100 Million Friends You Can Never Know

Adding COPPA compliant social networking to Poptropica

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Poptropica®

Wait, what's a Poptropica?

- Web based side scrolling adventure platformer
- For kids from 6 to 15 years old
- Conceived in mid 2006 by Jeff Kinney
- Launched on the first of September 2007
- There are now 33 Poptropican Island adventures
- Narrative focus with each island telling a story
- Also a social game:
  - Common rooms for 8 players on every Island
  - Chat / Emote
  - Head to head mini-games

ZOMBIE IN PARADISE
MANATEE!
OPEN
POLICE
Save

Save

CORNER SHO
STATIONERY
NEWSPAPER
OPEN
OPEN
Save

Save

So, it's cool, but is it BIG?!?

- 500,000,000 characters created
- 8,000,000 active users per month
- 28 minutes on the site each visit
- 3.25 visits a month
- That's 12,133,333 kid hours a month.
- 1,385 kid years ... every month...
- 99,726 years spent playing our game since launch...

give or take a thousand years...

Poptropica®

#poptropica

How could this happen?!?

- Great Writing
- Great game play
- Easy access
- Free
- Secret Ingredient
- Luck?

Poptropica
EXPLORE · COLLECT · COMPETE
RETURNING

Poptropica
WELCOME TO POPTROPICA!
POINT AND CLICK THE MOUSE
TO MOVE YOUR CHARACTER
Rough
Speck
CHANGE CHARACTER

CREATE YOUR CHARACTER
ARE YOU A
BOY OR A GIRL?
BOY
GIRL

WELCOME TO POPTROPICA!
POINT AND CLICK THE MOUSE
TO MOVE YOUR CHARACTER
Loud
Sinker
CHANGE ALL
SKIN COLOR
HAIR
HAIR COLOR
EYES
MOUTH
SHIRT
PANTS

Goals

To provide a way for players to:

1. Connect with other users in a persistent way, allowing deeper friendships to develop
2. Further express their personalities in the game (beyond the millions of costume combinations already possible)
3. Share that captured personal expression with others.
4. Be able to find real life friends in the game
5. Be able to make new friends within the game.
6. Be able to share their progress through the game in a meaningful and intrinsic way.

Poptropica
Stats
Store
Stuff
CLOSE
Invisible Foot
ISLAND MEDALLIONS
WHAT'S NEW
Coming this spring: Astro Knights Island! Poptropica has been attacked by invaders from outer space, and the princess has been captured!
POPTROPICA STORE
ROCK STAR OUTFIT
VISIT THE STORE
BATTLE RANKING
3700 CREDITS
PURCHASE MORE CREDITS
CHANGE PASSWORD
RECENT ACTIVITY
Login
Login
Won Soupwords
Won Soupwords
Lost Balloons
Login
Login

Island Medallion
GREAT PUMPKIN
MEDALLION
Congratulations! You have completed the Great Pumpkin quest.
TAKE OFF

Stats
Store
Friendly Bug
ISLAND MEDALLIONS
WHAT'S NEW
You completed Great Pumpkin. You earned 100 credits!
Members can play Mystery Train now! The free demo is available to all.
Great Pumpkin
1 completion
MYSTERY TRAIN
MEMBERS PLAY NOW!
NOT A MEMBER? PLAY DEMO NOW!
LEARN MORE
BATTLE RANKING
1575 CREDITS
MEMBERSHIP STATUS: ACTIVE
RECENT ACTIVITY
Obtained GameShow Promo Bir
Obtained GameShow Promo Ro
Obtained GameShow Promo Co
Obtained CreatorClip-11295
Obtained Mystery Train Medallic
Obtained Transformer
Obtained Transformer Sketch
PASSWORD SETTINGS

Stats
Store
Fierce Moon
ISLAND MEDALLIONS
WHAT'S NEW
Members now have early access to Twisted Thicket!
Vampire's Curse Island is now available to everyone!
Twisted Thicket
MEMBERS PLAY NOW!
LEARN MORE
BATTLE RANKING
1775 CREDITS
MEMBERSHIP STATUS: ACTIVE
PASSWORD SETTINGS

Poptropica
Pop
185
FRIENDS
TRIBES
MULTIVERSE
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
MOST ACTIVE
ISLAND MEDALLIONS 13
NEXT

Challenges

Above and beyond the normal challenge of adding social features social systems must ...

- maintain COPPA compliance
- protect the privacy of our users
- maintain the level of simplicity and clarity that are the foundations of the Poptropica experience

COPPA - Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

How to comply with Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, effective April 21, 2000, applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13. The new rules spell out what a Web site operator must include in a privacy policy, when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent and what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online.

The Federal Trade Commission staff prepared this guide to help you comply with the new requirements for protecting children's privacy online and understand the FTC's enforcement authority.

Who Must Comply

If you operate a commercial Web site or an online service directed to children under 13 that collects personal information from children or if you operate a general audience Web site and have actual knowledge that you are collecting personal information from children, you must comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.

- To determine whether a Web site is directed to children, the FTC considers several factors, including the subject matter; visual or audio content; the age of models on the site; language; whether advertising on the Web site is directed to children; information regarding the age of the actual or intended audience; and whether a site uses animated characters or other child-oriented features.
- To determine whether an entity is an "operator" with respect to information collected at a site, the FTC will consider who owns and controls the information; who pays for the collection and maintenance of the information; what the pre-existing contractual relationships are in connection with the information; and what role the Web site plays in collecting or maintaining the information.

Personal Information

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and Rule apply to individually identifiable information about a child that is collected online, such as full name, home address, email address, telephone number or any other information that would allow someone to identify or contact the child. The Act and Rule also cover other types of information -- for example, hobbies, interests and information collected through cookies or other types of tracking mechanisms -- when they are tied to individually identifiable information.

Basic Provisions

Privacy Notice

Placement

An operator must post a link to a notice of its information practices on the home page of its Web site or online service and at each area where it collects personal information from children. An operator of a general audience site with a separate children's area must post a link to its notice on the home page of the children's area.

The link to the privacy notice must be clear and prominent. Operators may want to use a larger font size or a different color type on a contrasting background to make it stand out. A link in small print at the bottom of the page -- or a link that is indistinguishable from other links on your site -- is not considered clear and prominent.

Content

The notice must be clearly written and understandable; it should not include any unrelated or confusing materials. It must state the following information:

- The name and contact information (address, telephone number and email address) of all operators collecting or maintaining children's personal information through the Web site or online service. If more than one operator is collecting information at the site, the site may select and provide contact information for only one operator who will respond to all inquiries from parents about the site's privacy policies. Still, the names of all the operators must be listed in the notice.
- The kinds of personal information collected from children (for example, name, address, email address, hobbies, etc.) and how the information is collected -- directly from the child or passively, say, through cookies.
- How the operator uses the personal information. For example, is it for marketing back to the child? Notifying contest winners? Allowing the child to make the information publicly available through a chat room?
- Whether the operator discloses information collected from children to third parties. If so, the operator also must disclose the kinds of businesses in which the third parties are engaged; the general purposes for which the information is used; and whether the third parties have agreed to maintain the confidentiality and security of the information.
- That the parent has the option to agree to the collection and use of the child's information without consenting to the disclosure of the information to third parties.
- That the operator may not require a child to disclose more information than is reasonably necessary to participate in an activity as a condition of participation.
- That the parent can review the child's personal information, ask to have it deleted and refuse to allow any further collection or use of the child's information. The notice also must state the procedures for the parent to follow.

Direct Notice to Parents

Content

The notice to parents must contain the same information included on the notice on the Web site. In addition, an operator must notify a parent that it wishes to collect personal information from the child; that the parent's consent is required for the collection, use and disclosure of the information; and how the parent can provide consent. The notice to parents must be written clearly and understandably, and must not contain any unrelated or confusing information. An operator may use any one of a number of methods to notify a parent, including sending an email message to the parent or a notice by postal mail.

Verifiable Parental Consent

Before collecting, using or disclosing personal information from a child, an operator must obtain verifiable parental consent from the child's parent. This means an operator must make reasonable efforts (taking into consideration available technology) to ensure that before personal information is collected from a child, a parent of the child receives notice of the operator's information practices and consents to those practices.

Until April 2002, the FTC will use a sliding scale approach to parental consent in which the required method of consent will vary based on how the operator uses the child's personal information. That is, if the operator uses the information for internal purposes, a less rigorous method of consent is required. If the operator discloses the information to others , the situation presents greater dangers to children, and a more reliable method of consent is required. The sliding scale approach will sunset in April 2002 subject to a Commission review planned for October 2001.

Internal Uses

Operators may use email to get parental consent for all internal uses of personal information, such as marketing back to a child based on his or her preferences or communicating promotional updates about site content, as long as they take additional steps to increase the likelihood that the parent has, in fact, provided the consent. For example, operators might seek confirmation from a parent in a delayed confirmatory email, or confirm the parent's consent by letter or phone call.

Public Disclosures

When operators want to disclose a child's personal information to third parties or make it publicly available (for example, through a chat room or message board), the sliding scale requires them to use a more reliable method of consent, including:

- getting a signed form from the parent via postal mail or facsimile;
- accepting and verifying a credit card number in connection with a transaction;
- taking calls from parents, through a toll-free telephone number staffed by trained personnel;
- email accompanied by digital signature;

But in the case of a monitored chat room, if all individually identifiable information is stripped from postings before it is made public -- and the information is deleted from the operator's records -- an operator does not have to get prior parental consent.

Disclosures to Third Parties

An operator must give a parent the option to agree to the collection and use of the child's personal information without agreeing to the disclosure of the information to third parties. However, when a parent agrees to the collection and use of their child's personal information, the operator may release that information to others who uses it solely to provide support for the internal operations of the website or service, including technical support and order fulfillment.

Exceptions

The regulations include several exceptions that allow operators to collect a child's email address without getting the parent's consent in advance. These exceptions cover many popular online activities for kids, including contests , online newsletters , homework help and electronic postcards .

Prior parental consent is not required when:

- an operator collects a child's or parent's email address to provide notice and seek consent;
- an operator collects an email address to respond to a one-time request from a child and then deletes it;
- an operator collects an email address to respond more than once to a specific request -- say, for a subscription to a newsletter. In this case, the operator must notify the parent that it is communicating regularly with the child and give the parent the opportunity to stop the communication before sending or delivering a second communication to a child;
- an operator collects a child's name or online contact information to protect the safety of a child who is participating on the site. In this case, the operator must notify the parent and give him or her the opportunity to prevent further use of the information;
- an operator collects a child's name or online contact information to protect the security or liability of the site or to respond to law enforcement, if necessary, and does not use it for any other purpose.

October 2001/April 2002

In October 2001, the Commission will seek public comment to determine whether technology has progressed and whether secure electronic methods for obtaining verifiable parental consent are widely available and affordable. Subject to the Commission's review, the sliding scale will expire in April 2002. Until then, operators are encouraged to use the more reliable methods of consent for all uses of children's personal information.

New Notice for Consent

An operator is required to send a new notice and request for consent to parents if there are material changes in the collection, use or disclosure practices to which the parent had previously agreed. Take the case of the operator who got parental consent for a child to participate in contests that require the child to submit limited personal information, but who now wants to offer the child chat rooms. Or, consider the case of the operator who wants to disclose the child's information to third parties who are in materially different lines of business from those covered by the original consent -- for example, marketers of diet pills rather than marketers of stuffed animals. In these cases, the Rule requires new notice and consent.

Access Verification

At a parent's request, operators must disclose the general kinds of personal information they collect online from children (for example, name, address, telephone number, email address, hobbies), as well as the specific information collected from children who visit their sites. Operators must use reasonable procedures to ensure they are dealing with the child's parent before they provide access to the child's specific information.

They can use a variety of methods to verify the parent's identity, including:

- obtaining a signed form from the parent via postal mail or facsimile;
- accepting and verifying a credit card number;
- taking calls from parents on a toll-free telephone number staffed by trained personnel;
- email accompanied by digital signature;
- email accompanied by a PIN or password obtained through one of the verification methods above.

Operators who follow one of these procedures acting in good faith to a request for parental access are protected from liability under federal and state law for inadvertent disclosures of a child's information to someone who purports to be a parent.

Revoking & Deleting

At any time, a parent may revoke his/her consent, refuse to allow an operator to further use or collect their child's personal information, and direct the operator to delete the information. In turn, the operator may terminate any service provided to the child, but only if the information at issue is reasonably necessary for the child's participation in that activity. For example, an operator may require children to provide their email addresses to participate in a chat room so the operator can contact a youngster if he is misbehaving in the chat room. If, after giving consent, a parent asks the operator to delete the child's information, the operator may refuse to allow the child to participate in the chat room in the future. If other activities on the Web site do not require the child's email address, the operator must allow the child access to those activities.

Timing

The Rule covers all personal information collected after April 21, 2000, regardless of any prior relationship an operator has had with a child. For example, if an operator collects the name and email address of a child before April 21, 2000, but plans to seek information about the child's street address after that date, the later collection would trigger the Rule's requirements. In addition, come April 21, 2000, if an operator continues to offer activities that involve the ongoing collection of information from children -- like a chat room -- or begins to offer such activities for the first time, notice and consent are required for all participating children regardless of whether the children had already registered at the site.

Safe Harbors

Industry groups or others can create self-regulatory programs to govern participants' compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule . These guidelines must include independent monitoring and disciplinary procedures and must be submitted to the Commission for approval. The Commission will publish the guidelines and seek public comment in considering whether to approve the guidelines. An operator's compliance with Commission-approved self-regulatory guidelines will generally serve as a 'safe harbor' in any enforcement action for violations of the Rule.

Enforcement

The Commission may bring enforcement actions and impose civil penalties for violations of the Rule in the same manner as for other Rules under the FTC Act. The Commission also retains authority under Section 5 of the FTC Act to examine information practices for deception and unfairness, including those in use before the Rule's effective date. In interpreting Section 5 of the FTC Act, the Commission has determined that a representation, omission or practice is deceptive if it is likely to:

- mislead consumers; and
- affect consumers' behavior or decisions about the product or service.

Specifically, it is a deceptive practice under Section 5 to represent that a Web site is collecting personal identifying information from a child for one reason (say, to earn points to redeem a premium) when the information will be used for another reason that a parent would find material -- and when the Web site does not disclose the other reason clearly or prominently.

In addition, an act or practice is unfair if the injury it causes, or is likely to cause, is:

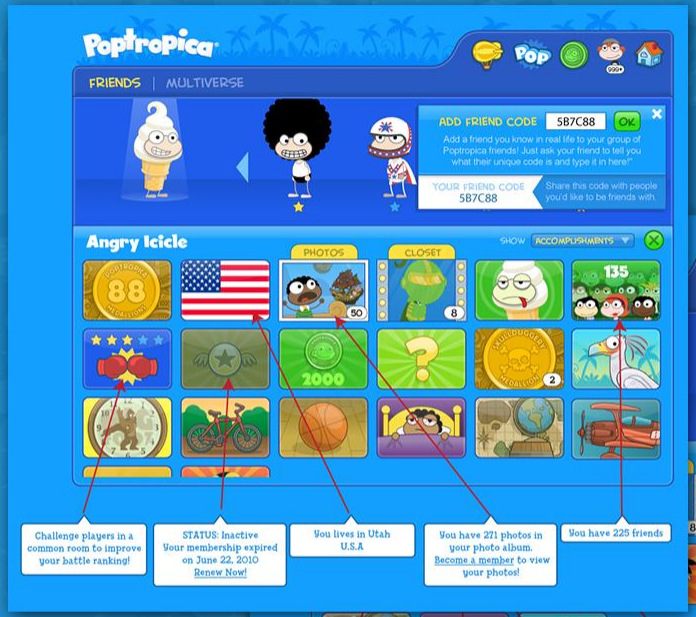
- substantial;
- not outweighed by other benefits; and
- not reasonably avoidable.

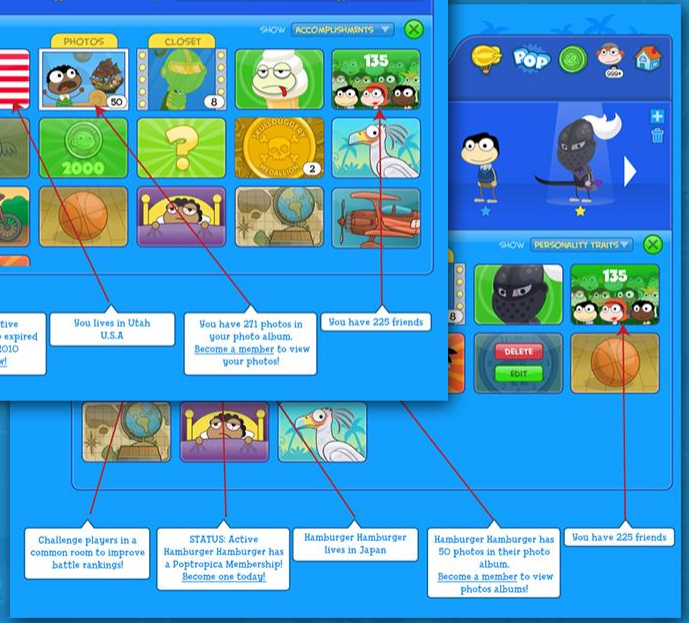
For example, it is likely to be an unfair practice in violation of Section 5 to collect personal identifying information from a child, such as email address, home address or phone number, and disclose that information to a third party without giving parents adequate notice and a chance to control the collection and use of the information.

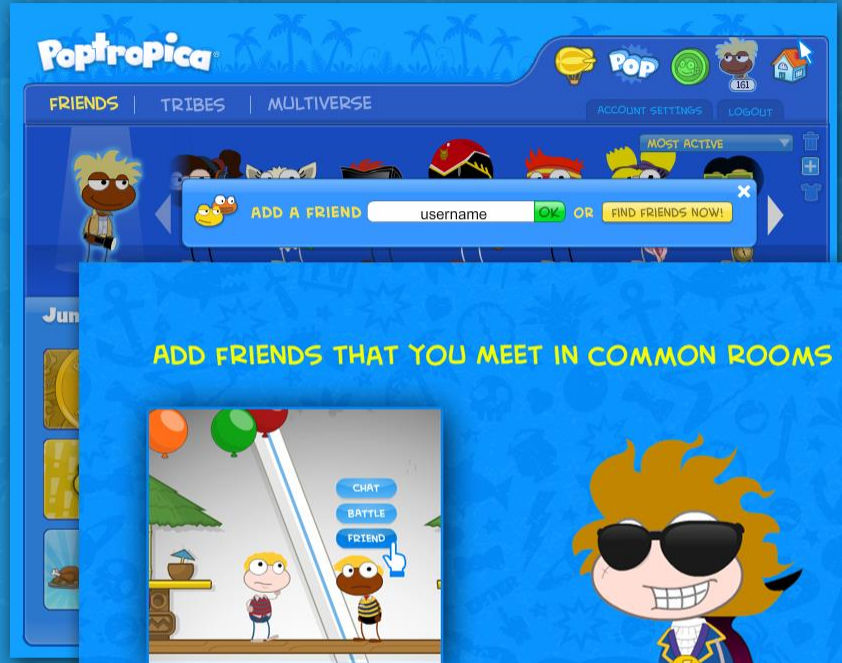
References: http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/buspubs/coppa.htm

Design:

- Add friends in common rooms
- Add friends by their user names
- View all of their friends costumes
- Answer visually appealing personality questions
- See their own personality questions in a meaningful format


Poptropica
FRIENDS | MULTIVERSE
ADD FRIEND CODE 5B7C88 OK
Add a friend you know in real life to your group of Poptropica friends! Just ask your friend to tell you what their unique code is and type it in here!"
YOUR FRIEND CODE 5B7C88
Share this code with people you'd like to be friends with.
Angry Icicle
SHOW ACCOMPLISHMENTS
PHOTOS
CLOSET
Challenge players in a common room to improve your battle ranking!
STATUS: Inactive Your membership expired on June 22, 2010 Renew Now!
You lives in Utah U.S.A
You have 271 photos in your photo album. Become a member to view your photos!
You have 225 friends


SHOW PERSONALITY TRAITS
DELETE
EDIT
Challenge players in a common room to improve battle rankings!
STATUS: Active Hamburger Hamburger has a Poptropica Membership! Become one today!
Hamburger Hamburger lives in Japan
Hamburger Hamburger has 50 photos in their photo album. Become a member to view photos albums!
You have 225 friends


Poptropica
FRIENDS | TRIBES | MULTIVERSE
ACCOUNT SETTINGS LOGOUT
MOST ACTIVE
ADD A FRIEND username OK OR FIND FRIENDS NOW!

ADD FRIENDS THAT YOU MEET IN COMMON ROOMS
CHAT
BATTLE
FRIEND
"THE NEW FRIENDS THING AND DAILY QUIZ IS PRETTY IMPRESSING.
THIS NEW VERSION IS WAAAAY BETA!"
-SLIPPERY COMET

Design 2:

- See other users' personality questions
- Take 'photos' (artistic renderings of the character) at key moments during island gameplay
- View the photos of Friends
- See recent activity of your Friends when you log in

Poptropica
POP
185
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
RETURN TO YOUR GAME
READING IS FUN!
POP QUIZ
RECENT ACTIVITY
Is ice cream better on a cone or in a bowl?
cone
bowl
ZOMBERRY ISLAND
MEMBERS: GET THESE NEW SPOOKY ITEMS IN THE STORE NOW!
MEMBERSHIP
STATUS: ACTIVE
EARLY ACCESS TO NEW ISLANDS
MEMBER ONLY ITEMS
UNLIMITED ACCESS TO THE STORE
SAVE 30 OUTFITS IN YOUR CLOSET
SEE ALL ISLAND PHOTOS
YOU HAVE 4503 CREDITS
PROMO CODE
ENTER

Poptropica
POP
185
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
RETURN TO YOUR GAME
READING IS FUN!
POP QUIZ
RECENT ACTIVITY
Incredible Hawk
has an updated mood.
Poptropica
TRIBE
COMMON ROOMS
CLICK THE TRIBES BUTTON ON YOUR FRIENDS PAGE TO MEET OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR TRIBE!
CLICK HERE
TRIBES
JUMP INTO YOUR TRIBE ROOM TODAY!
MEMBERSHIP
STATUS: ACTIVE
EARLY ACCESS TO NEW ISLANDS
MEMBER ONLY ITEMS
UNLIMITED ACCESS TO THE STORE
SAVE 30 OUTFITS IN YOUR CLOSET
SEE ALL ISLAND PHOTOS
YOU HAVE 4503 CREDITS
PROMO CODE
ENTER

Monetization

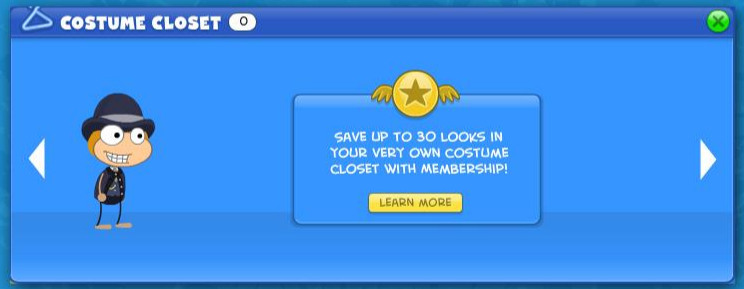
Contribute to our bottom line without negatively impacting the user's experience

- Integrated advertising as part of the friends offering
- Sponsored feed items

Restrict some of the friends content to members

- Photos: users can collect all the photos but only view the first photo for each island adventure.
- Costume Closet: Members can save 30 costumes and non-members do not have access to the closet

"You have to make FREE membership or else you wil loose money on membership!"



"I would like you to have FREE membership for everyone. That way people will finish islands faster and have more fun!"

Technology:

Our technology is remarkably unremarkable

- Apache web servers running on Centos
- Our code is in PHP
- Database is just MySQL
- Our multi-player servers run on Red5 on Tomcat
- The game client is Flash
- We use Akamai as our content delivery network

MAX PLATFORM HEIGHT
MAX BUILDING WIDTH
CN
CARTOON NETWORK
BEN 10
OMNIVERSE

Ben 10 Omniverse:
Alien Transformation Power
USE
VISIT WEBSITE
Ben 10 Omniverse:
Ben 10 Costume
COSTUMIZE
VISIT WEBSITE

CLICK HERE
CN
BEN 10
OMNIVERSE
CLICK HERE

Technology Challenges

- Concerned that existing hardware would be insufficient
- We did stress tests, scripts that hit the backend in the ways we expected the Flash to
- We designed each new feature to be able to be shut off independently
- It was indeed necessary to use the shutoff

Poptropica
FRIENDS | TRIBES | MULTIVERSE
POP
3
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
THE FRIEND FEATURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE. PLEASE CHECK BACK LATER.
Little Peanut
SHOW ALL
POPTROPICA MEDALLIONS
TRIBES
PHOTOS
0
CLOSET
0
3
75
POP QUIZ | RECENT ACTIVITY
Recent Activity not available.
Please check back later.

Issues of Scale

- No maximum number of friends
- Current record over 10,000
- Constant addition of photos and Pop Quizzes
- Solutions:
  - Paginate data
  - Use lookahead to make it feel continuous where needed
  - Denormalize data where needed?

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Success!

- All friends functionality added using current backend
- Features added with zero downtime
- Zero data loss (Saving and loading was not interrupted)
- Continuous integration testing of codebase during development
- Full deployment testing
- Some features disabled for non-members while database queries were made more efficient
- Hot launch is difficult and maybe not worth it for others

Poptropica
COMICS | GAMES | SNEAK PEEKS | CELEBRITY CLIPS
PEANUTS
OVER THE HEDGE
ROSE IS ROSE
Grand Avenue
NUTZ
nancy
Frazz
Poptropica STORE
CHECK OUT THE LATEST AND GREATEST ITEMS IN THE STORE!
VISIT THE STORE

CELEBRITY CLIPS
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
I GOT A QUARTER FROM THE TOOTH-FAIRY LAST NIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE SHE DOES WITH ALL THOSE TEETH?
I THINK SHE SELLS THEM TO SOME FIRM IN THE EAST THAT MANUFACTURES BILLIARD BALLS
IF THAT'S TRUE, WE HAVE A GOOD COURT CASE BECAUSE WE SHOULD BE GETTING ROYALTIES!
STARTED ON THAT HOMEWORK RIGHT NOW!

COMICS | GAMES | SNEAK PEEKS | CELEBRITY CLIPS
Rick Riordan
the Scariest Thing that ever happened to me...
When I was a kid, I was sure that a ghost lived in my closet. This feeling was made worse by the fact that there was a trapdoor in the closet floor that led to the crawlspace under the house. My parents assured me there was nothing down there, but I would lie awake at night watching the closet door, waiting for it to open.
One night, my worst fears were confirmed. I woke up and the closet door was open. The trap door rose up, and this dark shape was moving around in the opening.
« PREVIOUS
NEXT »

COMICS | GAMES | SNEAK PEEKS | CELEBRITY CLIPS
UFO Joe
CANYON DEFENSE
Candy & Clyde
smashing
Sleigh Shot
Snow Bird 2
Crash Down
Balance
Poptropica STORE
CHECK OUT THE LATEST AND GREATEST ITEMS IN THE STORE!
VISIT THE STORE

SNEAK PEEKS | CELEBRITY CLIPS
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
AT ARMS LENGTH
I'VE GOT YOU UNDER MY SKIN.
« PREVIOUS
WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? VISIT THE CREATORS' BLOG

Pitfalls: Quizzes

While our end design looks cohesive and conforms to the high level goals of or product we don’t always get it right on the first try…

- Pop Quizzes
  - Initial design text based
  - 20 question personality quiz style
  - Interesting to us… not so much so to our audience
  - Revised to single question visual pop quizzes

Pitfalls: Photos

Rewards progress aka badging

- Early designs used badges, much like console achievements
- Neat but complex and abstract, too extrinsic
- Revised into Photos
  - Mark the same events as badges would have
  - Show the player in the act being rewarded
  - Not just screenshots but artistic renderings of the scene
  - Much higher overhead than badges, for art and coding
  - Worth it to make progress rewards intrinsic to the gameplay.

Poptropica
PROFILE | NEW FOR YOU
Short Tummy
TAKING A BREAK FROM HOMEWORK
ISLAND MEDALLIONS
BADGE ALBUMS
TOTAL BADGES: 14
COMPLETED SETS: 3
BATTLE RANKING
PRIVACY LOCK
COLLECTOR
9 BADGES EARNED
BUDDY
0 BADGES EARNED
EXPLORER
4 BADGES EARNED
COMPETITOR
1 BADGES EARNED

Poptropica
PROFILE | WELCOME BACK
EXPLORER BADGES SETS
CLOSE
ALTERNATE REALITY
CHALLENGER
CHATTERBOX
COMIC KID
HEADSTRONG
KNOCKEDHEAD
LONE WOLF
PREVIOUS

Poptropica
PROFILE | WELCOME BACK
CLOSE
EXPLORER ALBUM
COMIC KID SET
BECOME THE COOLEST KID ON THE BLOCK AND COLLECT ALL 4 COMIC KID BADGES BY READING THE AWESOME COMICS IN THE TREASURE TRUNK AREA!
YOU'VE READ 3 COMICS.
READ 1 MORE COMIC TO EARN YOUR NEXT BADGE!
COMIC BEGINNER
COMIC LOVER
COMIC MASTER
COMIC NINJA
« PREVIOUS
NEXT »

Pitfalls: Monetization

- Identified locations for ad placement
- Highest impact position was on the friends hub
- It was designed to be the centerpiece of a friends ad offering
- It was invasive
- It didn’t improve the game experience for the user
- The marketing team decided to remove it as soon as they saw it in the game.

POP-TOP!CS
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO POPTROPICA POPCULTURE
AVAILABLE AT NEWSTANDS NEAREST YOU!
I LOVE THIS MAGAZINE!
The Bucky Stops Here!
BILLIARDS
MIKE'S MARKET

Pitfalls: General Design

- First design: Facebook like, single page, several vertical screens
- Second design: player room navigated through platforming
- Third design: March of users like those found in existing store and art intensive personality quilt.
- User rooms are still part of the plan, but when and if they are created they will be a project in and of themselves.

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ENTER POPTROPICA

Pitfalls: Map

Ongoing changes during friends development

- Too many islands for a single screen static map
- First redesign was a zooming map
  - very interactive
  - Exciting to use…
  - Ultimately disorienting
  - Easy to get ‘lost’
- Second redesign moved to a long scrolling map
  - Allowed us to highlight new islands and provide a suggested order of play

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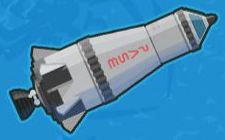
#poptropica

Outcome: Time on site

- 10% increase in session length

That might not seem like a lot but with our user base it has added up to 2,000 years of usage since the launch of friends



Outcome: Friendships

The most impressive and core number that we look to as an indicator of the success of our project is the number of friendships that have been formed.

Time	# of Friends
12 hours	500,000
48 hours	2,000,000
5 months	60,000,000
6 months	70,000,000
By GDC	~120,000,000

B.A.D
FRIE

Outcome: Friendships

- We use a follower model more like Twitter than Facebook
- 5 people finding each other would generate 25 friendships
- While we have over 120,000,000 friendships they are among around 10,000,000 individuals with 11 friendships each.
- One individual has over 10,000 friends
- more than 20 users have 4,000 friends

Outcome: Personality Quizzes

- We launched Friends with 50 pop quizzes
- We now have 104
- Users are given 3 quizzes the first time they log in
- One additional quiz is unlocked each day they log in after that
- Presentation order is fixed per user but random between them
- 58,500,000 questions have been answered
- 5,000,000 users have answered pop quizzes

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Outcome: Photos

- Photos for all islands not just new ones
- 120 photos were produced pre launch
- Each photo is an artist's interpretation of a particular dramatic moment
- Each photo has multiple captions
- Photos show the user and whatever they looked like at the moment the photo was taken
- The system supports multiple versions of photos for added individuality between users.

Poptropica
FRIENDS
TRIBES
MULTIVERSE
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
PHOTO ALBUM 40
ISLAND ALL
YOU CAN PLAY OR REPLAY ISLANDS TO UNLOCK MORE PHOTOS!
LEARN MORE
4 OF 133
INMATE
012345
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
NEXT

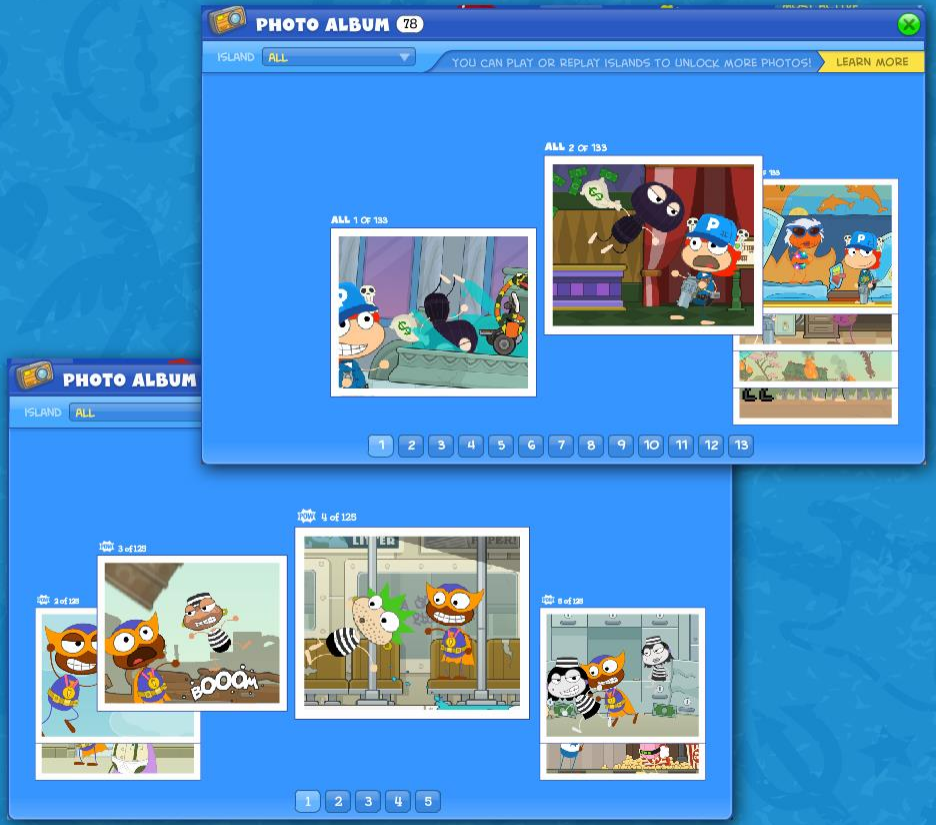
PHOTO ALBUM 78
ISLAND ALL
YOU CAN PLAY OR REPLAY ISLANDS TO UNLOCK MORE PHOTOS!
LEARN MORE
ALL 1 OF 133
ALL 2 OF 133
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
PHOTO ALBUM
ISLAND ALL
BOOOM
1 2 3 4 5

Outcome: Photos 2

- We decided not to retroactively grant photos for completed islands
- Instead we implemented the ability for users to reset and replay islands
- Users can delete photos
- many users have played their favorite islands dozens of times
- 69,000,000 photos have been taken by about 8,200,000 users

TUNNEL VISION.
HIRED!
I'M ON A BOAT!
WHAT WAITS IN THESE WOODS?
THE TREE HOUSE STARTED TO SPIN.
NOW WE'RE COOKING!
SIGNAL ON THIS THING.
NATURE: PRESERVED.
TURN BACK!
MY GPS DOESN'T WORK DOWN HERE
CALL IT A LEAP OF FAITH.

Outcome: Mood

- 10,695,654 have seen their mood on their profile page, which defaults to happy
- 2,246,137 Poptropicans have changed their mood
- 8,449,517 Poptropicans have NOT changed their mood and are presumed to be happy being Happy
- Girls are more likely to change their mood than boys
- Users are most likely to change their mood to excited
- Users are least likely to change their mood to bashful
- Users are most likely to change their mood if they are 10

Poptropica
POP
FRIENDS
TRIBES
MULTIVERSE
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
MOST ACTIVE
Clean Axe
SHOW ALL
PHOTOS
CLOSET

MOOD
HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?
HAPPY
EXCITED
GOOFY
STARSTRUCK
BORED
SLEEPY
BASHFUL
ILL
ANGRY
SAD

Poptropica
PROFILE | WELCOME BACK
Short Tummy
CHOOSE STATUS:
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET
DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTETUR
TAKING A BREAK FROM HOMEWORK
IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTETUR
ONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT SED
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTE
DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTETUR ADIPISCI
IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTETUR
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECT
LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET
CONSECTETUR ADIPISCING ELIT SED
BATTLE RANKING
PRIVACY LOCK
COLLECTOR
9 BADGES EARNED
BUDDY
0 BADGES EARNED
EXPLORER
4 BADGES EARNED
COMPETITOR
1 BADGES EARNED

Outcome: Country

- Country is selected by name
- Country is shown by flag, the images are pulled from a partner site
- Country is pre-populated based on geo-ip
- Users say they are from 237 countries
- Location is clearly used by players to construct their Poptropican identity whether or not they are choosing their actual location

Selected

United States	United States
Canada	Canada
Australia	Australia
United Kingdom	United Kingdom
New Zealand	New Zealand
Mexico	Philippines
Philippines	United Arab Emirates
India	India
Singapore	Hong Kong
Ireland	Singapore

Geo-IP

Future Plans

- Friends is a platform for future features
- We have created a social graph in Poptropica
- So, what do we hang on our new Friends platform?
  - First Tribes [DONE]
  - Second presence detection
  - Asynchronous interaction with friends
  - Synchronous interaction with friends

What are Tribes?

- Tribes are Poptropica's answer to Guilds
- Small number of strongly themed tribes
- Introduced through the in game fiction
- Produce smaller groups for the user to belong to

Poptropica
FRIENDS | TRIBES | MULTIVERSE
ACCOUNT SETTINGS
LOGOUT
PATHFINDERS
JOIN THE COMMON ROOM
VISIT THE COMMON ROOM TO BATTLE, CHAT, AND FRIEND OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR TRIBE.

POPTROPICA TRIBES
SELECT THE TRIBE YOU WANT TO JOIN

PATHFINDERS
JOIN ROOM
VISIT THE PATHFINDERS COMMON ROOM TO BATTLE, CHAT, AND FRIEND OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR TRIBE.
CHANGE TRIBE

Tribes Outcome

- Tens of millions of users have joined a tribe
- On average a user completes 0.96 islands
- Users who are in a tribe complete 3
- Membership across tribes is not even
- Unsurprisingly members' play habits conform to the theme of the tribe they are in
- Members of the Pathfinders tribe complete 4.5 islands

Click on a player to chat or battle.
Roll over a player to view their stats.
Save

Click on a player to chat or battle.
Roll over a player to view their stats.
Save

Click on a player to chat or battle.
Roll over a player to view their stats.
Save

Save

Save

The Future of Tribes

- Tribe specific Common Rooms [DONE]
- Tribal home pages
- Tribal Challenges

Vague General Takeaway

- Our answers are specific to our problem… and that is the most important takeaway.
- Look at your user base and your product
- Make sure that the answers you find fit them and not you, your development team or your company.

1 of 105
THE FUTURE'S SO BRIGHT I GOTTA WEAR SHADES.

Substantive Takeaway

- Making any reward (achievement) system in your game intrinsic makes those rewards much more relevant to your players.
- Look at the level of complexity of your solutions and make sure they match your audience. What works for you as a 35 year old game developer may not be what a 6 year old wants or needs to enjoy your game.
- When adding to an existing game make sure your additions complement what is already loved about your game.

Substantive Takeaway

- Limit the amount you alter your game in with each addition and assess how it is received. Change direction if needed. The features we implemented prior to Friends were not well received and we changed our direction based on that reception and produced Friends as a result.
- Be prepared for failure. We limited the resources dedicated to Friends so that our other game development could move forward and the game would not fail if Friends was not a success.

Substantive Takeaway

- Be prepared for success. Our hardware resources are very limited, and though we did simulated load testing, we could not know how our servers would hold up to real usage patterns. We built each feature we added in a way that allowed it to be turned off or limited to our paying members if needed to reduce load. In the first days after launch we did indeed need to limit several features while we made optimizations. The idea to design the new features in this way came directly from a lecture here two years ago by Zynga about their Farmville architecture.

Substantive Takeaway

- Just because you ‘can’ put an ad there doesn’t mean you ‘should’ Consider your user’s experience and the long term health of your game and brand.
- Evolve your technology. It’s never too late to start building features so that they can be upgraded.
- Use the technology you evolve. If you have done something like what you need to do then generalize that technology and re-use it. If you are doing something for a second time you will probably do it for a third and even if it takes longer to rework and reuse something this time it will save you time on your next iteration.

Substantive Takeaway

- Design the tools you will need to use for continued content deployment. I personally skimped on this a bit in several areas and ended up doing a huge amount of work to keep content flowing smoothly after launch. That could have been avoided by taking the time to develop the content management tools that our content producers would need before they needed them!

Substantive Takeaway

- Build in metrics! Within minutes of launching I began to receive requests for metrics. We built both a high volume aggregate metrics system that works off of parsing the server logs and also designed our production databases to allow ad hoc queries. Having user data available through a data warehouse is also highly recommended; there are just some things that you can’t ask a 500,000,000 row production table without setting fire to the server. We are in the process of implementing data warehousing but that’s a different talk.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FEEL FREE TO EMAIL ME:

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