Editorial Pointers

ALTERNATE REALITY GAMING (ARG) IS A RELATIVELY new genre of collaborative entertainment that combines online information and puzzles with real-world events. Known for their elaborate scavenger hunts, ARGs attract players into interactive plots that often blur the distinction between cyberspace and public space; online cues lead players to real-world clues with the goal of finding the ending to the story—an ending they ultimately create themselves.

One recent example of ARGs that generated media interest was the cross-media game “I Love Bees,” or ILB. Its intricate and evolving storyline prompted a diverse group of players to follow cyber clues that led to ringing pay phones (and clues) across the U.S. and the U.K.

The ILB model posed some unique design challenges for the creative team. For this month’s cover story, Jeffrey Kim, Jonathan P. Allen, and Elan Lee retell the plotline for ILB as it unfolded, detailing the design decisions and the ways players ultimately constructed and directed the game. While ILB succeeded in adding new layers and dimensions to the ARG experience and supporting technologies, the authors contend that in the end, it’s all about the story.

ALSO THIS MONTH, MANDVIWALLA ET AL. EXAMINE MUNICIPAL wireless networks and how they represent a new option for broadband access to the Internet that promises anytime, anywhere connectivity. Alfred Loo says the strength of a computer system’s security is always measured by its weakest component, and in most systems that component is the end user. Further, wireless security will never be realized without a coordinated effort among corporations, manufacturers, employers, and end users.

Shih et al. explore global IT diffusion by analyzing data from 44 countries over a 15-year period and found markedly different results for developing and developed countries. McKinney et al. investigate the professional IT experience for men and women and find significant similarities that shine new light on reasons why women are still under-represented in the field. Marks et al. study the ways managers influence how knowledge is shared within an organization. Keane, O’Brien, and Smyth track the role of user bias in deciding which links to follow in rank-ordered results lists. And Taylor, Loiacono, and Watson discuss alternative formats for Web banner ads.

In this month’s “Viewpoint,” Andy Oram calls for technologists to support the Peer to Patent project, an initiative created to address the proliferation of computer-related patents that sometimes hinder innovation rather than promote it. Peer to Patent channels input directly from the public to the examiners at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office who ultimately decide what patents to grant.

Diane Crawford
EDITOR

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