

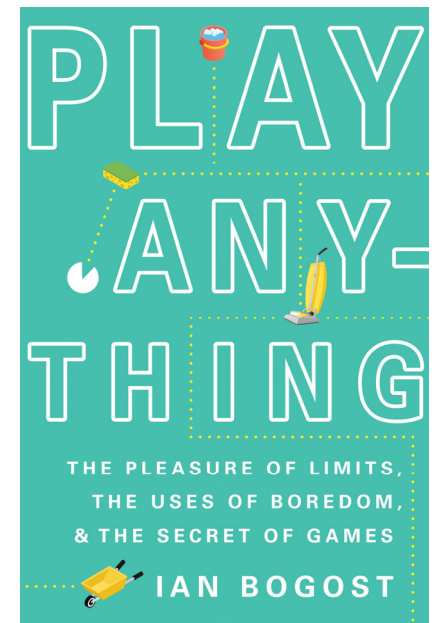
Digital Media, Society, and Culture

Angus A.A. Mol

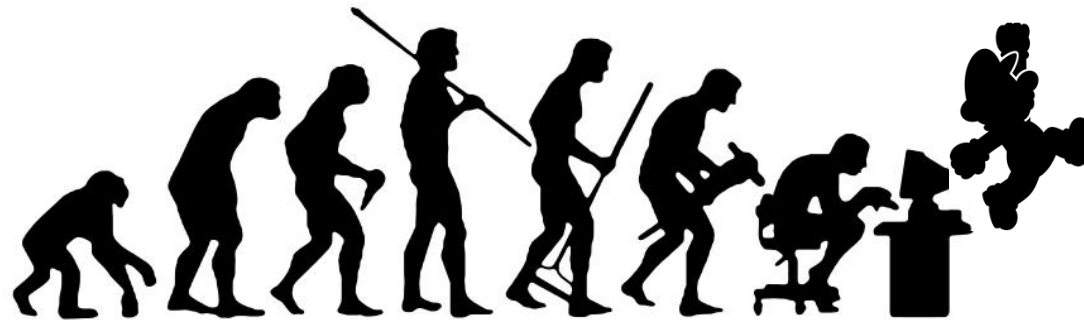
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00100000 01010111 01101111 01110010 01101100
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Flappy Bird

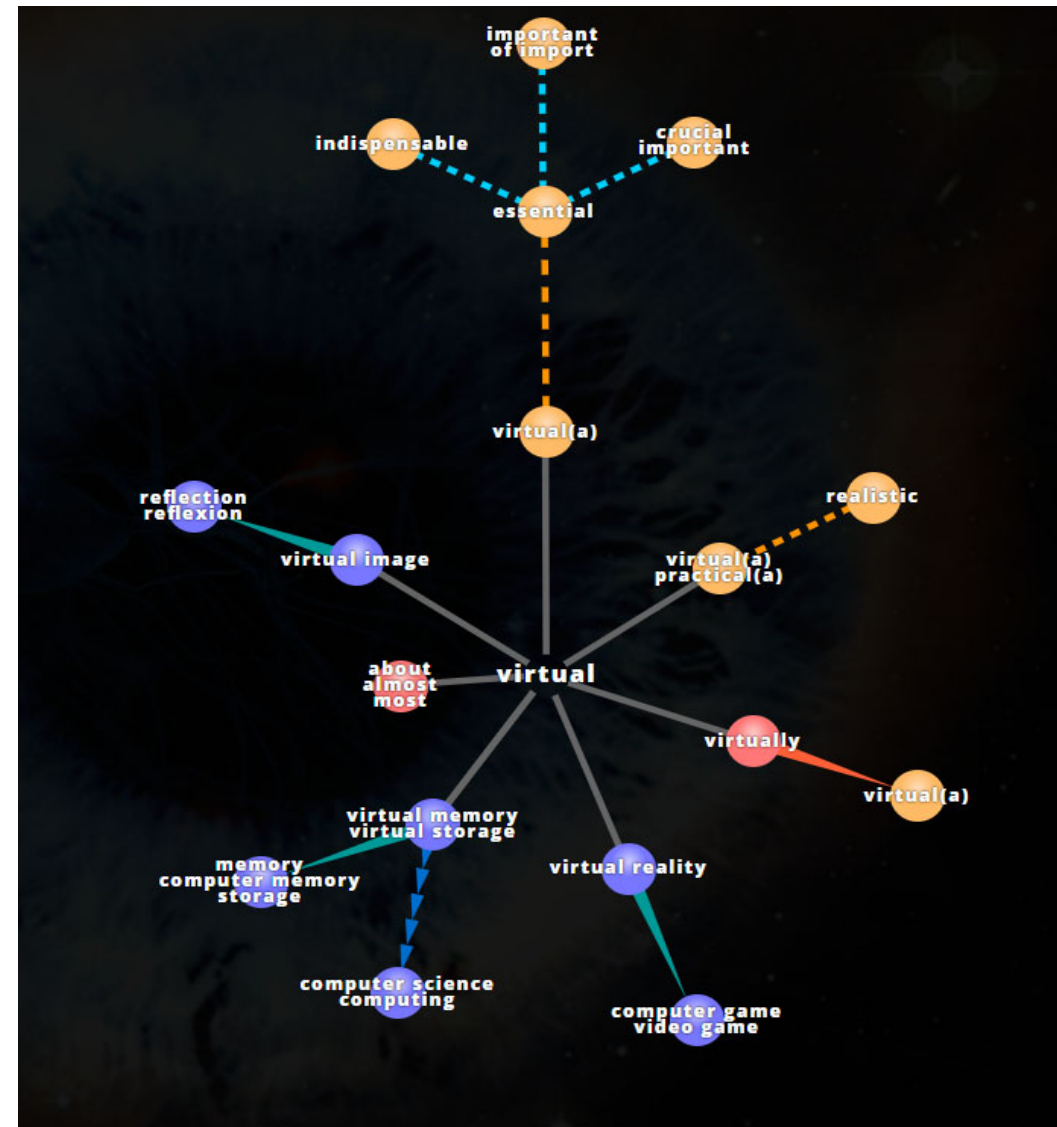


Virtual Worlds

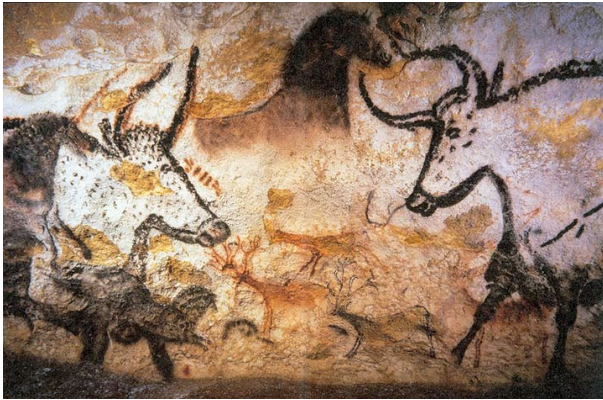


Virtual (adj)

- “in essence, potentiality, or effect, although not in form or actuality” ([OED](#))
 - Roots in Latin’s *virtus* (*vir* [man]+ *tus* [suffix to form a noun]): virtue,
- Virtual is “that which isn’t, having the form or effect of that which is.” (Bartle 2004)



Pre-digital Virtuality



Lascaux Cave (France; 17.000 BCE)



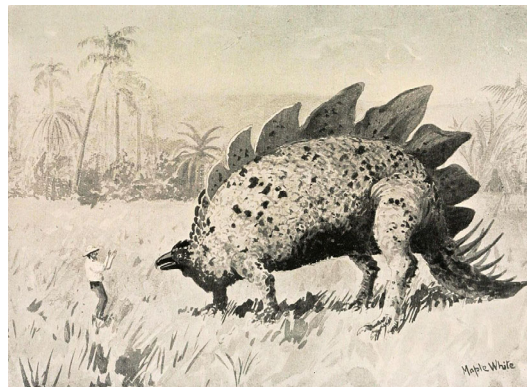
Indigenous Caribbean petroglyphs
(Dominican Republic)



Fresco from the Villa of Livia
(Rome, 1st Century CE)



Plato's Allegory of the Cave
(Theory of Forms)



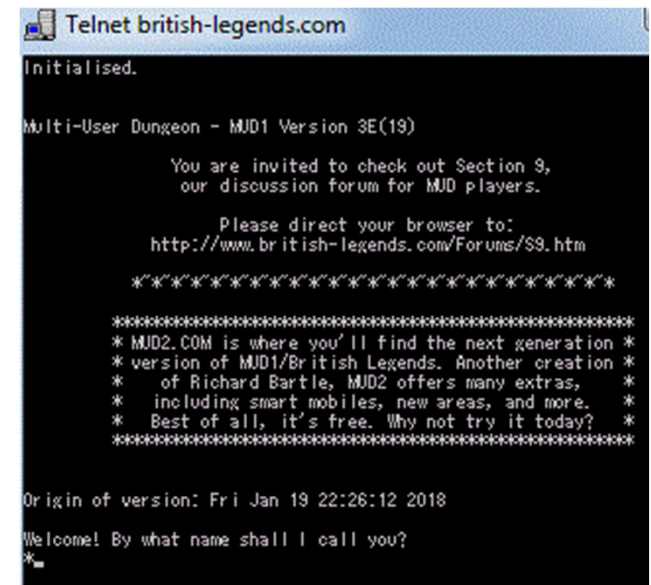
Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World*



Gary Gygax' *Dungeons and Dragons*

Virtual Worlds

- “Where the imaginary meets the real” (Bartle 2004)
- Virtual Worlds:
 - Have *physics*: underlying automated rules that enable players to effect changes to it.
 - Have players that represent individuals or *characters* in the world
 - Interaction takes place in *real time*
 - are *shared*
 - are (at least to some degree) *persistent*.



```
Telnet british-legends.com
Initialised.
Multi-User Dungeon - MUD1 Version 3E(19)

      You are invited to check out Section 9,
      our discussion forum for MUD players.

      Please direct your browser to:
      http://www.british-legends.com/Forums/S9.htm

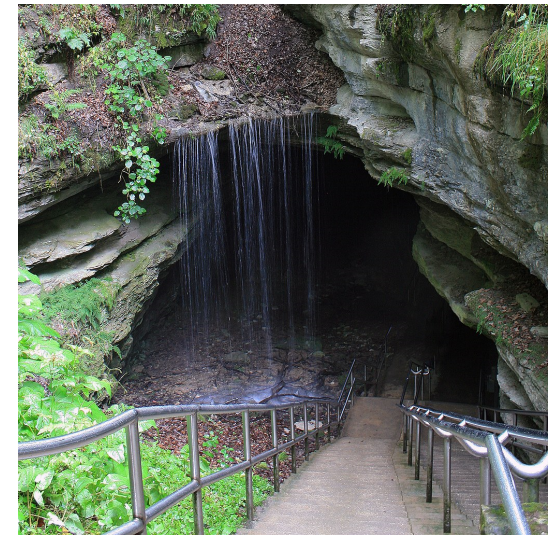
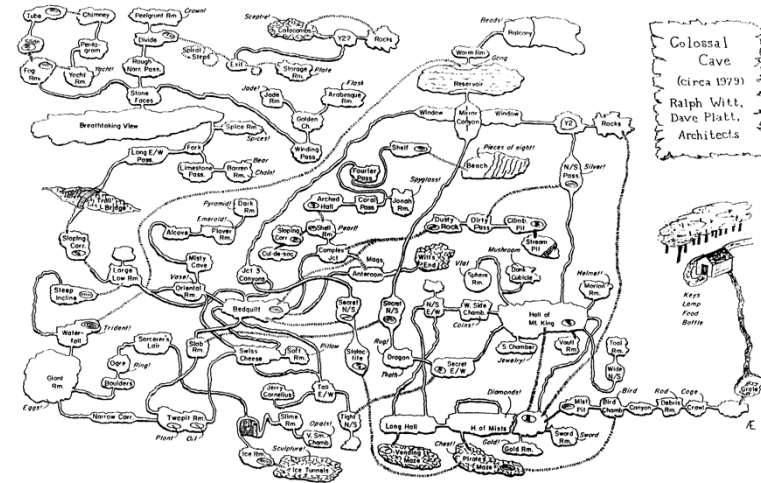
      *****

      *****
      * MUD2.COM is where you'll find the next generation *
      * version of MUD1/British Legends. Another creation *
      *   of Richard Bartle, MUD2 offers many extras,   *
      * including smart mobiles, new areas, and more. *
      * Best of all, it's free. Why not try it today? *
      *****

Origin of version: Fri Jan 19 22:26:12 2018
Welcome! By what name shall I call you?
*
```


MUD (Multi-User Dungeon)

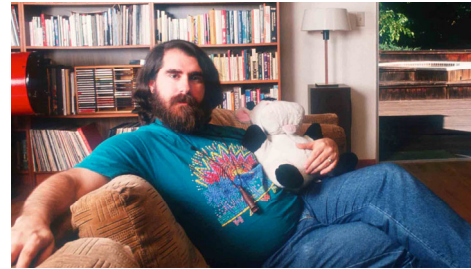
- Multi-User
 - Multiplayer, i.e. via a network
 - University networks
 - Early Dial-up networks
 - Access to MUDs based on provider (MUD belonged to CompuServe)
 - Once responsible for up to 10% of internet traffic (1993)
- Dungeon
 - [Zork](#), originally called Dungeon (MIT 1977-1979) ← [Colossal Cave Adventure](#) (Will Crowther, 1976), also known as ADVENT ← Dungeons and Dragons + Caving



Mammoth Cave (Kentucky)

LambdaMOO

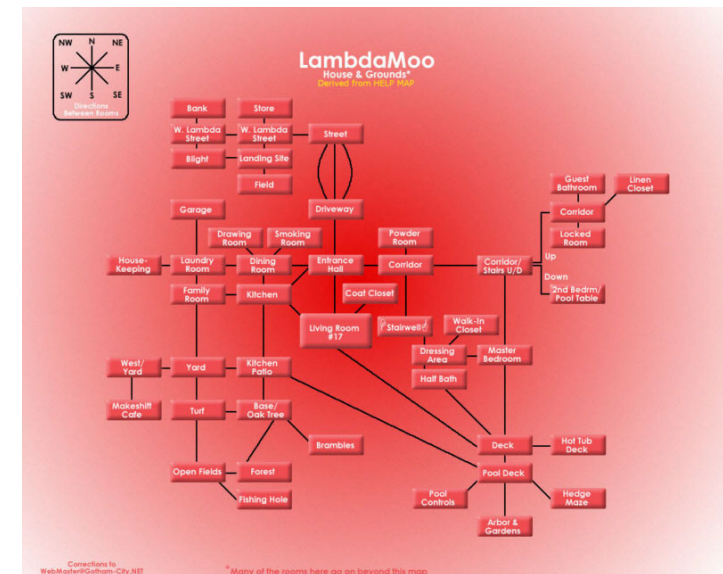
- MUD, Object Oriented
 - Players can create objects through scripting
- LambdaMOO
 - Hosted in Xerox Parc
 - Made by Pavel Curtis, further developed by thousands of people after him.
- Longest running virtual world
- Social Experiment
 - No hierarchy
 - “Wizards”
 - Large community
- *A Rape in Cyberspace* (1993)
 - Using a virtual voodoo doll
 - Led to institution of code of ethics and democratic self-governance system.



Pavel Curtis



Xerox PARC (Palo Alto, CA)

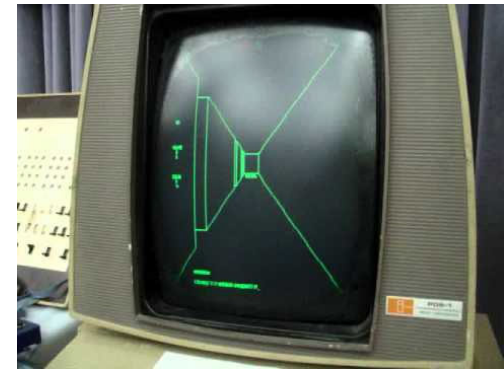


Map of LambdaMOO

Graphical Virtual Worlds

- *Mazewar*
- *Ultima Online* (1997)
 - Set in the world of the Ultima games by Richard Garriott
 - Famous for having a carefully designed eco-system that was completely destroyed by players.
- *Second Life* (Linden Labs; 2003)
 - Social and entrepreneurial hub
 - Virtual Economy (GDP) in 2006: \$64 million
 - If actual economy would have ranked 55 out of 179 countries.

→ MMORPGS, most famously WoW

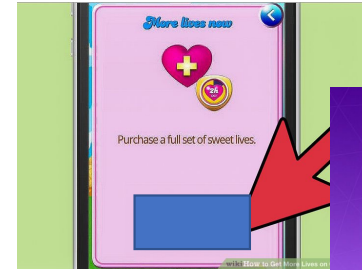


Mazewar on an IMLAC-PDS 1D (1973)



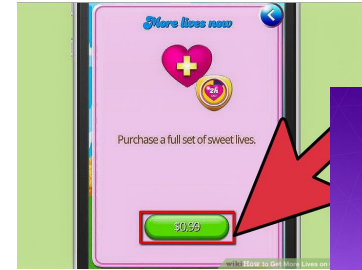
Virtual Values

- 5 extra lives on Candy Crush: ?
- Fortnite candy axe: ?
- CounterStrike: Go's Weapon Skins: ?
- Entropia's [Club NEVERDIE](#): ?
- Most Expensive Eve-Online Battle: ?
- WoW Gold Farming (2009): ?



Virtual Values

- 5 extra lives on Candy Crush: \$0.99
- Fortnite candy axe: \$15,-
- CounterStrike: Go's Weapon Skins: \$3600
- Entropia's [Club NEVERDIE](#): \$635.000
- Most Expensive Eve-Online Battle: \$1.000.000
- WoW Gold Farming (2009): \$2 billion
 - [Play Money](#)



Virtual Reality's big break?

- VR has been around for a long time
- 2016: “Year of VR”
 - Consumer-version VR
- Oculus is owned by Facebook
- Coronavirus breakthrough?
- Virus troubles over? Welcome to come and try at the LUCDH.



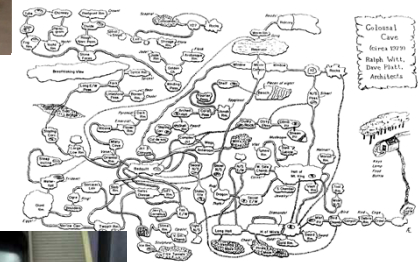
3D movies in the
Sensorama (1962)

A virtual reality suit
(1989; VPL Research)



Virtual Worlds

- Use visual and narrative technologies that have been present for ages.
 - Add interactivity (real time physics) and computer graphics to the mix.
- Mimic a culture, society, and ecology that is also found in the actual world (good and bad).
 - The Proteus Paradox
- Are surprisingly fragile places!
- Point to a fundamental strain in (Western) conceptions as well as practicalities of reality/actuality
- Future of Virtual Worlds?



Fall, or Dodge in Hell

In his youth, Richard “Dodge” Forthrust founded Corporation 9592, a gaming company that made him a multibillionaire. One beautiful autumn day, while he undergoes a routine medical procedure, something goes irrevocably wrong. Dodge is pronounced brain dead and put on life support. Dodge’s family has his brain scanned and its data structures uploaded and stored in the cloud, until it can eventually be revived. In the coming years, technology allows Dodge’s brain to be turned back on. It is an achievement that is nothing less than the disruption of death itself. An eternal afterlife—the Bitworld—is created, in which humans continue to exist as digital souls.”

~ Harper Collins [abstract](#)

Also check out his [Reamde](#) or [Cryptonomicon](#)

