New alternate-reality game the first to explore digital provenance

February 12 2014

A ground-breaking transmedia alternate-reality game (ARG), which is the first large-scale project to explore 'digital provenance', has been launched.

In the art world, provenance documents the chain of ownership of an artefact: In the digital world, provenance is a description of what influenced an artefact, a data set, a document, a blog or any resource on the Web and beyond.

Researchers from Electronics and Computer Science at the University of Southampton in collaboration with the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham are examining how people can relate to the concept of digital provenance of objects through the free 'The Apocalypse of MoP' ARG.

Working with the Nottingham-based artists group Urban Angel, the game mixes theatre, art, gaming and research for players to untangle events in a complex mystery thriller, based on the activities of a sinister government organisation, by understanding the history of ownership and modifications of objects.

Professor Luc Moreau, from the Web and Internet Science group (WAIS) in Electronics and Computer Science at the University of Southampton says: "The World Wide Web is now deeply intertwined with our lives, and has become a catalyst for a data deluge, making vast amounts of data available online, at a click of a button. With Web 2.0,

users are no longer passive consumers, but active publishers and curators of data. Hence, from science to food manufacturing, from data journalism to personal well-being, from social media to art, there is a strong interest in provenance.

"Provenance is a crucial piece of information that can help a consumer make a judgment as to whether something can be trusted. Provenance is no longer seen as a curiosity in art circles, but it is regarded as pragmatically, ethically, and methodologically crucial for our day-to-day data manipulation and curation activities on the Web."

As well as providing an exciting experience for players over the next six months, the team hope that the game will lead to new insights into how storing and showing the history of a piece of art, or the ingredients of food should be provided to people in an intuitive manner. The game is partially supported by the EPSRC funded ORCHID project.

The researchers held a live launch event for the project entitled Genesis of Cr0n at last year's GameCity8 festival and it has been carried over to the online environment at www.cr0n.org - everything that happened during the live events has been posted to the Cr0n website so you can get up to date.

Provided by University of Southampton