Digital Culture, Play, and Identity: A World of Warcraft® Reader (MIT Press)

From The MIT Press

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World of Warcraft is the world's most popular massively multiplayer online game (MMOG), with (as of March 2007) more than eight million active subscribers across Europe, North America, Asia, and Australia, who play the game an astonishing average of twenty hours a week. This book examines the complexity of World of Warcraft from a variety of perspectives, exploring the cultural and social implications of the proliferation of ever more complex digital gameworlds. The contributors have immersed themselves in the World of Warcraft universe, spending hundreds of hours as players (leading guilds and raids, exploring moneymaking possibilities in the in-game auction house, playing different factions, races, and classes), conducting interviews, and studying the game design -- as created by Blizzard Entertainment, the game's developer, and as modified by player-created user interfaces. The analyses they offer are based on both the firsthand experience of being a resident of Azeroth and the data they have gathered and interpreted. The contributors examine the ways that gameworlds reflect the real world -- exploring such topics as World of Warcraft as a "capitalist fairytale" and the game's construction of gender; the cohesiveness of the gameworld in terms of geography, mythology, narrative, and the treatment of death as a temporary state; aspects of play, including "deviant strategies" perhaps not in line with the intentions of the designers; and character -- both players' identification with their characters and the game's culture of naming characters. The varied perspectives of the contributors -- who come from such fields as game studies, textual analysis, gender studies, and postcolonial studies -- reflect the breadth and vitality of current interest in MMOGs.

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- Sales Rank: #1679694 in Books
- Published on: 2011-09-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .63" w x 7.00" l, 1.22 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 312 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Multidisciplinary in their perspectives, thoughtful in their analyses, and above all deeply and collaboratively engaged with the online world whereof they speak, the contributors to this 'World of Warcraft Reader' have fashioned not only a valuable introduction to one of the core texts of the new digital literacy, but a working model of the most rewarding forms this emergent literacy may take.

(Julian Dibbell, author of *Play Money: Or How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot*)

With its millions of users around the globe, World of Warcraft points to a future cyberspace far more fantastic and revolutionary than we had ever imagined: entire human societies immersed for thousands of hours in pursuit of fictional dragons. The essays in this book reveal the differences and similarities found in the human societies of World of Warcraft, explosive combinations that will shock our century as game worlds come to dominate daily life.

(Edward Castronova, Indiana University)

The authors represent a new breed of academic scholar, researchers who don't just study games, but play them as well. The essays reflect the irintimate knowledge of the game, the many hours logged into the digital world of Azeroth, and the deep love/hate relationship with World of Warcraft that every player knows so well. Because they are in fact players, the authors' joy and excitement for the game shines through every essay in the collection.

(Eric Zimmerman, Co-Founder of Gamelab, and co-author of *Rules of Play*, and *The Game Design Reader*)

It's a delight to read so many astute game studies scholars approach one game, in one volume. World of Warcraft Reader provides an invaluable comparative resource for the field.

(Mary Flanagan, Department of Film and Media Studies, Hunter College, and co-editor of *re: skin*)

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Users Review

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