Exploiting the Constraints of the Medium: Lessons from Table-top vs. Live Action Roleplaying on Computer Games

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Terminology

- **Medium** – Where is the game played?
- **Constraints** – What limits does the medium place on the game?
- **LARP** – Live Action Role Playing
- **Boffer** – A foam weapon
- **Interactive Literature** – A highly plot intensive style of LARP
- **GM/DM** – Game/Dungeon Master
Constraints Make The Game

• The game has to work in the environment
• Chess strategy is based on the size and shape of the board
• Dungeons and Dragons started as a framework for interactive storytelling
Tabletop Roleplaying

- Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
- Runequest
- Call of Cthulhu
- Etc.
Constraints of Tabletop Games

- Small groups
- Paper and pencil
- GM can have secret knowledge about the characters
- Mechanics need to be relatively simple
- All interaction with the world goes through the GM
Assassin

- Aka Killer
- Popular college game
Early Boffer Games

- The party wandered through the woods and fought monsters
- D&D on its hind legs
Evolution of Plot

- It’s not just killer any more
- Over time, the plot becomes the game
Moving Away From D&D

- Put the plot in the hands of the players
- Increase competition within the game
Constraints of Live Games

- Time frame is finite
- Players come and go
- The story needs to come to a climax
- Mechanics need to be simple
- Environment plays a big part: college campus, woods, hotel, etc.
Computer Games

• What do they offer?
• What constraints aren’t really necessary?
• What are the actual constraints?
Handheld Devices

• What are the constraints?
• What are the benefits?
• How can a game exploit the strengths?