



Online Worlds: ***The Forms of Things*** ***Unknown***

Raph Koster
Chief Creative Officer, Sony Online Entertainment

**San Diego IGDA Chapter Meeting,
March 16th, 2004**

Who am I?

- Creative lead, *Ultima Online*
- Lead Designer, *UO: The Second Age*
- Creative Director, *Star Wars Galaxies*
- Chief Creative Officer, Sony Online Entertainment

The MMO market



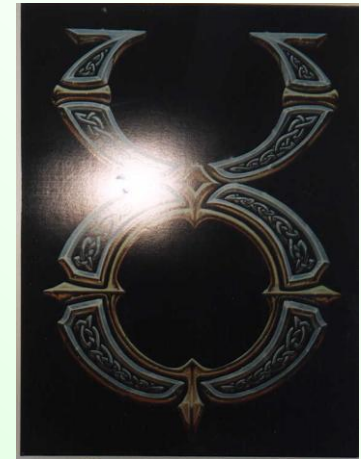
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The MMO market



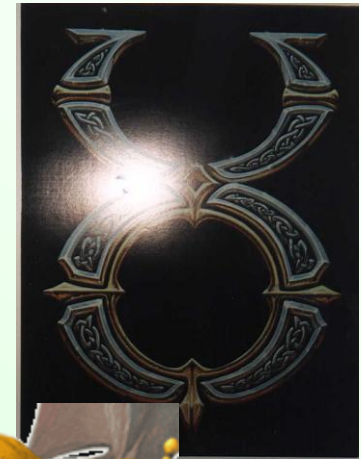
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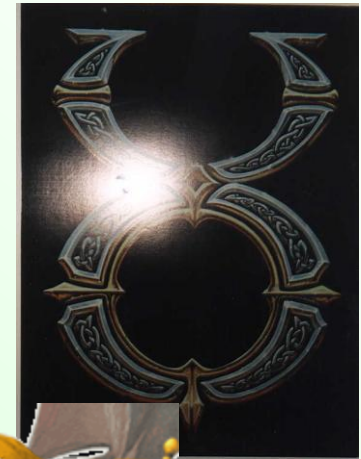
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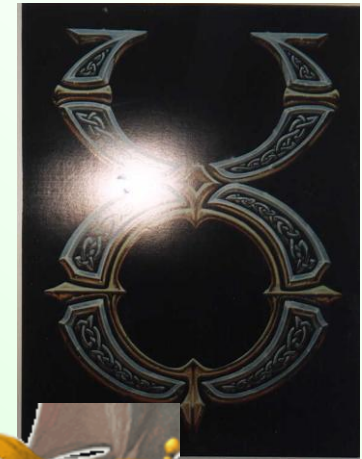
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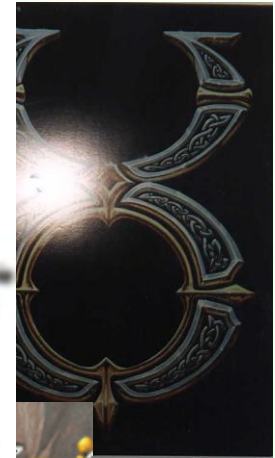
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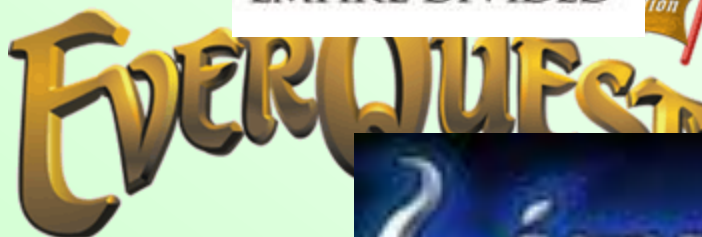
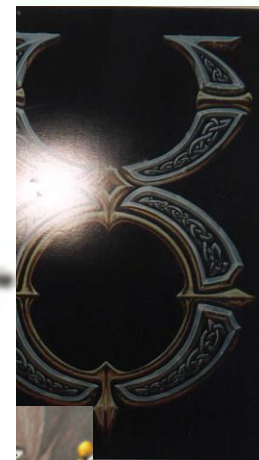
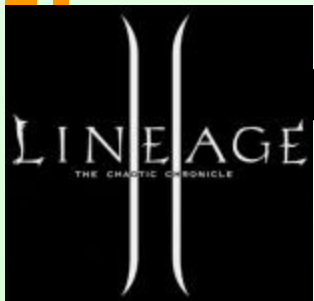
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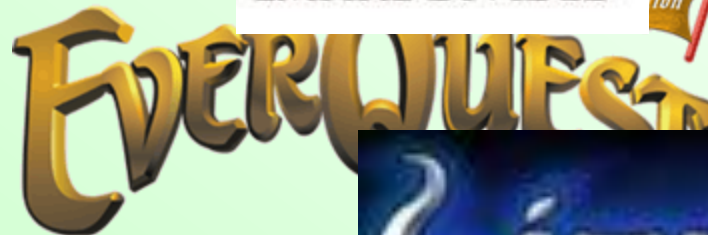
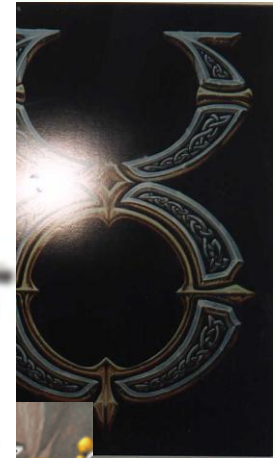


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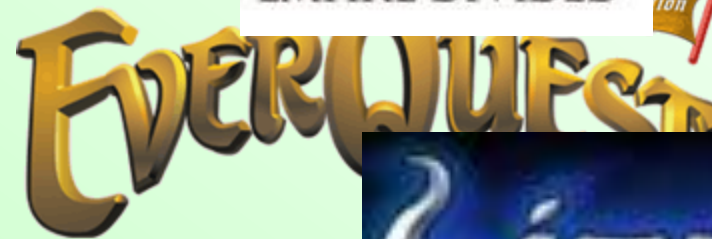
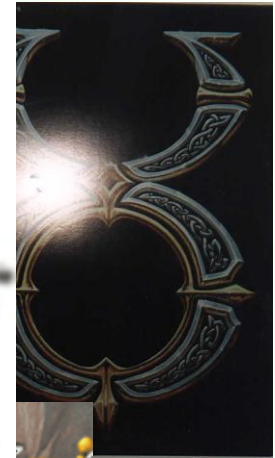


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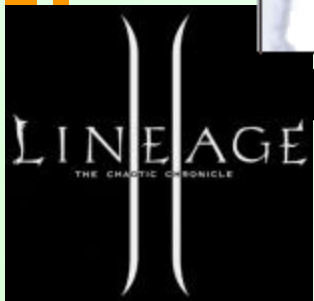


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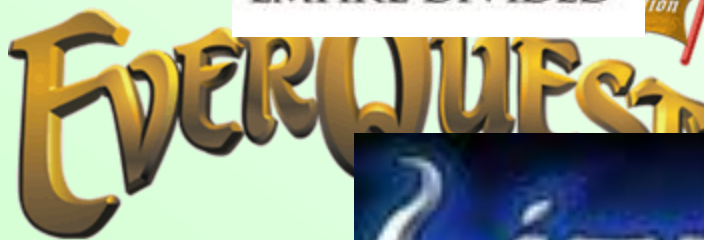
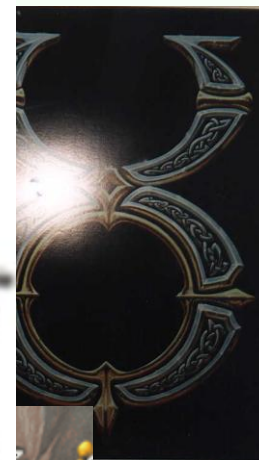


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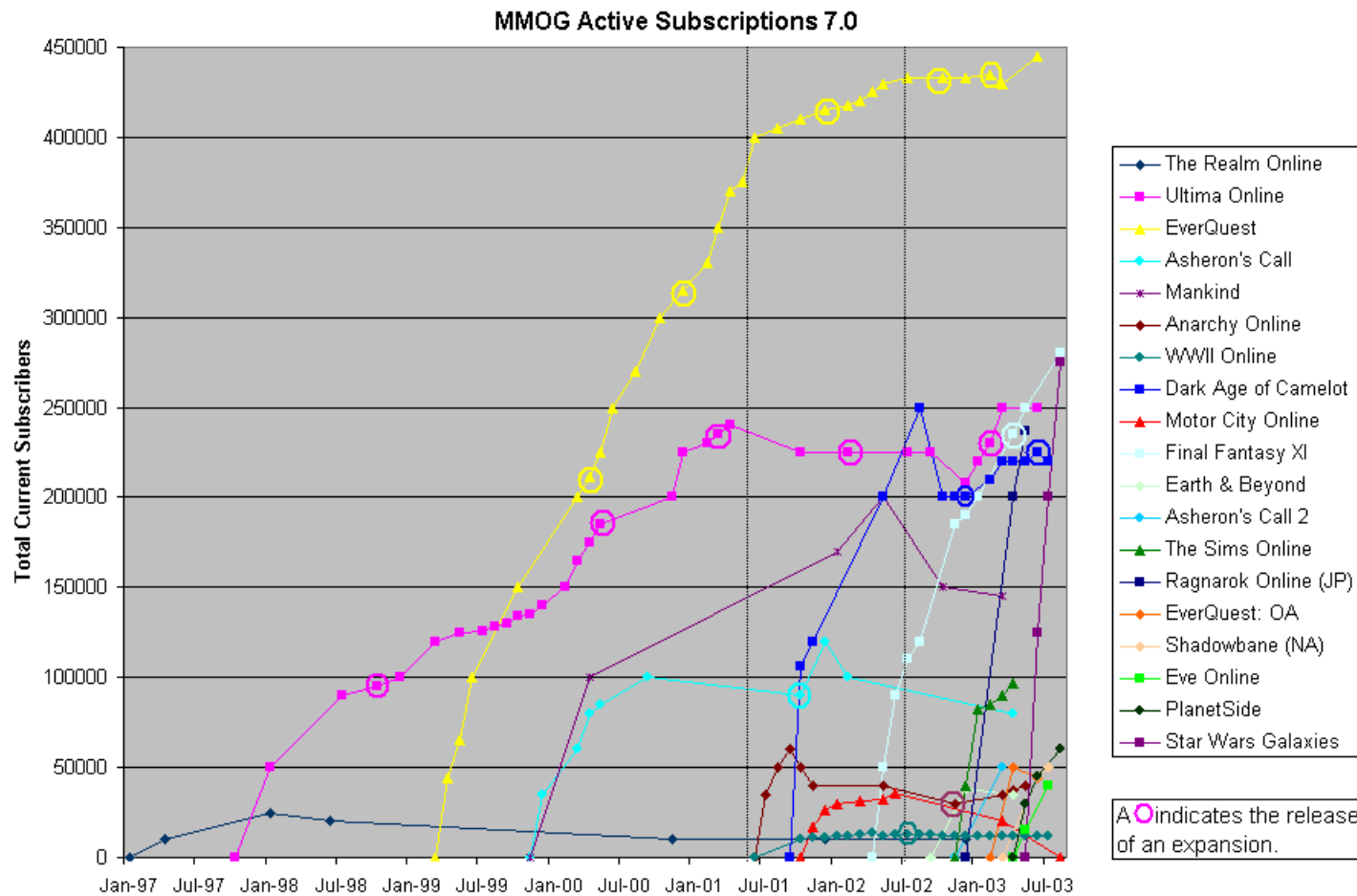


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The Asian explosion

- Lineage in 2003 had MILLIONS of active users
- Ragnarok has caused Thailand to impose a curfew
- China is a burgeoning market

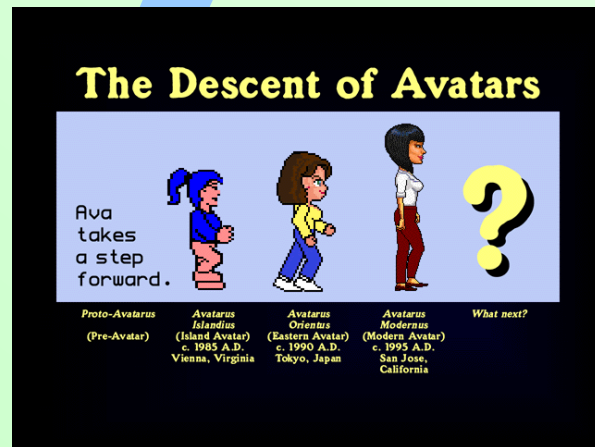
Market size



- Data from Bruce Sterling Woodcock's website

A bit of history

- This medium dates back to 1978.
- It went commercial in the early 80's.
- Proprietary networks ruled the roost until 1995
- Revenues per head fell hugely in the 90s



PLATO



- Originated live chat, bulletin boards, FAQs
- Also originated online gaming
- Plasma screens
- Academic network only
- Games were eventually banned

MUD1



Playing the game. Richard Bartle in the background.

- Roy Trubshaw & Richard Bartle
- Text-based environment inspired by Colossal Cave ripoffs
- Item scavenging, full-world resets

Habitat



- Developed by LucasFilm
- Graphical worlds, in 1985!!
- Influential research: “The Lessons of Lucasfilm’s Habitat.”

The MUD family

- [AberMUD](#)
- [AberMUD3](#)
- [AberMUD4](#)
- [AberMUD5](#)
- [Ack](#)
- [AeMUD](#)
- [AMP](#)
- [Avalon](#)
- [BSX](#)
- [CamMUD](#)
- [CD](#)
- [Chalacyn Nights](#)
- [Circle](#)
- [Cold](#)
- [ColdMUD](#)
- [CoolMUD](#)
- [Copper](#)
- [daemonMUCK](#)
- [DaleMUD](#)
- [DGD](#)
- [Diku](#)
- [DikuII](#)
- [Dirt](#)
- [DUM](#)
- [DUMII](#)
- [dyrt](#)
- [Ember](#)
- [Envy](#)
- [Federation II](#)
- [FreeDIRT](#)
- [FuzzBall](#)
- [Gemstone](#)
- [Gods](#)
- [idirt](#)
- [Interlude](#)
- [Isengard](#)
- [Island](#)
- [LambdaMOO](#)
- [Lance](#)
- [LP](#)
- [LPMud 2.4.5](#)
- [LPMud 3.0](#)
- [LPMud 3.1.2](#)
- [LPMud 3.1.2-DR](#)
- [LPMud 3.2 \(Amylaar\)](#)
- [MAGE](#)
- [MARE](#)
- [Merc](#)
- [Mirrorworld](#)
- [MIST](#)
- [Monster](#)
- [MOO](#)
- [Mordor](#)
- [Mosaic](#)
- [MouseMUCK](#)
- [MUCK](#)
- [MUD++](#)
- [MUD1](#)
- [MUD2](#)
- [MudOS](#)
- [Mundi](#)
- [MUQ](#)
- [MUSE](#)
- [MUSH](#)
- [MUX](#)
- [Mythran](#)
- [Oblivion](#)
- [Ogham](#)
- [PennMUSH](#)
- [PerlMUD](#)
- [Pirate](#)
- [Quest for Mordor](#)
- [ROM](#)
- [Scepter](#)
- [Sequent](#)
- [Shades](#)
- [Shattered Worlds](#)
- [Silly](#)
- [Smaug](#)
- [SMUG](#)
- [Teeny](#)
- [Terris](#)
- [The Isles](#)
- [TinyMUD](#)
- [Trash](#)
- [UberMUD](#)
- [UglyMUG](#)
- [UnterMUD](#)
- [UriMUD](#)
- [VAXMUD](#)
- [Vie](#)
- [VUM](#)
- [YAMA](#)
- [YAMud](#)

Aber MUD

- Early MUD platform
- Solidified the hack n slash gameplay style
- Based on collecting
- Very little persistence

Tiny*

- User creation comes of age
- Architecture based on softcode
- Led to the MUSH and MOO families

MOO

- Users get to build the world
- The most famous case is LambdaMOO
- Popular in academia
- No game rules

Diku

- The most popular gaming platform
- Templated data makes for easy content expansion
- Very difficult to add functionality

Online services

- Legends of Kesmai
- Dragon's Gate
- Neverwinter Nights
- Rabbitjack's Casino
- Gemstone
- CyberStrike

Classify gameplay

- Primarily RPG driven
 - Character advancement
 - Item collection
- Social groupings
 - Guilds
 - Parties
 - Chat services
- User contributed content

MUD

- The adventure branch
 - Design-driven adventure
 - Typically advancement driven
 - Typically collection games
- Static templating
 - Little use of softcode
 - Character state persistence

MUSH

- Primarily a chat or roleplay environment
- Often do not include a formal game system
- Typically based on popular IPs (with permission of course)

MOO

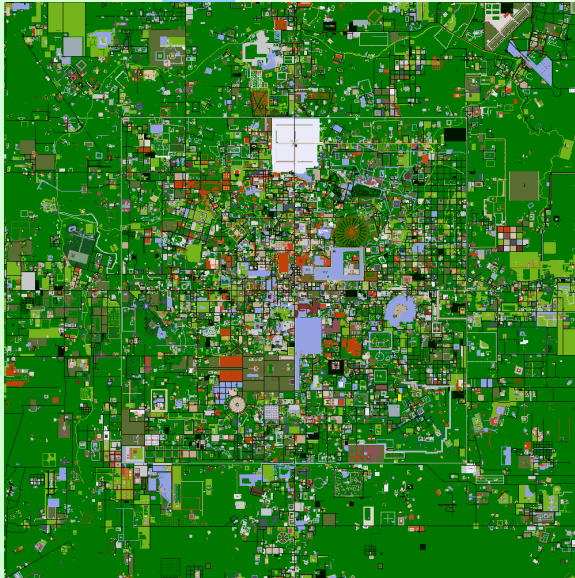
- User extendable environment
- Stands for “MUD, object oriented.”
- Popular in academia
- The closest thing to traditional pictures of “virtual reality”

Other genres

- Action or sim:
Planetside, World War II Online, Warbirds, Air Warrior, etc
- RTS: Shattered Galaxy, Ballerium, etc
- Turn-based: Laser Squad Nemesis, ec
- Strategy: Empire, etc

Modern types

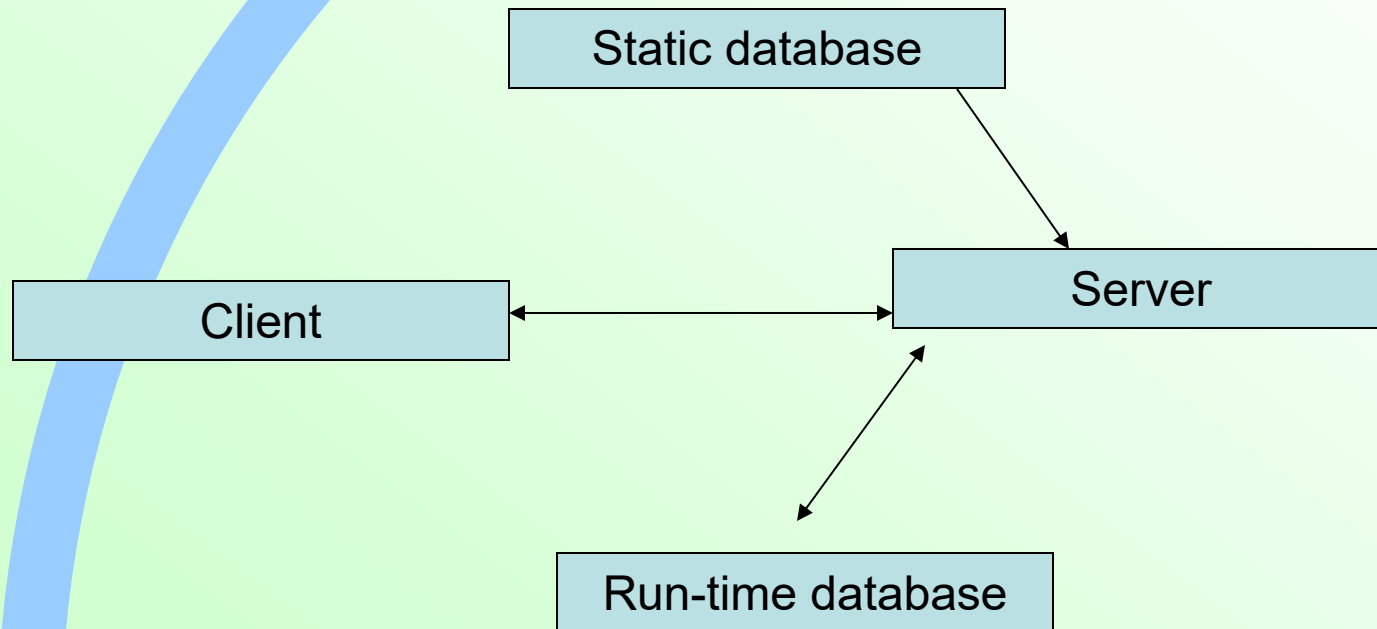
- Modern games are mostly MUDs
- MOOs: Second Life, AlphaWorld, WorldsAway
- MUSHes: There



Game vs world

- Recent debate:
 - The “game world”
 - The “virtual world”
- Epitomized by EQ vs UO
 - Some assert “theme park world”
- Can’t one contain the other?

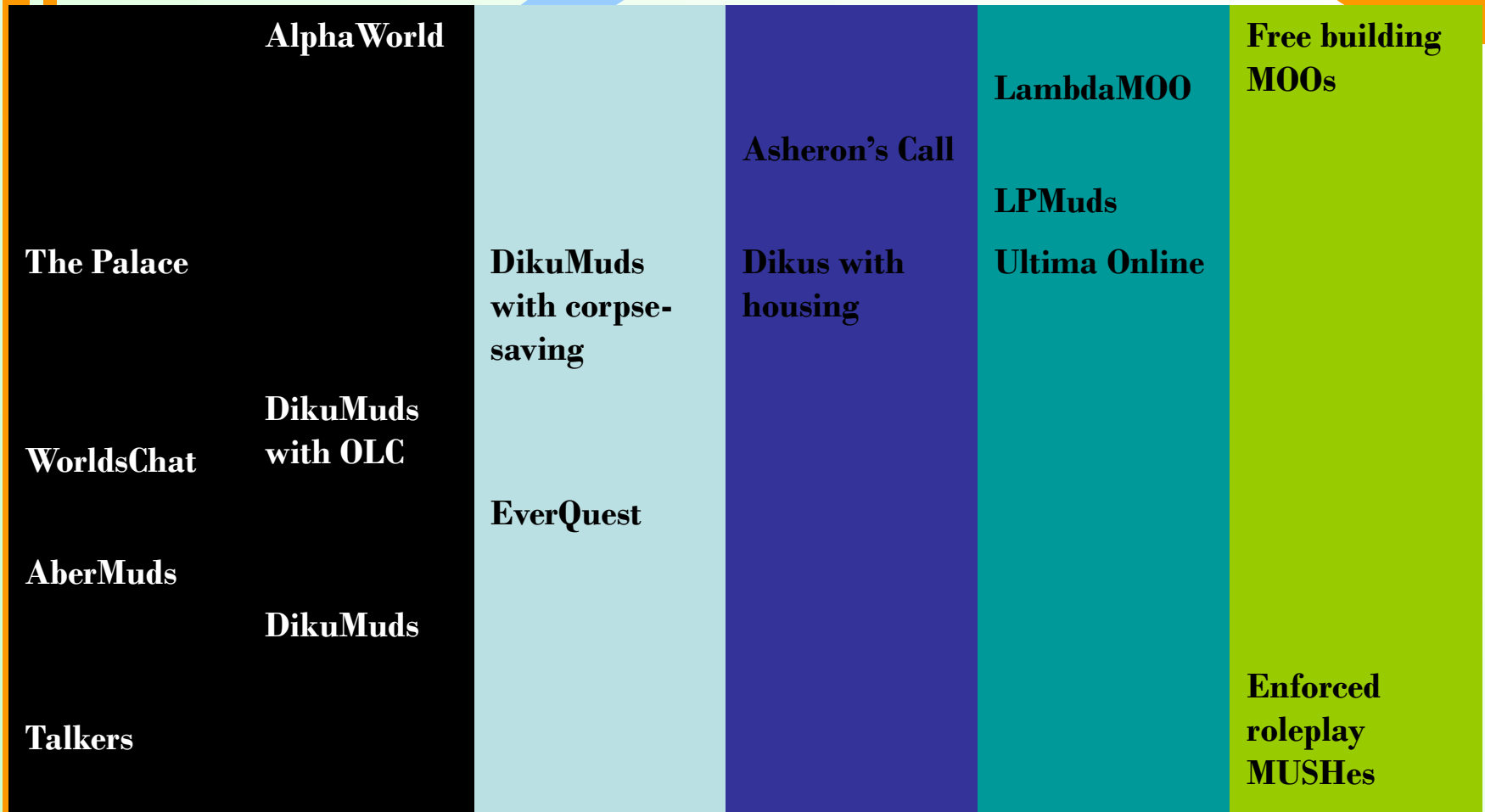
How are they put together?



Only persist map and
characters

Persist some objects

Save world state



Pieces of the game

- UI
- Chat
- Physics
- DB
- Economy
- Spawning
- Questing
- Scripting

Whither online?

- Current trends:
 - Small pieces loosely joined
 - User content
 - Mobile
- Blogs, LiveJournal, Social Network Software, etc

Non- game worlds

- Is this a good interface?
 - E-commerce
- Education
 - A few virtual universities
 - Collaborative writing/building training
- Military training
 - Collaboration, team-building

Non-RPG worlds

- Why no action market?
- Power laws and success
 - The 80/20 rule
- What are the steps to market dominance?

The *Snow Crash* promise

- Modifiable world
- Rich AI and content
- The marriage of world and game
- Distributed?

Niche or not?

- Barriers to the casual market
 - Time
 - Money
 - Content
 - Gameplay
- Medium or genre?

A large orange circle containing the text "Q&A" in a bold, black, serif font. The circle is centered in the upper half of the slide. A thick, light blue arc curves behind the circle, spanning from the left edge to the right edge of the frame. The background is a light green gradient.

Q&A

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