Developer's Dilemma: The Secret World of Videogame Creators (Inside Technology)

Casey O'Donnell

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Developer's Dilemma: The Secret World of Videogame Creators (Inside Technology) Casey O'Donnell Rank-and-file game developers bring videogames from concept to product, and yet their work is almost invisible, hidden behind the famous names of publishers, executives, or console manufacturers. In this book, Casey O'Donnell examines the creative collaborative practice of typical game developers. His investigation of why game developers work the way they do sheds light on our understanding of work, the organization of work, and the market forces that shape (and are shaped by) media industries. O'Donnell shows that the ability to play with the underlying systems -- technical, conceptual, and social -- is at the core of creative and collaborative practice, which is central to the New Economy. When access to underlying systems is undermined, so too is creative collaborative process. Drawing on extensive fieldwork in game studios in the United States and India, O'Donnell stakes out new territory empirically, conceptually, and methodologically. Mimicking the structure of videogames, the book is divided into worlds, within which are levels; and each world ends with a boss fight, a "rant" about lessons learned and tools mastered. O'Donnell describes the process of videogame development from pre-production through production, considering such aspects as experimental systems, "socially mandatory" overtime, and the perpetual startup machine that exhausts young, initially enthusiastic workers. He links work practice to broader systems of publishing, manufacturing, and distribution; introduces the concept of a privileged "actor-intra-internetwork"; and describes patent and copyright enforcement by industry and the state.

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