

Game makers to explore social issues at conference

March 17 2014, by Derrik J. Lang



In this Jan. 7, 2014 file photo, show attendees play a video game wearing Oculus Rift virtual reality headsets at the Intel booth at the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. The Game Developers Conference which kicks-off Monday, March 17, 2014, at the Moscone Center in San Francisco will have a handful of developers that will be showing off software using the VR goggles Oculus Rift. The exhibit "ALT.CONTROL.GDC" will highlight 14 games that utilize such alternative control schemes, like a piano-powered version of the sidescroller "Canabalt" and a holographic display called Voxiebox. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, file)

The video game industry is taking itself more seriously. Besides the usual talk of polygons, virtual worlds and artificial intelligence at this week's Game Developers Conference in San Francisco, there will also be planned discussions led by game makers about such socially conscious topics as designing for gamers with disabilities, battling depression at game studios and tackling hate speech in online game communities.

The organizers of GDC, which kicks off Monday at the Moscone Center and continues through Friday, have expanded the conference's advocacy-themed sessions with panels featuring such titles as "Beyond Graphics: Reaching the Visually Impaired Gamer," "How to Subversively Queer Your Work" and "Women Don't Want to Work in Games (and Other Myths)."

"It's something that in some way or another has always been part of the conference, but it's something that we've found interest in genuinely continue to grow as the industry has become more diverse and inclusive," said Simon Carless, executive vice president of UBM Tech Game Network, which organizes GDC and several other technology conventions.

This year's conference is expected to attract about 23,000 [game](#) developers and executives from across the globe. Carless and other GDC organizers, which includes an advocacy advisory committee made up of game designers, hope that examinations of racism, misogyny and homophobia in games aid the industry's continued fight for wider cultural legitimacy.

Rosalind Wiseman, author of the book "Queen Bees and Wannabes," which inspired the Lindsay Lohan film "Mean Girls," will be part of a Tuesday discussion about gaming and social hierarchies among boys. The panel will examine how the games that young men choose to play effect their popularity, as well as their social competence in moments of

conflict.

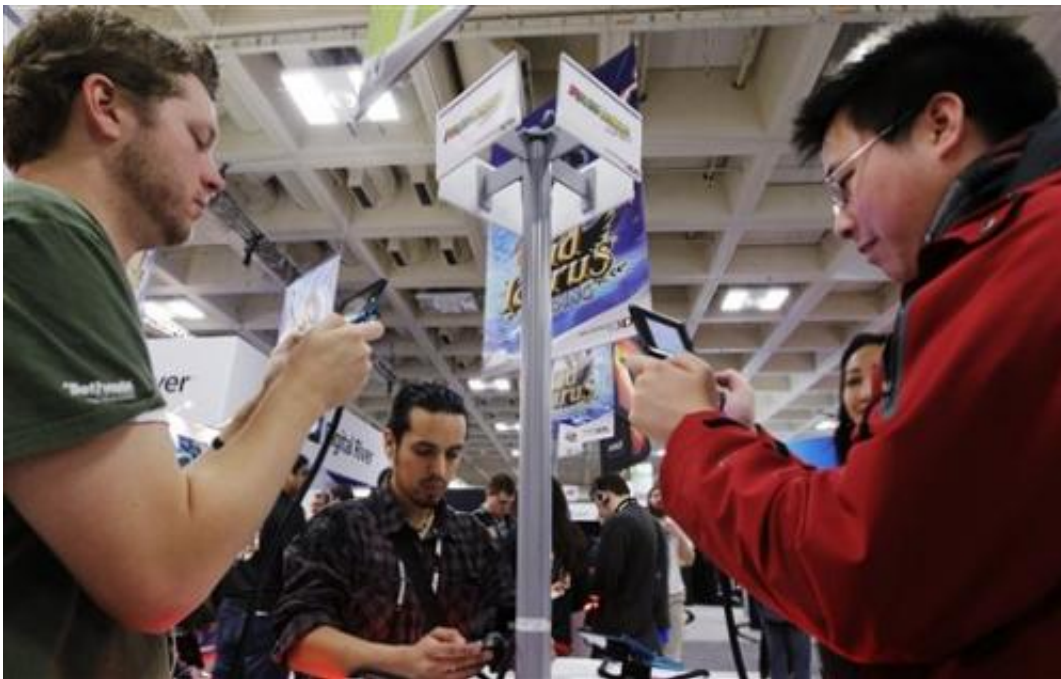


This March 8, 2012 file photo shows attendees walking past the Sony PlayStation PS Vita console on display in the Sony PlayStation booth at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. Despite a refreshed focus on real-world issues at the 2014 GDC convention that kicks-off Monday, March 17, 2014, the ever-changing virtual world and how to view and interact with it will take center stage at GDC. PlayStation 4 creator Sony Corp. is expected to tease its rendition of virtual reality technology during a Tuesday presentation called "Driving the Future of Innovation at Sony Computer Entertainment." (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, file)

Other speakers will include Adam Orth, who left Microsoft Corp. last year after fiery Twitter exchanges about "always-on" technology; Manveer Heir, a game maker who works on the "Mass Effect" sci-fi series, which features gay and lesbian characters; and Toshifumi

Nakabayashi , who organizes an annual game workshop to support Fukushima disaster victims.

Despite the refreshed focus on real-world issues at the convention, how to view and interact with ever-changing virtual worlds will ultimately take center stage at GDC. PlayStation 4 creator Sony Corp. is expected to tease its rendition of virtual reality technology during a Tuesday presentation called "Driving the Future of Innovation at Sony Computer Entertainment."



In this March 8, 2012 file photo, attendees play the Nintendo game "Mario Tennis Open" on a Nintendo 3DS console before its May release at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco. The organizers of GDC, which kicks off Monday, March 17, 2014, at the Moscone Center in San Francisco and continues through Friday, have expanded the conference's advocacy-themed sessions with panels featuring such titles as "Beyond Graphics: Reaching the Visually Impaired Gamer," "How to Subversively Queer Your Work" and "Women Don't Want to Work in Games (and Other Myths)." (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma, file)

Meanwhile, a handful of developers will be showing off software using the VR goggles Oculus Rift, which captured attendees' attention at last year's conference. The exhibit "ALT.CTRL.GDC" will highlight 14 games that utilize such alternative control schemes, like a piano-powered version of the sidescroller "Canabalt" and a holographic display called Voxiebox.

This year's conference, the largest annual gathering of game creators outside the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles in June, is the first since Sony and Microsoft respectively released its PlayStation 4 and Xbox One consoles last year. Several sessions scheduled this year are dedicated to creating games for those systems, as well as more popular mobile platforms.

More information: www.gdconf.com

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