

The Development of a Polymath in a Culture-Neutral Space: MMORPGs, Game Design, and Social Structure

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Abstract

In a world where identity is often shaped by culture and places, the anonymity of the digital space of the internet, free of biases tied to form, gender, and position can perhaps be looked as a space holding pockets that provide the possibility to interact, mediate, and build with impartiality to biases embedded in our physical spaces. While culture defines identity, it can also augment limitations, emphasised by social or geographical structures.

Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) present such digital spaces, where one can transpose a new identity upon oneself by recreating one's form into the denizens of the game, and be allowed to carve a niche based on one's skill, perseverance and amount of time. With the structure of the world defined by the game's design, an individual's worth and purpose is often defined by expertise and versatility of skill sets. The diversity in the character can perhaps be taken analogous to the real life polymath, however in the online space the acquisition of these competences might be more accessible.

This research shall explore the idea of a polymath in the virtual artificial worlds and social structures in a space where the divides of age, social status, culture, and geographical boundaries are nullified. In a space where normal agencies of power are removed, power and strength granted from one's knowledge and skill, the mastery of multiple crafts can turn to be the means of forging a new power structure.

Keywords: MMORPG, Online Polymathy, Skill Trees, Power and Knowledge