

VIRTUAL WORLDS: HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS

RICHARD GILBERT, PHD
THE P.R.O.S.E. PROJECT
(PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH
ON SYNTHETIC ENVIRONMENTS)

I. Definition and Types of Advanced Virtual Worlds

5 characteristics of an Advanced Virtual World

1. 3-D Graphical Interface
2. Massive Multi-User Remote Interactivity
3. Persistent
4. Immersive
5. User Generated Goals

Types of Virtual Worlds

Proprietary vs. Open Source

Networked vs. Free Standing

A. Precursors

1. Literary/Conceptual Precursors:

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1973); William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984); Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1993)

2. Muds/Mush(es) and Text-based Virtual Worlds

MUD: Multi-User Dungeon (generic term)

MUSH: Multi-User Shared Hallucination (Role-play)

3. Early Graphical Virtual Worlds

Meridian 59 (1996 Game) 12K peak

Ultima Online 1997 Electronic Arts
200K