SuperGaming!
ludic networking & massively collaborative play

JANE MCGONIGAL
42 Entertainment & UC Berkeley
www.avantgame.com
What is SuperGaming!?
What is SuperGaming!? (etymology)

SuperGaming! is:

• massively scaled, as in **supersized** gaming
What is SuperGaming! ? (etymology)

SuperGaming! is:

• massively scaled, as in *super-sized* gaming

• embedded in and projected onto everyday public environments, as in *superimposed* gaming.
What is SuperGaming!? (etymology)

SuperGaming! is:

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• able to heighten the power and capabilities of its players, as in *superhero* gaming;
What is **SuperGaming!**? (etymology)

SuperGaming! is:

• massively scaled, as in **supersized** gaming

• embedded in and projected onto everyday public environments, as in **superimposed** gaming.

• able to heighten the power and capabilities of its players, as in **superhero** gaming;

• designed to harness the play of distributed individuals into a high-performance problem-solving unit, as in **supercomputing** gaming.
What is SuperGaming!? (structural/aesthetic)

Networking that is:

**ludic** *(gamelike)*
- rule sets govern action & interaction
- there is a shared goal and clear “win condition”
- “magic circle” is created
- transformative through play

& **spectacular** *(for an audience)*
- public display
- large or lavish scale
- contrast, friction and/or surprise
What is **SuperGaming!**? (technological)

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<td>PDAs</td>
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What is **SuperGaming!**? (cultural-historical)

- smart mobs
- networked console gaming
- superhero culture
- live action role playing
- open source ethic
- & hacker culture
- do-it-yourself supercomputer culture
- urban computing
SuperGaming!
ludic networking & massively collaborative play

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42 Entertainment & UC Berkeley
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Moderately collaborative play

The Tele-actor Project (Alpha Lab/UC Berkeley)
Moderately collaborative play

the co-opticon project & demonstrate (Alpha Lab/UC Berkeley)
Moderately collaborative play

Tele-Twister (Alpha Lab/UC Berkeley)
Moderately collaborative play

Research questions
Moderately collaborative play

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• How do collaborative strategies change in the absence of verbal communication?
Moderately collaborative play

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• Can competitive sub-structures improve overall collaboration?
Moderately collaborative play

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Moderately collaborative play

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Moderately collaborative play

Research questions

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• Can competitive sub-structures improve overall collaboration?
• How does leadership emerge and evolve during highly condensed, quickfire collaborations vs. ongoing collaborations?
• What non-averaging algorithms and untraditional statistical categories could be used to best represent the collective judgment or desires of the group?
• Does collaboration require community?
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges

• How can do you design a problem that requires collective effort?
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges

• How can you design a problem that requires collective effort?
• How can your interface communicate individual, differentiated roles within the collaborative structure?
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges

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• How do you design for collective intelligence, rather than hive mind or mob effect?
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges

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How do you get enough people together to test the projects at larger scales and higher densities?
Moderately collaborative play

Design challenges

• How can you design a problem that requires collective effort?
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How do you get enough people together to test the projects at larger scales and higher densities?

PUBLIC PLAY. URBAN ENVIRONMENTS.
SuperGaming!
ludic networking & massively collaborative play

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42 Entertainment & UC Berkeley
www.avantgame.com
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JANE MCCONIGAL
42 Entertainment & UC Berkeley
www.avantgame.com
Situated Gaming

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42 Entertainment & UC Berkeley
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Situated Gaming

What is situated gaming?

Think: Clay Shirky’s “situated software” (2004):
Situated Gaming

What is situated gaming?

Think: Clay Shirky’s “situated software” (2004):

• “A refusal to embrace scale”

• Social software that is the right size for the right community

• Ideal # of users: 10 – 150
Situated Gaming

What is situated gaming?

Think: Clay Shirky’s “situated software” (2004):

• Duration as the temporal equivalent of scale – reject this too

• Short life, or one-off, deployment
Situated Gaming

Situated gaming is the practice of developing small-scale games designed for specific local communities.

It is currently the norm in experimental and research-oriented pervasive game design.
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

**PacManhattan**
(NYU’s ITP 2004)
Scale: 5 street players, 5 online players
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

Asphalt Game
(Intel 2004)
Scale: single player street play
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

Can You See Me Now?
(Blast Theory/Mixed Reality Lab, 2003)
Scale: 4 street players, 20 online players
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

**Uncle Roy Around You**
(Blast Theory/Mixed Media Lab, 2004)
Scale: 4 street players, 20 online players
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

The Seamful Game
(Equator Project)
4 – 16 street players
Situated Gaming

A few of my favorite situated pervasive games:

**Big Urban Game**
(Design Institute 2003)
Scale: 30 street players, 3000 online players
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“The more the better.”
– Andrew Fluegelman, founding member of the 1970s New Games movement, on the optimal number of players.
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“The more the better.”
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Read: there is a **phenomenological pleasure** in being part of a larger (much larger) whole.
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“More is different.”
– P.W. Anderson, physicist, on the phenomenon of emergence — the unpredictably complex behavior of atoms in larger particle systems.
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“More is different.”
– P.W. Anderson, physicist, on the phenomenon of emergence — the unpredictably complex behavior of atoms in larger particle systems.

Read: Unexpected things happen when you scale up.
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“More is needed.”
– Pat Miller, computer scientist, on the massive number of PCs required to create an ad-hoc supercomputer.
SuperGaming! design for more, more, more

“More is needed.”
– Pat Miller, computer scientist, on the massive number of PCs required to create an ad-hoc supercomputer.

Read: Massive scaling allows you to create exponentially more effective and powerful systems.
SuperGaming! Why to massively-scale play:

- More pleasure
- More emergence
- More problem-solving power
SuperGaming! the mass in massively-scaled

Massively multiplayer online games already think big…

JANE MCGONIGAL  Computer Systems Lab – Colloquium @ Stanford University  2.23.05
Massively multiplayer online games already think big…

But they face scaling challenges, as well.

Multiple servers limit interaction and accessibility.
SuperGaming! the mass in massively-scaled

But where is the MASS?

- materiality
- physicality
- embodied experience of a density of people

City of Heroes

JANE McGONIGAL  Computer Systems Lab – Colloquium @ Stanford University  2.23.05
SuperGaming! the mass in massively-scaled

…And, but what about the MASSES?

• In the public eye
• Mainstream
SuperGaming! the **mass** in massively-scaled

So, let’s give massively multi-player gaming:

- Physical real-world, not just virtual, mass
- A place in the public domain.

*Star Wars Galaxies*
SuperGaming! **Community vs. Audience**
SuperGaming! Community vs. Audience

Audience:
- One-to-many communications
- Members are isolated from one another
- Infinitely scalable

Community:
- Two-way communications, many-to-many
- Members are densely connected
- Finite, starts becoming more audience-like >150
SuperGaming! Community vs. Audience

What do we mean by **density of connections**?

  traditional: “know each other”

  But must it be identity-based?

  Could it be interaction-based instead?

What do we mean by **two-way communication**?

  traditional: member to member(s)

  But do the “receivers” have to be in the community?

  Could the group collectively communicate outwards instead?
SuperGaming! density of connections

Massively multiplayer thumb-wrestling (Monochrome 2004)
SuperGaming! density of connections

Massively multiplayer thumb-wrestling (Monochrome 2004)

Kazaa Peer to Peer
As many three-player-knots as possible are built.
Then these knots are connected via the players' free left hands.
SuperGaming! density of connections

Massively multipler thumb-wrestling (Monochrome 2004)

“This experimental project engages low-fi sweaty-fingers-entertainment and places it in the high TCP/IP context of recent Massive Multiplayer Online Gaming.”
SuperGaming! \textit{density of connections}

Massively multiplayer thumb-wrestling (Monochrome 2004)

“Unlimited amounts of players can connect to join a Multiplayer Thumb-Wrestling Network. As the number of players is unlimited, global thumb-wrestling may emerge through self-sustaining peer-to-peer networks and ad-hoc socializing.”
“Radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes....”

-Bertolt Brecht, *The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication*
“...That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers.”

-Bertolt Brecht, The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication
SuperGaming! two-way communications

Bertolt Brecht, *The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication*

Brecht’s radio theory fulfilled by the Internet?

Critical Art Ensemble’s “Utopian Promise ➔ Net Realites”

William J. Mitchell’s *Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City*
SuperGaming! two-way communications

1936: Brecht’s vision for radio achieved with Welles’ War of the Worlds?
SuperGaming! two-way communications

1936: Brecht’s vision for radio achieved with Welles’ *War of the Worlds*?

- Massively-scaled communication
- Public character
- Inventive and persuasive responses
- Active and interactive drama
SuperGaming! two-way communications

1936: Brecht’s vision for radio achieved with Welles’ *War of the Worlds*?

- Massively-scaled communication
- Public character
- Inventive and persuasive responses
- Active and interactive drama

What if the “players” knew what they were doing?
SuperGaming!

Flash mob 6/16/03

Flash mob supercomputer meetup 4/23/04

Go Game 5/12/03

I Love Bees 8/24/04
June 12, 2003, San Francisco — The Go Game
Genre: “urban superhero gaming”
Scale: Over 450 simultaneous local street players
July 16, 2003, San Francisco — Whirling Dervishes
Genre: “flash mob”
Scale: Over 300 simultaneous local participants
April 23, 2004, San Francisco — FlashMob I

Genre: “flash mob supercomputing” + LAN gaming tournament

Scale: Over 700 simultaneous local participants
August 24, 2004, San Francisco — I Love Bees
Genre: “flash mob gaming”
Scale: Over 10,000 distributed local participants
August 24, 2004, San Francisco — I Love Bees
Genre: “flash mob gaming”
Scale: Over 10,000 distributed local participants
SuperGaming! two-way communications

HALT - MODULE CORE HEMORRHAGE

Control has been yielded to the SYSTEM PERIL DISTRIBUTED REFLEX.

This medium is classified, and has a STRONG INTRUSIVE INCLINATION.

PHASE 1 COMPLETE: Network throttling has eroded.

In 7 days this medium will metastasize.

COUNCUTOWN TO WIDE AWAKE AND PHYSICAL:

20:15:12:42:265

Make your decisions accordingly.

FAQ
Q: What happened to this site?
A: No idea. Help me out here.

JANE MCGONIGAL Computer Systems Lab – Colloquium @ Stanford University 2.23.05
SuperGaming! (trend/context)

San Francisco based examples are not isolated…

Urban superhero gaming

+ 

Flash mobs

+ 

Flash mob supercomputing

+ 

Flash mob gaming
“Life imitates ARG.”

-ARG player g_rottic

gaming that feels like real life, only MORE ➔
players who feel more capable, more confident, more expressive, more engaged and more connected in their real everyday lives
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces,
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months,
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, or thousands of players come together online,
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What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

An interactive drama played out online and in real-world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, or thousands of players come together online, form collaborative social networks, and work together to solve a mystery or problem …that would be absolutely *impossible* to solve alone.
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

6 key terms that describe ARGs:

- cross-media
- pervasive
- persistent
- collaborative
- constructive
- expressive
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross-media  
 pervasive  
 persistent  
 collaborative  
 constructive  
 expressive

Case study: I LOVE BEES (2004)
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross media: clues, narratives and missions are distributed via a variety of digital media:
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross media: clues, narratives and missions are distributed via a variety of digital media:

- web sites
- emails
- blogs
- MP3s and DVDs
- web cams
- text messages
- instant messages
- networked game consoles
- handheld GPS devices
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

- cross-media
- pervasive
- persistent
- collaborative
- constructive
- expressive
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross-media
pervasive
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What is *Alternate Reality Gaming*?

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cross-media  pervasive  persistent  collaborative  constructive  expressive
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

**pervasive:** extending into the real-world, taking place in everyday environments
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**pervasive:** extending into the real-world, taking place in everyday environments

- physical clues are embedded in everyday environments
- location-specific information is required
- site-specific missions and challenges are given
- public “ubiquitous computing” and personal mobile technologies become essential tools for players
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming?**

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**cross-media**

**pervasive**

**persistent**

**collaborative**

**constructive**

**expressive**
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

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<td>map</td>
<td>rand</td>
<td>acme</td>
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</table>
cross-media
pervasive
persistent
collaborative
constructive
expressive
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

persistent: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
What is *Alternate Reality Gaming*?

**persistent:** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- always on
- unfolds in “real-time”
- organic and responsive to players
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

cross-media
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What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

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What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

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What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**collaborative:** designed to be absolutely impossible for an individual or small group to solve in isolation

- parse information strategically
- require location-specific information
- massively-scale challenges
- “walk and talk and chew gum” design
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**constructive**: requires players to build the gaming platform themselves
What is *Alternate Reality Gaming*?

**constructive**: requires players to build the gaming platform themselves

- “Batteries Not Included” design
- communities self-organize
- communications systems are designed and developed by the players
- social engineering
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARG: The Haunted Apiary (Lot Op!): Azon Coordination</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a temporary moderated forum in which to post your reports from the field at the Azon Coordinate locations, and to discuss whatever the heck ends up happening. Please keep threads strictly on topic as noted. Only moderators can post new threads.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11425</td>
<td>Wed Nov 03, 2004 15:12 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Modera</strong>tor: Aweana, fireball, sapago, cathwooded, krystyn, LouMac, celina43, allie, djamath4uy, Vann, Anthrop1f, Brefingma, Dickard, rowan72</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARG: The Haunted Apiary (Lot Op!): General/Updates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Last Post</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(aka System Perl Distributed Reflex or Loveboss) - Now Playing: What do the letters in the honey mean? What's up with Dana's aunt's website? What is the connection to Halo 2 for Xbox? Why isn't Dana turning into a bee?</td>
<td>1336</td>
<td>21749</td>
<td>Wed Nov 03, 2004 12:09 pm</td>
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<td><strong>Moderators:</strong> Aweana, fireball, sapago, cathwooded, krystyn, LouMac, celina43, allie, djamath4uy, Vann, Anthrop1f, Brefingma, Dickard, rowan72</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| ARG: The Haunted Apiary (Lot Op!): Catalog | Topics | Posts | Last Post |
| Catalog information about sites, chat, **Reach Out** | | | |
| **Members:** Aweana, fireball, sapago, cathwooded, krystyn, LouMac, celina43, allie, djamath4uy, Vann, Anthrop1f, Brefingma, Dickard, rowan72 |

**The Bruce.ca - Home of Geoff May - Microsoft Internet Explorer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><a href="http://wWw.thebruce.ca:443">wWw.thebruce.ca:443</a></th>
<th>Real World</th>
<th>Organized Data</th>
<th>Character Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 13: Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June was looking for another site, but he dislikes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bruce.ca - Home of Geoff May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14: Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June makes a second blog entry about China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 15: Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazeweb (<a href="http://www.mazeweb.com">http://www.mazeweb.com</a>) has been</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cataloged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16: Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazeweb (<a href="http://www.mazeweb.com">http://www.mazeweb.com</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roger's blog, the Bruce, has been cataloged, with a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>coordinate to August 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily is holding</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Thursday Trails**

- **The Operator**
  - **Source:** Enlarged in-game map of HQ, from the adventures of the Operator.
  - **Mission:** Assist the Operator in completing the missions.
  - **Items:** outfits, maps, weapons.
  - **Goals:** Collect all items, complete all missions.

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**Monday Trails**

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**Castle of Mind**

- **Lance**, male, 12 years old, haunted by the Spectre.
- **Shadow**, male, 12 years old, haunted by the Spectre.
- **Ashton**, female, 13 years old, haunted by the Spectre.
- **Nina**, female, 13 years old, haunted by the Spectre.

**The Haunted Apiary (Lot Op!): New to the game or have a question? Help you out. This is also the place to be.**

**Cross-media, pervasive, persistent, collaborative, constructive, expressive.**
**Combat Training Exercise**

What the freak is this? Read what GameSpot has uncovered: [article](#).

OMG!!!111! lone!11even!!!1... How do I get in?
Read the instructions from Melissa: [Combat Training Exercise](#) (scroll down).

Who are these people? We are the **Beeskeepers**, players of the I Love Bees game.

### LOCATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lat/Long</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>List</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>37.784568 -122.40469</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>New York, NY</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.040240 -088.03197</td>
<td>Chicago, IL</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.266632 -097.744710</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>Attendees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Add Yourself) (Show All)

To edit your record, click on the link next to your name in the list of Attendees.

(NOTE: this data does NOT imply any confirmed registration with Melissa.)

---

**Topics**

- **Announcement:** [META] New Coordinates on contactme.html!!!!!
  - [Goto page: 1, 2, 3]

- **Announcement:** [META] SF Combat Training/ARGFest-O-Con: Check in Here!
  - [Goto page: 1 ... 3, 4, 5]

- **Sticky:** [META] Chicago Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  - [Goto page: 1 ... 23, 24, 25]

- **Sticky:** [META] New York City Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  - [Goto page: 1 ... 9, 10, 11]

- **Sticky:** [META] Austin Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  - [Goto page: 1 ... 4, 5, 6]

- **Sticky:** [META] San Francisco Combat Training Exercise Coordination
  - [Goto page: 1 ... 9, 10, 11]
What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

cross-media  
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What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

**expressive:** requires and inspires user self-expression

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What is **Alternate Reality Gaming**?

**expressive:** requires and inspires user self-expression

- user-created web sites and blogs
- player guides
- communications missions
- new languages
- fan art
- mass media interventions
What is *Alternate Reality Gaming*?

**expressive**: requires and inspires user self-expression

You are my extraordinary. Near strangers — brilliant, kind, loud, mean, methodical, wildly creative, above all passionate. I don't agree with all of you... no surprise, you hardly agree with one another. But your energy. This community.

By sheer fluke luck, this blog has become a way station for amazing, brilliant, compassionate, crazy people. A clearinghouse for an extraordinary phenomenon. And I don't mean the AI.

I get it now. And I'm here, I'm all in.

P.S. I'm posting a summary of what we've figured out so far in the sidebar. I'll keep updating it as we learn more.

posted by Dana at 8/24/2004 09:42:14 AM  |  2358 comments
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

expressive: requires and inspires user self-expression
What is Alternate Reality Gaming?

expressive: requires and inspires user self-expression

```plaintext
net: !attach act |
drop !attach act |
drop !route proc attach proc net
grope: !probe host crypt weak
!decrypt host decrypt confidence 100 !
probe master sector fail
surg: !invntry primary sector proc proc
invntry 343 working 0 dmg 38 dmg unk 2 broken
102 abs 201 !invntry primary sector mem mem
invntry 678223072849 clear 0.0007 dmg 0.0014
frgm 1.41 abs 98.5879 net: !attach act |
```
What does Alternate Reality Gaming accomplish?

TECHNOLOGICAL CONFIDENCE:

• Players gain skills and experience using a variety of new media and network technologies.

• Players become confident using these technologies in real-world contexts.
What does *Alternate Reality Gaming* accomplish?

**COLLABORATION SKILLS:**

- Players experience the new kinds of collaboration made possible by mobile and ubiquitous network technologies: e.g., ad-hoc, real-time cooperation
- ARGs demonstrate the importance of individual responsibility and contribution within a big group – everybody is uniquely necessary and valued
What does **Alternate Reality Gaming** accomplish?

**COMMUNITY:**

- Players feel more connected to and actively engaged with others, both in terms of local community and distributed community

- Players become a part of “something bigger”
SuperGaming!

Web site: www.avantgame.com

Email: janemcg@berkeley.edu

Additional Web Resources
www.thegogame.com
www.flashmobcomputing.com
www.ilovebees.com
www.argn.com
www.cheesebikini.com (search “flash mobs”)