Game Design Workshop: A Playcentric Approach to Creating Innovative Games

Chapter 1

First chapter author talks about who is a game designer and there is lots of good info.

Game designer job only about providing superior gameplay (Don't care about money (yes, book said this I think it's wrong), programming part (this is also partly wrong)). Invite play testers so that they can test your game, this is a way to understand how game work (feedback, reaction, questions, and even silent can talk about game). Skills: communication, teamwork, process (working under the pressure, so make right decision in changing of game), inspiration (see challenges in world), became a better player, creativity.

Design process from conception through completion. Player experience goals – barnstorming strategy. Prototyping and playtest: physical prototype can use paper and pen, index cards; goal is to play and perfect this simplistic model. Iterative process: brainstorming, physical prototype, presentation, software prototype, design documentation, production.

Chapter 2 - The Structure of Games

Now we can know about players and what types of games exists.

Players: how the join game, how they adopt, what impression they have from (music, sound, visual), how easy gameplay. Objectives: clearly defined goals of game. Procedures: what actions will be in game (even technician, may be some events when player join game or whatever action happens). Rules: of course, game without rules is an anarchy… Resources: Finding and managing resources. Conflicts: more conflicts in GAMES (enemies, obstacles)!!! Boundaries: keep player in some boundaries.

Designing Puzzles. Level design, as it applies to puzzles, is crafting a particular puzzle configuration within a fixed set of rules. Puzzles design rule: inventing the overall rules, goal, and format of a puzzle. Keep the player in a pleasurably challenging state of flow. Don't limit yourself!!!

Chapter 3 - Working with Formal Elements
About players
Invitation to Play: think how to invite players in game. Number of Player: this is basics of game. Roles of Players: yes, players must have some roles.
Player Interaction Patterns: *Single player versus game* - include puzzles or other play structures to create conflict. *Multiple individual players versus game* – you know PvE… *Player versus player* – duel?? *Unilateral competition* – one player vs n players. *Multilateral competition* – MORE players compete with each other. *Cooperative play* - cooperate against the game system. Team competition – groups competition.

About game types
Capture - take or destroy something. *Chase* – RUN FASTER. *Race* – compete others! *Alignment* – puzzles (three in row, tic tac toe*). Rescue or escape* – get to safety (may be combined with chase). *Forbidden Act* - game is to get the competition to break the rules by laughing, talking, letting go, making the wrong move, or otherwise doing something they shouldn't (Twister, What about digital games?). *Construction* – complex Alignment, build something. *Exploration* – World opens gates to you (or smaller areas). *Solution* - solve a problem or puzzle before than the competition (more complex puzzle games). *Outwit* - gain and use knowledge in a way that defeats the other players.

Defining Procedures
Keep in mind limitations of the environment in which your game will be played (board game/digital, mouse or joystick, output device… and so on).

Rules
Determining variables for rules, how player learn nature of game objects, player use intuition when play (ofc there are always HARD players who always need challenges).
There are always rule restrictions (football team consists of 11 players, chess rules, and so on…).
Rules also can trigger effects based on certain circumstances (something happens, and we get xyz result).
Defining Rules: the more complex your rules are, the more demands you will place on the players to comprehend them. Less well that players understand your rules, whether rationally or intuitively, the less likely they will be able to make meaningful choices.

Resources
Assets (natural resources, economic resources, human resources) that can be used to accomplish certain goals. You might not find or earn as much money as you would like, but if you **meet the challenges** the game presents, you will **gain resources** that will allow you to move forward. If you **did not gain** these resources, the game system would be **unbalanced**.
+ Lives
    Do well, and you earn more lives to work with (Remember what became after death in Death Stranding?).
+ Units
    Generally, have unit resources to manage rather than lives. Determining this cost per unit and how it balances with the rest of the resource structure.
+ Health
    Just another resource… In some games matter… (player progress => health increasing).
+ Currency
    Key elements of an in-game economy.
+ Actions
    Sometimes actions, such as moves or turns, can be considered resources (Remember strategy games…).
+Power-ups
    Want to feel like a superhero?
+ Inventory
    Ofc, you need to carry so many your stuff.
+ Special Terrain
    Map-based systems, in Warcraft there is some places…
+ Time
    Time as a resource - restricting player actions by time or phases of the game in periods of time.
Conflict: Obstacles, Opponents, Dilemmas.

Chapter 4 - Working with Dramatic Elements
Challenge
*Flow theory***:** When a person begins performing an activity, they usually have a low level of ability. If the challenge of the activity is too high, they will become frustrated. As they continue on, their ability rises, however, and if the challenge level stays the same, they will become bored. Level of challenge remains appropriate to the level of ability, and if this challenge rises as the ability level rises.
Challenge and skill: For a person who does not have any of the skills a task requires, it is frustrating and meaningless. For a person who has the skills but is not completely assured of the outcome, a task is challenging.

Merging of Action and Awareness: People become so involved in what they're doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic; they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing.

Clear Goals and Feedback: When a game has clearly defined goals, the players know what needs to be done to win, to move to the next level, to achieve the next step in their strategy, etc., and they receive direct feedback for their actions toward those goals.
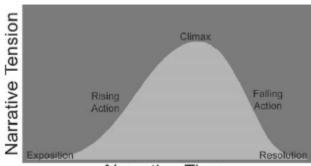
Concentration on the Task at Hand: If a musician thinks of his health or tax problems when playing, he is likely to hit a wrong note.

The Paradox of Control: People enjoy the sense of exercising control in difficult situations; however, it is not possible to experience a feeling of control unless the outcome is unsure, meaning that the person is not actually in complete control.

The Loss of Self-Consciousness: harmony…

The Transformation of Time: Digital games are notorious for sucking players in for hours on end because they involve players in flow experiences that distort the passage of time.

The Dramatic Arc

Chapter 5 - Working with System Dynamics

Objects - objects in games might be individual game pieces (such as the king or queen in chess), in-game concepts (such as the bank in Monopoly), the players themselves, or representations of the players (such as the avatars in an online environment).

Properties - set of values that describe an object.

Behaviors - potential actions that an object might perform in a given state.

Relationships – if there are no relationships between the objects in question, then you have a collection, not a system.

System Dynamics

A system, by definition, requires that all elements be present for it to accomplish its goal. Dynamics of any given game system are affected by the properties, attributes, and relationships of its objects is difficult to generalize.

Interacting with Systems
- Information Structure
- Control
- Feedback

AND BALANCE AT THE END

Chapter 6 – Conceptualization
Brainstorming Best Practices

- *State a challenge* - When you sit down to brainstorm, articulate the challenge for the session.
- *No criticism* - brainstorming alone, do not self-censor or edit your ideas. Write down all of your ideas and worry about their quality later.
- *Vary the method* – different approaches
- *Playful environment* – change space, sometimes its hard to be creative in room with computer.
- *Put it on the wall* – visualize ideas
- *Go for lots of ideas* - Go for quantity when developing ideas.
- *Don't go too long* - Brainstorming is a high-energy activity. A good session will naturally die down after 60 minutes or so.

Prototype game, mechanics is a good practice in engine editor with primitives (level prototyping), mechanics and so on.

Chapter 9 – Playtesting

- Recruiting Playtesters
- Self-Testing
- Playtesting with Confidants
- Playtesting with People You Do Not Know
- Playtesting with Your Target Audience

Playtest:
- Introduction (2–3 Minutes)
- Warm-up Discussion (5 Minutes)
- Play Session (15–20 Minutes)
- Discussion of Game Experience (15–20 Minutes)
- Wrap-up

Also, good practice is taking notes during the all stages, record emotions, feelings, impressions.

Conclusion

Overall, the book gives full review of how game design works. It's interesting to read and go deeper. I'm wrote main stuff what I thought was useful and give my understanding to most of the topics.