

PIRATES!  
*Chair's Prerogative Exhibit*

Pirates! is a mobile, multi-user, location-aware computer game that runs on PDAs and is experienced in physical space. The game world is a fantasy archipelago where each player takes the role of a pirate captain. Game objectives include solving missions, making landfall on islands, searching for treasures, trading commodities, and battling other players at sea.

The game is played with proximity-sensing handheld devices that take advantage of, and rely upon, players' mobility as an intrinsic part of the game structure. Each handheld device has a custom short-range radio beacon that identifies when players encounter each other in the physical world. A corresponding encounter is triggered in the virtual world, which enables player-to-player game activities such as battles. Radio beacons distributed throughout the gaming area represent islands that can be explored when approached. Thus walking between different locations in the room becomes equivalent to sailing between islands in the virtual world.

The handheld devices function as thin clients and use a wireless network to connect to a central game server. The server controls the overall game mechanics, such as missions and inventories, and determines the result of the players' actions through the user interface. This allows for dynamic update of the user interface, graphics, sounds, and game rules. The game server also provides an overall game status that is presented on a large public display.

Pirates! was designed to be played in a social setting, encouraging face-to-face interaction between players and non-players alike, and promoting movement and exploration within a defined physical space. Unlike most computer games, playing Pirates! depends just as much on social interaction with people in the real world as on the computer-mediated game play. Rather than continuously gazing at the screen, players have to navigate a social environment to move within the virtual environment and exchange information with other players, or even people not playing the game, to win the game.

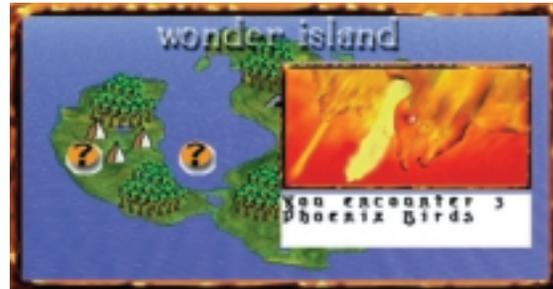
*Contact*

PETER LJUNGSTRAND  
PLAY-Interactive Institute  
Box 620  
40530 Göteborg, Sweden  
+46.31.7735543  
+46.31.7735330 fax  
peter.ljungstrand@  
interactiveinstitute.se  
www.playresearch.com

*Collaborators*

STAFFAN BJÖRK  
JENNICA FALK  
REBECCA HANSSON  
LARS ERIK HOLMQUIST  
PLAY-Interactive Institute

JUSSI HOLOPAINEN  
TIMO KOSKINEN  
JOUKA MATTILA  
EERO RÄSÄNEN  
TIMO TOIVONEN  
Nokia Research Center



On-screen graphics showing Phoenix birds attacking a player at an island.



Two Pirates! players closely engaged in battle.