

EVE Online for the Uninitiated

By Kelly Bergstrom and Marcus Carter

How do you describe EVE to someone who has never played it before? The most stripped down explanation is probably:

EVE is a space-themed massively multiplayer online game (MMOG).

But not only does this description require you know what an 'MMOG' is, it doesn't provide any information about the important parts of EVE that make it different, such as how the developer (CCP Games) has a laissez faire approach to the community, or how scamming and theft is permitted, and consequently pervasive. These facts about EVE are what make it relatively unique in the broader MMOG landscape, and therefore is an important piece of information when explaining what EVE is like. So then, this short description would have to be expanded to something along the lines of:

EVE is a space-themed MMOG with little developer intervention. Aside from hacking/modifying the software code, players are free to do whatever they like including scamming, cheating, and assassinating other players.

But this does not account for other affordances of the game's design also make it unique in the MMOG marketplace, for example EVE's permanent death or its single-server configuration, and what the consequences these design decisions are for the types of play that occur. So perhaps the description could be revised as:

EVE is a space-themed MMOG that is played on a single-shard server. There are many in-game affordances that result in high-stakes play (e.g. permadeath). Furthermore, the game's developer rarely intervenes. Aside from hacking/modifying the software code, players are free to do whatever they like including scamming, cheating, and assassinating other players.

And yet, this third revision to the description does not account for how only a small portion of EVE is actually played within the game client. The majority of the communication, strategy and planning occurs on forums and in chat rooms outside of EVE, meaning many EVE 'players' rarely log into the game client at all (see Chapter 11). The above description also does not account for the unusual representations of the player within the game client, the disposable nature of ships or the player-driven nature of the economy, and so forth. In fact, it would take an entire book chapter to even begin to provide a 'brief description' that does any justice to the task of explaining to someone who has never played EVE just what EVE Online is.

This is our attempt at that chapter where we do our best to provide a brief (as possible) explanation of what EVE is for someone who has yet to play it. Our goal is to provide the helpful context and background for the following 15 chapters. While with other games it would be helpful to spend a few hours playing the tutorials (EVE provides a limited free trial), this doesn't apply to EVE. Whereas other games can be reasonably well understood after a few hours of play, or even watching a video of play, many elements of EVE are inaccessible to outsiders encountering the game for the first time unless there is a more experienced player there to help guide their way. This is not to say that learning to play EVE is a Sisyphean task, but as Chapter 3 will illustrate, EVE's tutorial system has a steep learning curve and leaves out important information. New players enter EVE with little understanding about how the game works, and in consequence must reach out to other players for help, and build a social group with which to play. So then, our goal for this chapter is to supplement the introduction provided by the trial account and/or in-game tutorial, taking the place of a friendly current player helping to guide you through your first steps into EVE.

In other words, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to what EVE is. This chapter provides the background and key vocabulary necessary for understanding the following chapters for the reader who has never played EVE, those familiar with the game should feel free to skip it. This description of course comes with the necessary caveat that EVE is constantly evolving, and this information represents a snapshot at a particular point in time (early 2015). Studying a MMOG means studying a moving target, with each expansion or patch, things will inevitably change. However, we have written this chapter to be focused on the bigger picture elements of EVE, and hopefully our snapshot will not become hopelessly dated by the time this book reaches print. Finally, we note that this chapter is organized around a series of headings to

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allow the reader to skip over the information they don't necessary need, and zero in on the parts of EVE that are unfamiliar and/or need further contextualization. At the end of the chapter, we have provided a glossary of EVE jargon that can be used as a quick-reference for terms used throughout the rest of the collection.

The Sandbox of EVE Online

In addition to being a sci-fi and/or space-themed MMOG, one of the most frequent labels applied to EVE is that it is a sandbox-style game. When applied to games, "sandbox" is usually taken to mean that it is an open world in which players are have free reign to choose their own in-game activities based on what they find is most interesting (CCP Games, "Find Your Path in the Sandbox," n.d.). CCP Games often refers to (and advertises) EVE Online as 'The Sandbox'. For example, in 2009 CCP Games released a trailer that has since attracted over 1.5 million views. This trailer, titled 'The Butterfly Effect', begins with a voiceover stating:

In chaos theory, there's a concept known as sensitive dependence on initial conditions. Most people call it the butterfly effect. In EVE, we call it The Sandbox. (CCP Games, 2009a)

This trailer depicts the consequences of a simple decision, one player deciding to lend a hand to another player in trouble. This momentary act of kindness ultimately leads to an "epic battle between thousands of players". The voiceover concludes:

Hundreds of thousands of people could hear about this battle. Why so many? Because it all happened in one universe, not in separate realms, just one big Sandbox, where the actions of one person can resonate throughout the game world. In EVE, the choices you make shape the outcome of events...What matters most is that the experience was emergent. Unscripted. Because in the Sandbox, all player actions, no matter how subtle or bold, always have an impact. (CCP Games 2009a).

'The Butterfly Effect' trailer provides insight into what CCP, and EVE players, means when they refer to EVE as a sandbox, emphasising how play is player-driven rather than scripted or linear. This promotional text also highlights the importance of the single-shard server configuration, which allows a single EVE players to impact the entire virtual world of New Eden far more dramatically than typically afforded in other MMOGs (see, for example, Chapters 8 and 11).

Inside the EVE Online Client

Accessing EVE Online

To begin at its most basic, EVE Online is a piece of software. It was initially available to buy as a physical boxed game that required installation from a CD-ROM in 2003, and briefly again in 2008. However, for most of its history the EVE software has been digitally distributed through a downloadable executable file from CCP directly or through platforms like Steam. The current (January 2015) version is a little over 6GB. EVE requires an active Internet connection to play, and upon running the program the user has to sign into their account using a username and password. Once signed in, the user is able select from a maximum of three characters and enter the virtual universe of New Eden as one of these characters. In these regards, EVE is entirely unremarkable and quite similar to many of the other MMOGs available for purchase and play.

Also unremarkable is that once a new account's trial period has ended, it requires a subscription to remain active; a monthly fee of €14.95 (£10 for British customers, \$US15 for the rest of the world). While EVE's contemporaries in 2003 often charged a subscription, such a business model has grown increasingly rare during the rise of free-to-play games. EVE Online remains one of the few MMOGs to charge a subscription, interesting to note in the context of big-budget MMOGs like Rift, Star Wars: The Old Republic and The Secret World that have had to move towards various freemium business models. While EVE's subscription is similar in price to market-dominator World of Warcraft, we note that Blizzard Entertainment (World of Warcraft's developer) charges for major additions to game content (referred to as "expansions"), but CCP does not. EVE's expansions are made available to all current EVE players twice a year (usually one spring, one fall release) without charge.

The currency used within this gameworld is known as Interstellar Credits (ISK), not to be confused with the Icelandic Krona (also shorted to ISK). This in-game currency functions similarly to what is seen in other MMOGs, with a notable exception that as of 2008, ISK can be converted into 'Pilots License Extension' (PLEX). This item can be purchased with in-game money OR 'real' money for around \$US19.95 (or less, if bought in bulk). One unit of PLEX can be redeemed to a user's account for one month's subscription; in other words, in-game currency can be used to pay for the game's subscription fees. This has the effect of allowing virtually wealthy players the opportunity to pay for their subscription with ISK, and virtually poor players the opportunity to subsidise their play with 'real world' currency. Commended at its introduction for integrating virtual and real economies without disadvantaging players unwilling or unable to pay, PLEX provides a tenable exchange rate for the value of virtual goods in real life (\$US19.95 is worth approximately 800,000,000 ISK). It is currently against the rules of EVE Online to sell ISK for real money, though such practices are widespread on 'blackmarket' sites.

EVE Online's Imaginary

EVE is set far in the future, in a dystopic sci-fi imaginary. As human-kind expanded across our galaxy, "ruthless corporations rose to power, seizing every world within their grasp" (CCP Games, 2009b). When the galaxy was filled, these corporations turned against each other, catalysing centuries of war. In this future, a natural wormhole – called EVE - was discovered that allowed ships to travel to a new, virgin galaxy named 'New Eden'. After a century of colonisation, the wormhole collapsed, "severing young colonies from the home worlds that sustained them" (CCP Games, 2009b). Millions died, and those few colonies that survived persisted, grew and eventually rediscovered space travel and other colonies that had survived, leading to more destructive warfare. The first four of these comprise the current non-player factions in EVE Online, locked in a temporary armistice. The fiction of EVE is thus a harsh and ruthless future, in which war and destruction are commonplace (for more on EVE's histories, see Chapter 15). These four factions are:

The Amarr Empire

The largest nation in this fictional world; a society based on slave labour, ruled by a theocratic monarchy with an omnipresent religion.

The Caldari State

A corporate dictatorship that prizes strength, efficiency and dignity.

The Gallente Federation

The only "true" democracy of New Eden, a society focused on both liberal ideology (brotherhood and equal rights to all) and scientific advancement.

The Minmatar Republic

Emancipated slaves of the Amarr Empire, their post-slavery society is characterized by tribal leadership and individualism.

Players take on the role of 'capsuleers'; functionally immortal space pilots as a result of advanced cloning technologies. Upon logging into the game for the first time, new players are asked to choose one of these four empires as their character's 'race', and then select a sub-race. As mentioned above, each EVE account holds a maximum of three characters, and each of these characters has a unique pseudonym affording a persistent identity. When starting a character, the player is afforded tutorials that introduce the player to the basics of manufacturing and combat (see Chapter 3, by Chris Paul, on these tutorials and their failures in more detail), or can disregard them completely and venture out into the corners of the virtual universe. As Richard Page notes (see Chapter 9), the play that emerges from player interactions with the client is not inevitable but swayed by the intersecting social worlds that meet in New Eden. It is also worth noting that no matter what race a player selects for their avatar, they are able to interact with and freely communicate with any other player in the game.

Avatars in EVE Online

As well as breaking from a few key conventions of the MMOG genre, which is primarily populated with fantasy (orcs, elves and magic) themed games. For most of the game's history,

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players could not move through the game-world via a humanoid or anthropomorphized avatar, a feature commonly found in other MMOGs. Instead, players saw a passport sized "photograph" of their own character, and are consequently mostly known to each other by their user name rather than virtual appearance (on this, see Carter et al. 2012). When looking at another player's character in the virtual environment, the player sees a spaceship and their avatar's name. Even this spaceship is not a permanent representation of a player within the game-world, with spaceships being regularly changed depending on the pilot's goal at any particular time. There is little customization available, players frequently change ships depending on their purpose, and ships can be permanently destroyed.

In a recent expansion ("Incarna", released June 2011) CCP introduced fully rendered avatars and a sophisticated character creator that allowed players to modify their avatar's body in great detail, providing control right down to the level of modifying muscle group development. That new avatar is only visible to an individual player as they walk around inside their personal "Captain's Quarters", which is not accessible to any other players. As of the most recent EVE expansion ("Rhea", released December 2014), players continue to interact with each other via their spaceship and Captain's Quarters remains inaccessible to other players.

The EVE Game-World

EVE is divided into two types of areas, but in both the player can communicate with any other player through 'EVE Mail' (an in-game email service), public and private chat rooms (such as the help channels described in Chapter 3), and in 'Local Chat', a chat room shared by all players in a solar system, identifying the friends or foe nearby.

The first type is when 'docked' in a space station, where the player's character cannot be attacked. Here the player can trade on the in-game market, manufacture goods and load the cargo hold of their ship. The other is when 'un-docked', piloting their ship through EVE's vast virtual universe comprised of thousands of solar systems. An EVE solar system has hundreds if not thousands of celestial objects that can be flown to in a few seconds, and each solar system is connected through a network of 'jump bridges' that teleport the user vast virtual distances in moments. Each solar system has a 'security status', in 'high-security' (high-sec), the in-game police ('CONCORD') will swiftly respond to unprovoked aggression, but, if quick enough,

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players can still be destroyed, a mechanic exploited in player events like 'Hulkageddon' (see Chapter 13) and 'Burn Jita' (see Chapter 9). High-sec is where the non-player Empires hold sovereignty, granting access to all players with good standing space stations for trade and manufacturing (on this type of play, see Chapters 4, 8 and 13). In contrast, 'null-sec' is where EVE's huge player Alliances (of tens of thousands of players) can claim sovereignty and build space stations and infrastructure only for their allies, and where EVE's notable wars are waged (on this, see Chapters 6, 9, 10 and 11). Other solar systems include 'low-sec', where non-player groups provide space stations but no protection from CONCORD, and in 'wormholes', systems without 'local chat' (and thus no knowledge of who occupies the space around you) or space stations, but with the most rewarding PVE play.

"Levelling up" in EVE

In nearly all other MMOGs, a new player starts out much less powerful than older players, and through play they develop 'experience' (XP) which levels up their character making them more powerful, and unlocking new abilities, eventually becoming as powerful as a player who has been playing for significantly longer. Often this is critiqued as forcing players to 'grind' - engage in repetitive actions - to level up their character. While new EVE players are at a distinct disadvantage, this gap is much more difficult to close. This is because new abilities are unlocked through 'skill-training', something that takes real-time and is not accelerated by interactions within the game world.

Skills unlock the ability to do specific things (such as fly Logistics ships, or use a Heavy Missile Launcher) and increase efficiency at doing them (such as flying faster, or increasing manufacturing efficiency). Skills can be trained up to level 5, with the first level taking only a few minutes, and the fifth level sometimes taking weeks of real time to train. The player does not have to be logged into the game to train their skills, but can only queue their skills up to 24 hours in advance, leading to the pejorative nickname for EVE - 'skill queues online'. As these skills take real time, it is consequently not possible for a new player to be as powerful as one who has been playing for several years.

With only one character able to be learning a new skill at any given time on a single subscription, it is very rare for an EVE player to "start over" with a new character for the sake of

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revising one's in-game identity (common in other MMOGs). Instead, it is far more likely for a player to have multiple accounts, as described by some of the EVE players interviewed as part of Taylor et al.'s study (2015), which will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter.

Death in EVE Online

Another major departure from player to player interaction seen in other games is that death carries harsher consequences in EVE's game-world. If a player-controlled ship sustains enough damage from attacks by other players or NPCs, it will explode. Any items (including PLEX) being carried by the ship will either be destroyed, or will remain floating in the wreckage and available for any nearby players to pick up and keep as their own. Often these ships and their cargo are worth the equivalent of hundreds, occasionally thousands, of real world dollars and represent an enormous investment of time and energy. A player whose ship has been destroyed can attempt to flee the wreckage in an escape pod that is vulnerable to attack. If the pod is destroyed and a player wishes to continue, a clone that is being held in stasis must be activated from one of the space stations scattered around the universe. Until the 'Rhea' expansion (2014) if this clone hadn't been 'updated', the player lost a percentage of their trained skill points, further increasing the harsh consequences of death in EVE. Killing another player's pod offers no advantage or reward, but is to be expected in this ruthless MMOG.

A Single-Server Universe

EVE is relatively unique in that the game is played on a single shard server. All players interact in a single persistent universe, capable of handling over 50,000 simultaneous connections at once. Unlike most MMOGs where players are divided into multiple smaller servers that house parallel versions of the game-world, all EVE players are on the same server and can interact and impact any other player. Multiple servers allow players to create "a clean slate" by transferring their character to a new server, but this clean slate is unavailable to EVE players unwilling to start their long training queues over again. All of these qualities point towards a game-world in which players become heavily invested in a single, persistent player identity.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 NEAR HERE]

Combat in EVE Online

In Chapter 3, William Bainbridge provides a detailed description of how EVE's mining and industrial play functions, so we will only describe EVE's combat in this chapter. Players control of their spaceship is not mapped to a direct input (e.g., using the W,A,S & D keys to move). Rather, the player can command the ship to go in a particular direction, such as aligning with a celestial object (such as a sun or planet) or clicking in a direction of space, or orbit another object at a defined distance. They select enemy ships by either clicking on them in the game world, or selecting them from a list of nearby ships (that can be arranged by distance, type, and so forth). There are a variety of different weapon types in EVE, but (for the sake of some simplicity) the main three are lasers, projectile turrets, and missile launchers, and can be fitted to do four types of damage: electromagnetic, thermal, kinetic and explosive. The different ship types (coming from the four fictional empires in high-sec) are geared towards different weapon types, for example Amarr ships have a high energy reserves to power several laser weapons. Ships are also typically geared towards different types of defence, for example Caldari ships have powerful shields but low armour, and are thus less resistant to electromagnetic damage. Combat therefore becomes a version of rock-paper-scissors, with opponents attempting to bring the right offence and defence to best deal with their opponent's ship type.

The type of offence and defence defines the way combat occurs. Missile launchers fire a powerful explosive that travel at 3-4kms per second, exploding on or near their target. The missile can only last 5-10 seconds before detonating, limiting the aggressors distance. A player who has trained the appropriate skills can often extend these factors by up to 25%. Missile based ship combat thus typically involves orbiting the enemy at a distance of 35-40km, firing once every 10-15 seconds. In groups, players orbit their fleet commander (FC) at a close distance, and the FC then orbits the enemy ships. Projectile turret based weapons are more complex; they require better accuracy, something affected by a ship's signature radius (the smaller the 'sig', the harder to track, and the harder it is to lock the target). The damage that a projectile weapon does is affected by the enemy ships radial, transversal and angular velocities. Fast but weak ships will orbit an enemy in a fast tight circle in order to increase their angular velocity, making themselves

harder to hit. Consequently, players use other types of offensive modules to increase an opponent's signature radius (making them easier to target and track), slow down enemy ships (making them easier to hit), and stop them from activating their 'warp drives' to escape.

In large fleet battles, 30-40 players firing at once on a coordinated target can kill their opponent immediately. However, solo or small group combat typically involves exchanges of volleys that can last for several minutes. Further, 'logistics' ships can repair damaged ships while being fired upon, negating enemy attacks. This reduces the possible impact of lag, meaning players in Australia, thousands of kilometres from EVE's servers in London, are not disadvantaged, permitting the single shard virtual world so important to EVE Online's unique experience. In summary, the actualities of EVE combat are incredibly complex, demanding intimate game knowledge and the assistance of third-party programs and excel spreadsheets to correctly calculate damage in different circumstances. While understanding them is useful for contextualising the topics of discussion in the following chapters, it is not required.

EVE Online outside the Client

While the elements of the EVE Online client described above are important for understanding the EVE experience, it is often what occurs outside the client that is most foreign to non-players and crucial for understanding EVE. An enormous amount of the practices involved in playing EVE occur outside of the EVE client, perhaps more so than any other MMOG. These are not chores associated with understanding or coordinating play within the game, but spaces in which play is legitimately occurring. As Darryl Woodford has noted (2012), the widespread practices that occur outside of EVE present both conceptual and methodological challenges to game studies research (see also, Lehdonvirta 2010; Carter, Gibbs and Harrop 2012).

EVE Online's API

The key piece of technology that makes this sprawling of play possible is EVE Online's application programming interface (or 'API'). This is a piece of software that allows third party applications to request information from a player's account without having to know the player's username and password. Players can create custom APIs that only give out specific information,

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and then give these ‘API Keys’ to third party applications. This means players are able to securely share information about their account with programs and others, and verify their identity on platforms not managed by CCP Games.

One result of this has been a wide range of third party applications that help curb EVE’s harsh learning curve and difficult mechanics. EVE Fitting Tool (EFT), a program Chris Paul notes in Chapter 3 is “compulsory for anyone making informed decisions about key components of the game” allows players to mock-fit ships with different modules, view what their speed, damage and defence would be, and what skills would need to be trained to fly it. EVEMon is a similar program that allows players to plan their skill-training years in advance towards different goals, and calculate how long it will take to pilot new ships, as well as running in the background to notify players when they are not training skills or when a piece of manufacturing has finished.

Social Groups in EVE Online

When traveling through the universe of New Eden with allies, players can join together into temporary groups or “fleets”. This is a way of preventing friendly fire, and allows players to communicate with each other easily. More permanent groupings in EVE are “Corporations”. Corporations, like Guilds (World of Warcraft, EverQuest), Cabals (The Secret World), or Linkshells (Final Fantasy XIV) are a way for players to join together under the banner of a common group name, pool resources, and communicate with other members easily in a private corporation-only chat channel. Corporations can also align themselves with other corporations as part of an “Alliance”. Alliances can hold sovereignty over an area of the universe, and this territory can be assaulted by other alliances as part of a hostile takeover and attempts to increase empire. Alliances can declare war on each other and these wars can last months or even years. Longstanding grievances and wars become part of the game’s history and are chronicled on wikis or websites such as the EVElopedia (see Chapter 16). The largest Alliances have over 40,000 members (see Chapter 11 on the organisational demands of running a group this size). A robust and customised technical infrastructure is necessary to support these organisations, the majority of which requires EVE’s API to function.

Firstly, Corporations and Alliances use forums hosted on third party websites to facilitate the development of a community and coordinate players. These are typical gaming forums, with

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'sub-forums' dedicated to different EVE specific topics (military strategy, industrial, market, services for sale etcetera) and general interest (music, other games and so forth). Corporation and Alliance leadership typically use their forums to discuss leadership strategy and planning, and announce these plans to the members of the group. The API tool means that players can sign up to these forums and verify their in-game identity, meaning that players can trust that 'John Smith' posting on the forums is the same 'John Smith' that can be found in game, the persistent identity which we emphasised in the previous section players have a significant attachment to. In addition to forums, Alliances typically also have IRC chat and voice servers that players are able to use to communicate even when not playing the game; typically players have these running whenever their computer is running. For example, this allows groups to send announcements and notifications to all members who may be able to log into the game and defend territory. During battles, voice servers are integral to coordinating the hundreds of players in fleets, and consequently are often the focus of DDOS attacks and infiltration (see Chapter 10).

Leaders in TEST Alliance - the group at the centre of Carter's ethnography (Carter 2015c) - often suggested that their IT infrastructure was one of the groups' most valuable assets. In addition to the communication infrastructure, this was also because of the third party programs EVE players had developed that use the API function to help manage tens of thousands of players. For example, typical of an EVE Alliance, TEST has HR teams that review applications to join the Alliance. They also have reimbursement teams that review ships destroyed in combat for the Alliance and subsequently remunerate players who died, and other groups for players with specific skills (such as a group only for players who can pilot certain kinds of ships). Such is the logistical complexity of coordinating thousands of players, applications like these are crucial to an Alliance's in-game success.

An enormous portion of what constitutes 'EVE play' happens in these spaces (see also Carter 2014). To play EVE without engaging in these spaces is to not really play EVE at all, and thus acknowledging the practices outside of EVE is crucial for understanding it, as well as researching it.

EVE Online Play Styles

In this section, we will overview some of the common play styles that have emerged in EVE. What follows should not be taken as an exhaustive list of the types of play styles present in this game. Instead, these should be viewed more as EVE archetypes that help elucidate the sorts of play that can happen within this sandbox to better contextualize the discussions present throughout the remainder of this book. However, we stress that play preferences are fluid and they are not mutually exclusive. Simply put, a player who enjoys mining may also enjoy participating in PVP. Expressing a preference for one does not (and will not) prevent participation in any of the other ways of playing EVE. However, we note that because of EVE's real-time skill training system, players often focus a character's training on a specific 'career' to maximise efficiency, in turn attaching their player identities to specific styles of play.

Miners/Industrialists

The vast majority of in-game ships and items are manufactured by EVE Online players, using minerals mined by other players. Miners orbit asteroids until their cargo holds are full, firing mining lasers at them, before taking the minerals to a space station. Often miners will leave the minerals in space in 'secure cargo containers' and return with ships with large cargo holds, or coordinate with other players to increase the efficiency of their play (a notion measured by 'ISK per hour'). It is also not rare for dedicated miners to run multiple accounts simultaneously and do all this teamwork themselves. As players train their characters to be more efficient, they can fly larger ships that mine faster and make more money from play. Mining is commonly denigrated as one of the most 'carebear' styles of play for its solo nature and low skill requirement (see Chapters 8 and 13 on this colloquialism), but many players enjoy this relatively passive style of play as it does not demand their entire attention and can mesh with other simultaneous practices (see Carter, Nansen and Gibbs 2014).

These minerals can then be used to manufacture ships, modules, weapons and ammunition using blueprints (see Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the manufacturing process), a process similarly made more efficient by specific skill training. Manufacturers are players who focus on turning minerals (either mined themselves or more often bought on the game market) into modules that can then be sold at a profit. Manufacturing takes real time, broken up into 'runs', but can make significant profit from minimal, regular effort. Third party

programs using EVE's API system often facilitate calculating the potential profit from manufacturing runs, and often offer suggestions for how to improve this profit.

Playing the Market

Often distinct from this industrialist play style, 'Market' players are those who do not necessarily manufacture goods themselves, but focus on 'buying low and selling high'. This is possible because purchased items in EVE are not magically teleported to the buyers location, rather, they are purchased in a specific space station and the player has to attend that space station to use it. The virtual universe of EVE Online is enormous, comprising thousands of solar systems each often having multiple space stations, thus market players profit off the laziness of other players. While goods are mined and manufactured across the universe (predominantly in high-sec), market players work on buying goods at the best price possible before either re-listing them at a higher price, or moving them to a different location to sell for profit (sometimes this job is contracted out to 'freighter' players). Several trading hubs, the largest being the 'Jita' solar system, typically sell at the lowest price, while goods typically cost the most in 'null-sec'.

Market players often use excel spreadsheets and third party programs to maximise profit, but the richest can make enough to subsidise the subscriptions of multiple accounts, just by logging on for 20 minutes each day to update buy and sell orders. Like the rest of EVE, its market is unforgiving and ruthless, with the game's most powerful players manipulating the market through political manoeuvres and monopolising resources, earning vast amounts of income to fund wars and political agendas.

Player vs. Environment (PVE)

EVE's market is driven by the permanent destruction of destroyed ships in the various iterations of EVE's combat, and the expense of ammunition. Rarely losing their ships, player versus environment (PVE) players are those who fight non-player enemies, receiving 'bounties' from the non-player Empires and sellable salvage for doing so. There is a variety of player identities within this play style, with PVE players who fly incredibly expensive ships in the security of high-sec, eeking out efficiencies where possible, and null-sec PVE players who look for valuable

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enemy spawns but are constantly on the lookout for enemy pirates. Some PVE resembles 'raids' in World of Warcraft (see Chen, 2012), where groups of players must carefully coordinate small fleets to beat dangerous enemies in 'Incursions'. The most difficult form of PVE is found in wormholes where 'local chat' does not function, making it difficult to determine if any enemies are nearby. These systems also do not have space stations, meaning players must carry with them everything they could possibly need until they can find their way back into charted space through a maze of wormholes that are constantly collapsing.

Player-versus-Player combat similarly has a variety of forms, from solo-PVP to commanding fleets of hundreds of pilots.

Player vs. Player (PVP)

PVP within EVE comes in many different forms, ranging from highly skilled solo-PVP, tight-knit teams in 'Gang Warfare' and the de-individualised large fleet battles, often having over 500 pilots on each side. Most important to note for someone unfamiliar with this game-world, is that PVP can at times be non-consensual. If a World of Warcraft player decides they want to engage in combat against their fellow players, there are a few options: they can create a character on a specifically designated PVP server, they can queue for a battleground, and be matched against other players wishing to PVP, they can turn their personal PVP flag on and then venture out into contested space and hope to come across opposing players "in the wild", they can challenge players of their own faction to a duel, etc. The common theme is that players are able to make the choice to be open to PVP or not, whether it be selecting a PVP server or purposefully queuing themselves in a battleground. For those who do not enjoy PVP there is another designation of servers available, Player vs. Environment (PVE) where you are free to go about your business without fear of ambush. Similar safe zones just do not exist within New Eden, as evidenced by player-organized events such as "Hulkageddon" which is discussed in Chapter 12.

Scammers

Particularly unusual, EVE Online features pervasive treacherous play; the exploitation of misplaced trust for in-game advantage (Carter, 2015a). Unlike all other MMOGs that design out

the possibility for dark play involving theft, treachery, malfeasance and betrayal. CCP Games have designed for such activities at a massive and unparalleled scale. Except for disallowing technical exploits, players are not restricted from deceiving, tricking, lying and generally being dishonest towards other players in the pursuit of game goals, including in EVE's eSport (see Carter and Gibbs 2013; Carter 2015b; 2015c). This has manifested in the pervasive and common occurrence of scamming, stealing and espionage, and what Nick Combs refers to as a "culture of mistrust" (2007). This ruthlessness of EVE has permeated every fibre of its play and the number one rule hammered into each new player is 'DON'T TRUST ANYONE', but at numerous levels EVE players are forced to trust one another in order to access certain styles of EVE play. In Chapter 9, Keith Harrison, a player who runs the largest and most feared intelligence agency in EVE unpacks the practices around espionage in EVE in more detail.

Other Play Styles

This list of player identities unpacks some of the most common play styles found in EVE Online, but is by no means comprehensive. A small community of role-players exists within EVE Online, situating their efforts and play within EVE's rich fictional history. Similarly, many players follow, document and discuss EVE Online's lore and the occasional additions to it which often foreshadowing future expansions and changes to the game world, or simply document explorations of the EVE universe (e.g., see Mark726, 2015). With presence on twitter (around the hashtag #tweetfleet), blogs and EVE and other gaming forums, small communities of interest like this emerge and contribute to EVE's nature as a pastime (see Carter, Gibbs and Harrop, 2014) in that there is a wide range of leisure practices associated with playing EVE that are not confined to the EVE client. Finally, we note that there are definite hierarchies between these play styles in EVE's heterogeneous community, unpacked in further detail by Taylor et al. (2015) and by Kelly Bergstrom in Chapter 12.

Conclusion

EVE is unusually difficult to understand for the non-player; as detailed as we have gone in this chapter we have still greatly simplified many of our descriptions and overlooked many styles of

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play or elements of EVE's design that a player may consider important. Further, EVE is a game that is constantly evolving, featuring many styles of play now that have only emerged as the community has grown (the emphasis on propaganda, for instance, is a relatively new development) in the past 10 years. This description, and indeed this book, is only able to capture a small slice of EVE, a slice defined by the time the work was written, and the topics of the chapters.

Glossary of EVE Jargon

Whereas other MMOGs have some degree of crossover of terms and slang, EVE is a MMOG that has been relatively isolated and consequently has a lot of specialised language, another reason why it is a relatively difficult game to get into. This glossary covers many of the common expressions used in this collection, and should be used as a quick reference list for unfamiliar terms.

Alliance - Alliances are organisations of Corporations, formally recognised by the EVE Online client. Alliances can claim sovereignty over in-game territory, and enable access to shared resources and communication venues. The leader of an Alliance is known as an Executor.

Botting - The use of automatic programs to play the game, typically to generate resources. Botting is against the rules of EVE.

C.O.N.C.O.R.D. – EVE's non-player in-game police. Intervenes in unprovoked conflict in 'high security' space.

CSM - Council of Stellar Management, the democratic council of EVE Online players who advocate player needs and wishes to EVE's developer. The CSM has annual elections.

Coalitions - Coalitions are informal associations of Alliances, not recognised by the EVE game. These are typically military pacts, similar to organisations like NATO.

Corporation - Corporations are groups of players formally recognised by the EVE Online game, similar to Guilds or Clans in other MMOGs. Corporations can enable member access to shared resources and communication venues. The leader of a Corporation is known as the CEO.

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High-Sec - the common EVE colloquialism for solar systems where EVE's in-game police (C.O.N.C.O.R.D) will respond to unprovoked attacks and destroy the attacker.

ISK – EVE Online's virtual currency, standing for Interstellar Kredit.

Null-Sec – the common EVE colloquialism for '0.0 Security' solar systems, that is, where EVE's in-game police (C.O.N.C.O.R.D) is entirely absent and players can be attacked at any time with no protection from the game. Player Alliances can claim sovereignty over null-sec solar systems and build upgrades, such as space stations that players can dock in and trade.

PLEX - Pilots License Extension; an in-game item that can be redeemed for one month of game time, or purchased with real money and sold on the in-game market.

PvE - Player versus Environment combat.

PvP - Player versus Player combat.

Scam – A scam, in EVE Online, refers to where a player steals in-game items or money from another EVE Online player. This is legal within the game world, and requires misplaced trust.

Serenity - The Chinese EVE Online server run by Tiancity. Due to Chinese online gaming legislation, Chinese players are the only nationality not present in EVE's main server, Tranquillity.

Singularity - Singularity is the EVE Online test server that all players can access. Developers use this server to trial changes to the game, and eSport teams use Singularity to practice. It is regularly reset to match the status of the Tranquillity server allowing players the unique opportunity to play without consequence.

Tranquillity - This is the name given to the main EVE Online server. See also Serenity (the Chinese-only server) and Singularity (the test server).

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