

Inside the Ministry of Provenance – An Alternate Reality Game about Provenance

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Overview

- Department X (working title) is a browser-based alternate reality game
- The UK government is run by a 1984-inspired agency: The Ministry of Provenance (MoP)
- MoP is utilizing Provenance to keep track of everybody's activities
- MoP manipulates Provenance to hide the truth and change facts
- Players join underground organisation CRON and infiltrate MoP to uncover the darkest government secrets
- Two different modes of play:
 - Narrativism (CRON website)
 - Gamist (MoP website)
- Main game mechanic: inspection and analysis of Provenance data (in graph form)
- Developed together with artist group Urban Angels

"To do that, the NSA specifically targets the communications of everyone. It ingests them by default. It collects them in its system and it filters them and it analyzes them and it measures them and it stores them for periods of time simply because that's the easiest, most efficient and most valuable way to achieve these ends." (Edward Snowden)

"He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past." (George Orwell, 1984)

Game Play

[CRON - Narrativism]

- Each month a new episode is released (6 in total)
- The narrative draws players closer into the theme and overall storyline
- Narrative consists of text documents, photos, audio clips and video footage
- Players slowly uncover more and more of a worldwide conspiracy
- Main task of players in each episode is to analyze Provenance data of different documents and look for inconsistencies
- These inconsistencies show the involvement of MoP and its attempt to hide what really happened (by manipulating Provenance data)
- Players report the inconsistencies and if correct advance in the storyline

Technical set-up



[CRON and MoP websites]

- Both websites run on a Django-backend
- Provenance manipulation is implemented in Javascript
- All player interaction is logged



[Provenance data]

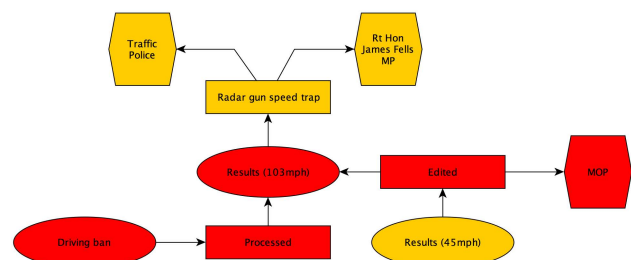
- Stored and retrieved from ProvStore via REST API
- developed and maintained by the University of Southampton



first task: analyse Provenance data of blood sample taken after a car accident

[MoP - Gamism]

- Players create fake persona to join MoP undercover
- Daily tasks to manipulate Provenance of various documents
- If players are doing a good job they get access to more critical documents
- Players also need to acquire documents for CRON to progress in the narrative



sample Provenance manipulation task

Schedule

- One week offline gaming event at GameCity festival in Nottingham (19.10.-26.10.2013)
- Online game is launched directly afterwards
- Game will run for about six months
- New main episodes are released monthly

"In China, I am constantly under surveillance. Even my slightest, most innocuous move can - and often is - censored by Chinese authorities." (Ai Weiwei)

Links

<http://www.genesisofcron.com> <http://www.apocalypseofmop.com> <http://www.cron.org> <http://www.mopf.net>