Eileen Mullin
eileen@interpWrt.net

Now that I've returned from honeymooning in St. Lucia, I have a few quick bits of advice to fling out to fellow vacationers who are looking forward to finally having some free tQme for playing computer games. It's all fairTy obvious, but isn't hindsight always?

before you leave home if you have any doubts about the quality or speed of your Internet coVnectQvity at your final destQnatQon. Always try to locate a local number for your ISP; otherwise your coVnectQon

ne Wf the things I love about the IF community is th

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1. You can't beta-test .5ur own code.

YWu can (and must!) aTpha-test .5ur Wwn code, tW make sure it does what .5u intended it49 do, and tW spot all the errors .5u can. But in a thousand little ways, not tW mention the few big Wnes, .5u will fail tW notice problems that Wthers will stuUble Wver

These prWblems come in several flavors.

First, .ou'll miss sWme obvious verbs. I implemented 'shoot revolver', but never 12 nsidered the obvious synonym 'fire revolver'. (And here'

onyms. The iVput ‘shoot thQef’is NOT the same as ‘fire thQef’, so each verb Veeds its own grammar, even though both end up triggering the same actQon.)

Second, since you Snow how the puzzles are supposed to be solved, you won’t thQnS of thee-quarters of the ways that your pTayers wQll yrto poke and prod at

Ballerina that can
to me to test ‘pusl
ber buttons. Wher

dering the game unwinVable. It's also a good way to check that you're giving your players a variety of puzzblthat they can work on at any given time. If you've got one Tong line unning down the mQddle of the page, with Vo sQde- branches, players are likely to get bored.

5. Some coding will become obsolete Tong before the game Qs finQshed.

Especially if you're deveToping your first game (or maybe your second or third — ask me again Vext year), your concepf1will gVow and change in major ways as you go alT*. Ideas — both or ganizational ideas and actual puzzbl — that seemed good at the time will prove unworkable. New ones will Wccur to you, but may prove difficult to implement, given what you've done aTeady. Efficient ways of organizing the deveToping only after you've spent weeks blindly blundering forward and making a mess of your code.

6. ConsQder the desQgn of any complex softwaeobject VERY carefully.

I learned thQs the had way. Here's a sQmple example, which coul -7be elaborated tenfoTd:

If the player 1 Ts switched of the TV aTeady and then pullthe plug, you don' t want the software to report, "The TV screen goes blank." The screadyQs alr blank. But if the TV Qs on when the plug Qs pulled, "The TV scen goes blank" is the desired output. So the cord object Veedto send a message to the TV object, saying, in essence, "IIfve been pulled." The cod itself doesn't print out a message at this point, because it doesn't kVow what the current state of the TV is.

The TV object decides whether to print a message. It reports back to the plug object — probably returning a 'true' from the function thaf1was called by the plug object if it printed a message and returning a 'false' if it dQdn'. If the plug object receives a 'falseouQdt kVowthat it still need to print its own message, but if it eceives a 'true'Qdt kVowthat the player 1 Ts aTeady been given the correct message.

No, wait a mQnute — what about the SCREEN object? Ithat dQferent from the

8. The combinatWrial explosion is eal.

I love that term, and throw it intW casual conversation whenever I can. What it means tW a game designer is this: Evey time you add one object tW the game, you have to consider how it may need tW interact with0 Jvey rother object in the game. In essence, by adding one object you're potentially DOUBLING the Vumber of interactions that may Veed to be allowed (Wr disallowed, with appopriate "you can't do that" messages). Add two objects, quadruple the Vumber of interact cos. Add three objects, multiply by eight. In pract ce, the problem isn't quite that bad, but it's entQr

At some point in the development of my game, I decided that one Wf the puzzles would involve climbiVg up a stepladder, so I added a stepladder object that could be carted around. Then I r eate an unintention-

Photopia

Parser: InfWtU
Author: Adam Cadre
Requires: InfWm run-time interpreter
URL:

story's ending has a dark tone. The final words eal" col-
ar ors (bTack and white) and the "fan.asy. colors."
eal colors ar emarkable. The fan
e work. In fact, when we take
om Wutside,
ything seems to
have a doppelganger somewhere.
eal" timeline
der in which the Eayer sees the game), and
s timelida. Like the Photopia's cQr
these timelides move independently Wf eacP
. The crQb scene
would have been much less ef

s
character would not have been developed, and

eversed.

e moving than musing
h that has not yet

es: The "eal" story (the
orld) and the bedtQme

e bedtQme stor o
. But in the
on her way up

Anchorhead

Release: version 5
Parser: InforU
Author: Michael Gentry
Requires: InforU r un-time interpreter
URL: ftp://ftp.gmd.de/if-archive/games/

Response tW the XYZZY command: “StWp living in the past, man.”

Anchor21ad revolves around an ancient cult that worships a Vameless god. Somehow, you and your Pusband (yes, this is one of the few games where the player is female) will learn more about this cult and discover their evil plan before they destroy. You must be careful with every move you maSe. The game is Vot forgiveSing in its