You Need an Editor!

Cameron Harris
Senior Editor, BioWare Montréal

Welcome

- ## What is this talk about?
  - ### What editors do
  - ### How editors make games better
  - ### Why the game industry needs editors

- ## Who am I?

About me

- Technical writer & editor in software
- Editor, producer, & managing editor in games

What can editors do?

- Make games better while saving money
- Smooth out production for better content
- Provide support in three areas:
  - Editing
  - Content management
  - IP branding

What is (game) editing?

- Not traditional editing (books, newspapers, etc.)

- The same principles in an interactive medium

- Multiple levels of editing, but one definition

Editing: a definition

- The art of invisibly refining the author's intentions
  - Art: not a science
  - Invisibly: unnoticed and seamless
  - Refining: shaping what's already there
  - Author: collaborate and support
  - Intentions: working with subtext & higher-level needs

Editing: an example

<u>Art</u>. Editing isn't a science, or else we'd have computer programs that could edit everything perfectly all by themselves. A style guide's rules go a long way, but there are always exceptions, especially with creative work. Sometimes, you *need* to break the rules, and it's a person who's best suited to decide when and how to do that without breaking anything else.

~~who~~ is best suited to decide when and how ~~that should~~ ~~work~~to do that without breaking anything else.

Editing in narrative

- An edited story is a better story
  - World-building, tone, theme, plot, character, dialogue, presentation… everything!
  - The editor as player surrogate
- Clear, consistent, & coherent = consumable
  - Internal teams & external partners
  - Players & media
  - Profit!

What else can editors do?

- No story? No problem!
- Editors add value with:
  - Non-narrative editing
  - Content management
  - IP branding

Non-narrative editing

- UI text
  - Clear, consistent, & coherent = consumable
  - Less confusion for players <u>and</u> developers
  - Free UX testing along the way
- Geopolitical & legal review
  - Language, art, maps, music, etc.
  - Avoid offense, lawsuits, & bad PR

Content management

- Organization
  - Wikis (design)
  - Checklists (production)
- Downstream pipelines and tasks
  - Voiceover: before, during, and after recording
  - Localization: geops, handoffs, queries
  - Publishing: TCRs, rating submissions

IP branding

- Marketing and PR
  - Consistency of terms, fiction, and presentation
  - Web and community

- Transmedia development
  - Sequels and side projects
  - Non-game products
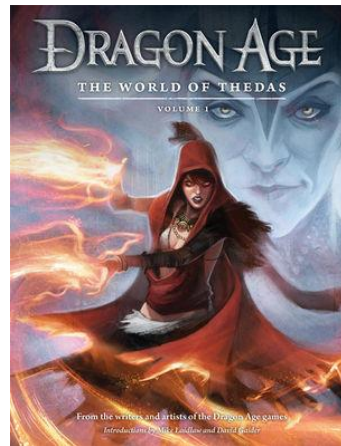
Why use editors?

- Producers & PMs have (more than) enough to do

- Everyone can focus on their own, best work

- Editing won't fall off the schedule

Building an editing culture

- Iterative improvement of writing

- Valued & scheduled, not optional

- Management as editing's champion

What editing gives you

- Clear, consistent, & coherent = consumable

- Smoother pipelines & teamwork

- Significant project savings

Editing saves money!

- *Star Wars: The Old Republic* script
  - Two characters, one actor: **$1000**
- BioWare Edmonton team
  - *Dragon Age II* edits: **$100,000+**
  - *Mass Effect 2* text exports: **$450,000+**
  - *ME1-ME3* text exports: **$1,000,000+**

Editing in the game industry

- Matching standards held in other forms of entertainment media

- Treating art *as* art and supporting the artists

- A rising tide lifts all boats… and we need to lift some boats

And finally…

- Talk to me anytime!
  - Twitter: @camharr
  - LinkedIn: cameroneharris
- IGDA SIGs: Game Writers, Editing

Thanks to EA BioWare, GDC & the Game Narrative Summit, my test audiences… and *you*!