Overview

In GEMS (“Geolocated Embedded Memory System”), players participate in a science-fiction narrative in which family members must create and share geolocated records of past experiences in order to gain access to knowledge of an impending global catastrophe. The game narrative revolves around an artificial intelligence system that promises to reveal details of the series of coming disasters in exchange for multimedia records of personal experiences. This kind of gameplay is designed to explore the relationship between location and personal history and to help families document and share past experiences.

Players use desktop and mobile web interfaces to engage the AI character and build spatially-distributed networks of personal stories and mementos. In doing so, they advance the narrative and try to discover a way to avoid destruction.

Gameplay

1: RECEIVE DIRECTIVES

When players join GEMS, they periodically receive directives from the AI character (Figure 1). These directives serve as prompts or objectives that encourage the player to reflect on a certain kind of personal experience and identify a location that holds personal meaning.

2: CREATE MEMORY RECORDS

The creation of memory records is the core activity in GEMS. In order to complete directives, earn databank tokens, and advance the game, players must create geolocated collections of pictures, video, audio, and text that describe the personal meaning in a specific location (Figure 2).

3: UNCOVER THE NARRATIVE

The AI character rewards players for creating records by granting access tokens that allow them to unlock files in the databank. In context of the game fiction, the databank is the AI character’s collection of information and files relating to the impending disasters. Players may spend access tokens to explore and investigate more of the narrative as they play.

4: COLLECT & SHARE STORIES

GEMS is designed to be played with family and close friends. Players can opt to be friends with other players in order to find and collect one another’s records.

When players collect a record, they earn bonus access tokens, and they can then see all of the media the author attached to it. The GEMS interface includes a map to help players find their friends’ records, but they must travel to the actual location and use their mobile device to collect.

Figure 1. The AI character delivers a directive prompting the player to create a story about home.

Figure 2. The AI character delivers a directive prompting the player to create a story about home.