

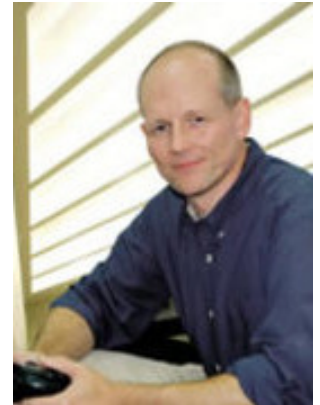
The IEEE Society on Social Implications of Technology presents...

**WOW, THEY'RE UNCONTROLLABLE:
ONLINE GAMES,
CENSORSHIP AND THE
CRISIS OF CONTROL**

DR. JEFFREY E. BRAND

Associate Dean and Head of School, Communication and Media,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University

Wednesday 13 May 2009 at 6:00pm
Theatre 3, Alan Gilbert Building, The University of Melbourne
(directions below)
Public welcome — no entry charge



Abstract

Computer and video games are big business in Australia, just as they are in many other developed economies. In 2008, the retail sector traded AU\$1.9 billion in hardware, software and peripherals. Of this total, approximately AU\$15 million were MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft (WOW). Ongoing online game subscriptions such as WOW may have accounted for another AU\$300 million and games downloaded through services such as Steam and Direct2Drive are not accounted for in domestic retail figures. Australia is unique among developed states in that it does not provide for an R18+ or "Adult" rating for computer game content. Yet demographic, behavioural and attitudinal data indicate that adults are a core market for games, are the heaviest consumers of massively multiplayer online games and are savvy consumers capable of considering the risks of playing games with challenging and confronting content while acting responsibly when using such games in homes with children. Recent controversy over whether games that are exclusively played online must be classified to be legally sold or exhibited in Australia has added to a growing chorus of criticism over the Australian content regulation regime. Most online-only games such as and including WOW have not been submitted by their publishers for classification by the Classification Board. James Beniger's (1986) notion of a "crisis of control" will be used to contextualise the contemporary regulatory environment and its failure to accommodate the rapidly changing medium of computer games. Suggestions and probable scenarios will be offered and canvassed to evaluate the policy and technical trajectory of ratings and classification in Australia.

About the speaker

Jeff Brand is Associate Professor and Head of the School of Communication and Media at Bond University. His research explores the effects of electronic media on audiences and the policy imperatives that arise from presumed effects. He conducts most of his research on computer game audiences and is author of the Interactive Australia series of studies for the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia. Jeff has published in the Journal of Communication, Journal of Advertising Research, Educational Leadership, Asia Pacific Media Educator, Communications & Strategies, Media International Australia and in edited texts in the field of media. He is co-author (with Prof. Mark Pearson) of Sources of News and Current Affairs (2001). Jeff has served as a consultant to the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the Classification Board, the Special Broadcasting Service, and the Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia. He completed his PhD in 1995 at Michigan State University.

Getting to the venue

The Alan Gilbert Building is on the corner of Grattan St and Barry St in Carlton. The best approach is to enter the Alan Gilbert Building from the Barry St entrance. Theatre 3 is on level one. Go up the stairs that will appear directly in front of you - at the top of the stairs, walk around to your left and keep walking - a clearly sign-posted entrance to the theatre will be visible in front of you. Lift access is also available to level one.

Register online: <http://ssit.ieeevic.org>

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