... FableVision delivers the final trailer that will grace the home page of the game site. Its catchy music and colorful animations are designed to intrigue students, teachers, and families using the site. The Boston educational media firm also delivers the Internet template that MPT staff will complete to provide the gateway to *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

After months of effort, MPT, MIT, and FableVision finally pick a name for the game: *Lure of the Labyrinth*. About 300 names were considered.

APRIL ... A new study shows that most K-12 students want to use digital games to learn in the classroom, but that very few of their teachers are giving them the chance to do so, according to the annual Speak Up Survey conducted by Project Tomorrow.

APRIL ... MPT staff and Advance Team teachers make presentations at the MICCA Annual conference held in Baltimore, MD. Gary Goldberger and Paul Reynolds from the game's developer, FableVision, delivered one of the conference keynotes about the roles of story, character development and design in making a good learning game.

The first prototype of *Lure of the Labyrinth* goes into limited release to be used as a tool in the evaluation process conducted for the project by Macro International.

MAY ... International Silver Surfers Day is held in the UK, honoring the over-fifty-year-olds who, according to research by Ofcom, spend significantly more time online than 18-34 year-olds. Ofcom is an independent organization which regulates the UK's broadcasting, telecommunications and wireless communications sectors.

MAY ... Macro International continues their project evaluation work, turning their attention to teacher materials developed in support of the game.

JUNE ... MPT staff and Advance Team teachers make presentations at the NECC (the National Educational Computing Conference) in San Antonio.

Concept art for Wing Two of *Lure of the Labyrinth* is released

JULY ... CTE continues work on its prototype VR project, now titled *Seahawk*. Initially focused on STEM-related content, this simulation will, in later iterations, allow teachers to customize content to meet their needs in teaching any curriculum.

Concept art for Wing Three of *Lure of the Labyrinth* is released

AUGUST ... EA and Maxis announce that Will Wright's new game *Spore* will launch in early September. In this experience, players are allowed to build their own personal universe by creating life, establishing tribes, building civilizations, and even traveling in space.

AUGUST ... Macro International begins planning for final evaluation efforts, which will begin when the first version of the game is released in November.

MPT, Advance team teachers, and The Advisory Panel continue to review graphic novel content for *Lure of the Labyrinth*.

MPT's Professional Development team and Producer Bill Beustring begin production of a video that will help teachers integrate *Lure of the Labyrinth* into their current math curricula. The video will be available on the *Lure of the Labyrinth* web site.

SEPTEMBER ... A new survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project shows that 97% of young people today play video games in one form or another – and they often play them with someone else, either in person or online. The study, funded by

SEPTEMBER ... An alpha version of the second wing of *Lure of the Labyrinth* is unveiled for review by project staff, Advance team teachers, and the Advisory Panel. MPT staff and FableVision also tackle issues related to registering for the game.

the McArthur Foundation, surveyed 12 – 17-year-olds throughout the US. Their favorite games were a very eclectic bunch. They included "Guitar Hero," "Halo 3," "Madden NFL," solitaire, and "Dance Dance Revolution."

MPT begins creating materials for and building out the online educator's materials that will accompany the game

OCTOBER ... Senator Barack Obama becomes the first presidential hopeful to buy space inside a video game to advertize his campaign. His spots run in nine different EA games connected to the internet, including Madden NFL 09 and Burnout Paradise.

OCTOBER ... *Lure of the Labyrinth* is completed. A beta version of the game is posted for review by MPT staff, Advance Team teachers, and the Advisory Panel.

Sony recalls copies of LittleBigPlanet for containing at least two references to the Quran, Islam's holiest text. The references were in the first 30 seconds of background music on one of the game's levels.

NOVEMBER ... National Geographic announces it will form a new business unit called National Geographic Games, developing games based on their core themes and media properties. Their first release will be "Herod's Tomb," a downloadable game for the Mac, iPhone and Windows that can also be played online through the National Geographic Channel's Web site.

NOVEMBER ... Macro International prepares to conduct a quasi-experimental study in Maryland schools on the impact of the *Lure of the Labyrinth* on student outcomes.

Zeebo, a new gaming system platform, is released in Brazil, preloaded with some games. Others are available by download directly to the unit.

Two of the strongest sellers at the beginning of the holiday season are Nintendo's Wii and the Wii Fit game experience.

DECEMBER ... On December 14, Spike TV holds its 2008 Video Game Awards, hosted by Jack Black. At the show, game designer Will Wright, the creator of the *Sims* games, receives the first-ever Gamer God award for his achievements in gaming industry.

2009

SERIOUS GAMES

LEARNING GAMES TO GO

JANUARY ... *Lure of the Labyrinth* site premieres and becomes publically available on <http://labyrinth.thinkport.org>.

