

**Safer internet Forum 2010 – MINUTES OF THIRD SESSION on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010:  
Online games – what role do they play in the lives of children?  
Room M6, 12:15 p.m. – 1 p.m.**

The following panellists took part in this 45 minutes session which was moderated by Prof. Sonia Livingstone

Pannelist	Organisation/company
Daniel Schwartz	Takomat
George Rose	Activision Blizzard
Derek Robertson	Learning and Teaching Scotland
Michel Stora	Psychologist
Martina Högberg	Safer Internet Centre Sweden
José Luis Zatarin	Safer Internet Centre Spain
Juhani Lassila	Sulake

Representatives from the Parents' Panel and the Youth Panel were present in this session. The Greek representative of parents summarised the conclusions of the discussion on online games at the Parents' panel meetings on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Some youth panellists (mainly boys) tried to contribute actively to the discussion, in particular pointing out factor of attractiveness for young people for online games (like reward and competitiveness). Unfortunately the time was too tight for allowing a larger and longer debate but the interest for the topic from the audience was clear.



Co-founder of the German company  
"TAKOMAT", a multimedia production  
company

### **Daniel Schwartz (DE):**

***"Exposing yourself on Facebook is more risky than playing a dwarf in World of Warcraft".***

First of all Daniel Schwarz provided some statistical data on who and why play what online games. He analysed the question whether children can learn from the games. He then briefly mentioned some of the projects on online games in which he has been involved over the last years:

In 2005, Mr Schwarz initiated the FP6-IST-Technology Enhanced Learning project: ELEKTRA: "Enhanced Learning Experience and Knowledge TRANSfer", which pioneered research on learning with computer games on an interdisciplinary level including neurosciences, pedagogy, cognitive science, psychology, computer science, game design and arts. ELEKTRA was awarded as one of the "Star projects" of European research and answered the question whether and how pupils can learn with the new medium computer games. From April 2008 - September 2010 his company participated in the FP7-ICT-Technology Enhanced Learning project "80Days - Around an inspiring virtual learning world in eighty days". His company TAKOMAT developed a character animation technology that will pave the way for the next generation of learning games. The company recently developed the most complex serious game about energy for the German Government.

He concluded that for young learners the computer games are the doors of perception for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. More details are available on his PPT presentation:

<http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/computer-games-and-learning-daniel-schwarz>



Executive Vice President, Chief Public Policy Officer, Activision Blizzard

## George ROSE (USA):

*"Entertainment software can be a terrific resource for variety of pursuits: entertainment, education, training, communication and discovery for children and parents alike. However, it is of vital significance for adults to understand what playing modern games really entails. The games have long graduated from dots and lines on a small screen and from a solitary pursuit by a lone teenage gamer on a computer. Most games now include rich and immersive social and interactive elements like chat rooms, online competitions, social elements where participants play in units and even large clans numbering dozens of players, each with his or her pre-assigned role and identity. Many games can now be changed and supplemented by downloading additional content from the Internet, which can be created by the publisher or other players and differ from tiny micro-elements like a sword or a car to entire new levels of play. It is no longer acceptable for adults to ignore or be fearful of what children are doing. It is their duty to be knowledgeable about what and how children play, to participate in their play and to make choices on their behalf. This is no way different than reading a book with the child or taking them to see a film or a theatre play".*

George Rose spoke about safe-play tips for parents concerning online games. Having discussed the types of such games, he discussed selected advices, e.g. using parental common sense, involvement and staying informed, among others.

The tips he presented are available on his PPT presentation:

<http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/safety-tips-for-online-gaming-george-rose>



Communications officer at the Swedish Media Council (Swedish Safer Internet Centre)

## Martina Högberg (SE):

*"(The Swedish Media Council is the Swedish Government's expert organization on children and young people's media use.) The Council is working with an aim to reduce the risks of harmful effects of the media and to empower the children in their media use. The Council raises awareness about risks and benefits of media use, offering advice to parents and professionals dealing with children and youth. While stressing the importance of being a critical media user, the Media Council also strives to increase understanding of children's and youth's creativity and activities online".*

Martina Högberg (Swedish Safer Internet Centre) presented recent statistics from Sweden about the use of online games of children and the new report *"The world as a playground – crossing borders in the culture of online games"* which has just been released. She pointed out that female players are treated differently; they often change of identity in virtual worlds. For more information see her PPT presentation: <http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/online-games-what-role-do-they-play-in-the-lives-of-children-swedish-media-council>



National Adviser for Emerging Technologies at Learning at Learning and Teaching Scotland

## Derek ROBERTSON (UK):

*"The rich and diverse world of online games offers exciting and challenging opportunities for teaching and learning. Be it learning Spanish with Dora the Explorer, improving number bonds in Moshi Monsters or managing a guild in World of Warcraft we are finding that learners/players generally choose to situate themselves in these worlds. We need to further recognise the cultural appeal of these environments but in doing so further develop our understanding of how the challenge and demand that that these worlds present can help inform and influence and enhance the learning experience. We also need to ensure that learners are safe in such worlds and that schools and parents can be confident that rich learning with online games can be safely achieved through the support of appropriate procedures and policies in relation to their access and use".*

Derek Robertson (Learning and Teaching Scotland) discussed the game-based learning in Scottish schools. Arguing in favour, he provided an example of the project on mental maths. He observed that some games are blocked at schools.



Psychologist, in charge of the psychological support unit at Skyrock

## Michael STORA (FR):

*"Mon expérience dans le domaine du soin en ligne (consultation psychologique d'avatars sur Second life, responsable de la cellule psychologique de Skyrock) ou du soin par l'utilisation du jeux vidéo en thérapie auprès d'enfants borderline ou autistes et plus récemment le développement d'un Serious Game destiné aux enfants en sur poids et obèses, me font penser qu'il est possible d'établir des relation thérapeutique d'un nouveau genre.*

*Par contre, il est dangereux de laisser ce type de modération psychologique entre les mains de modérateurs non formés. Ainsi, je crois aux soutiens entre pairs mais non à la modération entre pairs."*

Michel Stora talked about children playing online games. His observations are that parents usually do not pay them enough attention and thus children might look for replacement. There is a need for a better understanding. He also stressed the fact that peer to peer moderation is not the right solution for young people, they need support from adults.



## **José Luis Zatarain (ES):**

*Kids and Young adolescents don't distinguish between a virtual and a real World*

*For them both Worlds are the same one: their world. If the addressed topic and/or the platform they are using interest them, they may even attend virtual meetings regarding online safety issues.*

Project manager Safer Internet Centre  
in Spain

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José Luis Zatarain presented the co-operation of Protegeles (Spanish Safer Internet Centre) with the Habbo-bus and thus providing an example of how virtual worlds can support awareness raising and helpline purposes

More details are available on his PPT presentation:

<http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/awareness-activities-on-virtual-worlds>



## **Juhani LASSILA (FI):**

*"Sulake and Habbo Hotel believes that empowering the young users through education and participation is absolutely the most important vehicle in striving for safer internet use. Making this happen needs active involvement from service providers, parents, schools, organizations (governmental, NGOs) and youngsters themselves. Parents play a very important role here - it is many times a difficult role, and thus parents need to be supported."*

Director, PR & Communications Sulake

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Juhani Lassila presented the main finding from the recent survey on Habbo hotel users in 33 countries and focused in particular on the following questions:

- who has how much responsibility in online safety?
- who knows better?
- Children better than parents?
- How will be the situation in 10 years?