Playing Popular Science

August 3rd – 7th 2016
1st Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG, Dalhousie Building, Dundee
Dare Indie Fest, Caird Hall, Dundee

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With support from Scottish Crucible
Popular science is a critical form of science communication and dissemination. While scientific journals and textbooks are well suited to dissemination of detailed theories and findings within academic communities, there is a definitive need to inform the general public of key scientific concepts and challenges. Indeed, this is increasingly seen as a central part of any research project or funding bid: in the United Kingdom, the Research Councils stipulate a need to consider public engagement and outreach in research proposals.
For scientists, the popular science book has long been a medium of choice, primarily because they already have a great deal of experience in writing. But in recent years scientific researchers have been increasingly engaged with other forms of popular science communication, including radio and television broadcasting. Early careers researchers are now provided with training in these areas, including guidance on how to develop programme proposals and how to write, present, direct, and edit materials for print, the airwaves, and screen. In effect, today’s scientists are expected to engage directly with popular science journalism not merely as scientific advisors, but as the writers, directors, and broadcasters.
Playing Popular Science was a peer-reviewed game design event that took place at the 1st Joint Conference of DiGRA/FDG (August 3rd). This event involved an exhibition and discussion of four popular science games, co-designed by scientific experts and designed and developed by students at Abertay University. The four games were:
Namaka by Crowbar Games
Co-designed by Ecotoxicologist Dr Brian Quinn
Tides: A Shark Tale by Benthos Games
Co-designed by Immunologist and sharks expert Dr Helen Dooley
Orbs by Quantessential Games
Co-designed by Quantum Physicist Dr Erik Gauger
Cell Cycle by Type 3 Games

Co-designed by Cell Biologist and cancer researcher Dr Adrian Saurin
Presentations by game development teams at DiGRA/FDG, August 3rd 2016

Orbs (top left), Cell Cycle (top right), Namaka (bottom left), Tides (bottom right)
TIDES
A SHARK TALE

What if sharks had to save themselves?

Over 30 shark species live in British waters, but more than half are under threat of extinction as a result of human action.

In Tides: A Shark Tale, you take on the role of a spotted catshark, a medicus to save fellow sharks from the dangers from above.

Using your special shark sensors, you can explore the ocean, help sharks in need, and find out more about different shark species.

The SharkProtector Collect and store information about sharks - access your SharkProtector on the go with the handheld.

Friendly sharks Discover that there’s more to sharks than their teeth!

Shark habitats Meet a group of British sharks and learn how to use their unique abilities.

Real-life threats Encounter hazards and overcome them that are inspired by the real threats that sharks face.

Vibrant ocean world Explore a beautiful underwater environment with stunning scenery and enemies using the controller’s unique abilities.

NAMAKA

Brings attention to the ever-worsening issue of microplastics in the world’s oceans.

There are two types of microplastic. Primary microplastics are designed and manufactured to be very small and are secondary microplastics formed when larger plastic items.

In our day-to-day lives, there are plenty of ways we can introduce these plastics into the environment without even knowing.

Poseidon aims to raise awareness of the sources of these microplastics and the potential impact they can have on animal life.

Game posters exhibited at DiGRA/FDG, August 3rd 2016
Game demos presented at DiGRA/FDG, August 3rd 2016
Following presentations and demos at the DiGRA/FDG conference, the Playing Popular Science development teams exhibited at the Dare Indie Fest in the Caird Hall, Dundee (August 4th-7th)
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