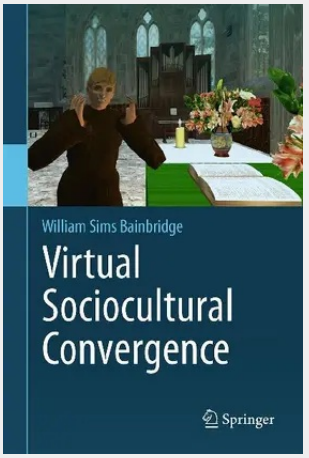
Bainbridge

Virtual Sociocultural Convergence



This book explores the remarkable sociocultural convergence in multiplayer online games and other virtual worlds, through the unification of computer science, social science, and the humanities. The emergence of online media provides not only new methods for collecting social science data, but also contexts for developing theory and conducting education in the arts as well as technology. Notably, role-playing games and virtual worlds naturally demonstrate many classical concepts about human behaviour, in ways that encourage innovative thinking. The inspiration derives from the internationally shared values developed in a fifteen-year series of conferences on science and technology convergence.

The primary methodology is focused on sending avatars, representing classical social theorists or schools of thought, into online gameworlds that harmonize with, or challenge, their fundamental ideas, including technological determinism, urban sociology, group formation,freedom versus control, class stratification, linguistic variation, functional equivalence across cultures, behavioural psychology, civilization collapse, and ethnic pluralism.

Researchers and students in the social and behavioural sciences will benefit from the many diverse examples of how both qualitative and quantitative science of culture and society can be performed in online communities of many kinds, even as artists and gamers learn styles and skills they may apply in their own work and play.

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