



How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design (Playful Thinking)

By Katherine Isbister



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This is a renaissance moment for video games -- in the variety of genres they represent, and the range of emotional territory they cover. But how do games create emotion? In *How Games Move Us*, Katherine Isbister takes the reader on a timely and novel exploration of the design techniques that evoke strong emotions for players. She counters arguments that games are creating a generation of isolated, emotionally numb, antisocial loners. Games, Isbister shows us, can actually play a powerful role in creating empathy and other strong, positive emotional experiences; they reveal these qualities over time, through the act of playing. She offers a nuanced, systematic examination of exactly how games can influence emotion and social connection, with examples -- drawn from popular, indie, and art games -- that unpack the gamer's experience. Isbister describes choice and flow, two qualities that distinguish games from other media, and explains how game developers build upon these qualities using avatars, non-player characters, and character customization, in both solo and social play. She shows how designers use physical movement to enhance players' emotional experience, and examines long-distance networked play. She illustrates the use of these design methods with examples that range from Sony's *Little Big Planet* to the much-praised indie game *Journey* to art games like Brenda Romero's *Train*. Isbister's analysis shows us a new way to think about games, helping us appreciate them as an innovative and powerful medium for doing what film, literature, and other creative media do: helping us to understand ourselves and what it means to be human.



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Editorial Review

Review

Katherine Isbister has long been one of the most important scholars of games -- and certainly the most empathic. Her new book, *How Games Move Us*, is an invaluable guide to the many ways that games can be designed to provoke powerful positive emotions, not to mention chills, goosebumps, and transformative experiences that change how we see ourselves and the people we play with. It's an essential read for all game scholars and game designers who want to make a real emotional impact with their work.

(Jane McGonigal, PhD, author of *Reality Is Broken* and creator of SuperBetter)

In *How Games Move Us*, Katherine Isbister gets to the heart of what makes games a powerful emotional medium. She writes clearly and persuasively about the actual techniques game developers use to reach players emotionally and explains why those techniques have impact. I particularly enjoyed the many examples of compelling emotional moments in games that illustrate and corroborate her analysis.

(Noah Falstein, Chief Game Designer, Google)

How Games Move Us is the first book to fully explore the complex social and psychological relationships we have with videogames -- and each other -- as we play. Whether you're a designer, a player, or someone who is simply curious about the human aspects of play, this small volume is packed with exciting findings that will inform how we play, make, and think about games.

(Colleen Macklin, Associate Professor, Art, Media, and Technology, Parsons The New School for Design; Co-director, PETLab)

You carefully consider the narrative, design, and technology for your game, but what of the emotions you are eliciting? Isbister's work courageously urges us to consider games as a means for communicating emotion, not just sights and sounds. How might you emotionally impact your player thoughtfully, and purposefully?

(Mark DeLoura, former Senior Advisor for Digital Media, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; Creator, Game Programming Gems series)

Katherine Isbister is always insightful and thoughtful in her analysis of the game creation process, and in this book she continues to set standards and raise appreciation for the art of game-making.

(Tim Schafer, Founder, Double Fine Productions)

In *How Games Move Us: Emotion By Design* Katherine Isbister investigates how game creators are figuring out different ways to spring actual feelings from the jaded corridors of our psyches.... This book is about how designers take the human desire and capacity for feeling and turn all that into meaningful interactions with

computers and, via computers, with other humans. It's something that happens, to one degree or another, with all games.

(Polygon)

About the Author

Katherine Isbister is Professor of Computational Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and is the author of *Better Game Characters by Design*. She was the founding Director of the Game Innovation Lab at New York University.

Users Review

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Carmen Vasquez:

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Donna Gamble:

On this era which is the greater man or who has ability to do something more are more special than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple method to have that. What you should do is just spending your time almost no but quite enough to possess a look at some books. One of several books in the top checklist in your reading list is usually How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design (Playful Thinking). This book which can be qualified as The Hungry Hills can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking up and review this e-book you can get many advantages.

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