Collectables

Fostering the obsessive compulsive tendencies of your player-base.

Things People Collect

- Stamps
- Coins
- Magic Cards
- Faberge Eggs
- Elvis Plates
- Beer Bottles
- Virtual Horse Dung

Yes.

Plus the open books are great for decorating houses in a *magical deco* ;)

These are the ULTRA rares. A BACKWARDS spell book... Marble table... a rock! Horse dung. Magical Plate Gloves... Wigs... (from WAYYYY back when orcs dropped them) Try to get these items... almost impossible.

Then we get to the gold.

People will, in fact, pay real-life money for virtual cow dung.

Games Using Collectability

- Ultima Online (originally mostly by accident)

- Asheron's Call and Star Wars Galaxies (crafting collection quests)

- Pokemon and Magic: The Gathering

- Mario 64 and most Console Game

- Madden

Why do people collect?

- Item Value
- Aesthetics/Uniqueness
- Hope for the big haul
- Accomplishment
- "A Glitch in the Matrix"
- "He collects beer bottles so that he can fall into his hobby and ignore me all night long because he doesn't love me any more…"
- Perverse Pride
- Why the hell not?

Or better put…

- There is no goal or system so unreachable, so nerfed or so broken that someone, somewhere won't see it as a mountain to climb.

Basic Tenets of Collectibles

Closed Sets vs Open Sets

- Ultima Online: Open Set
- Magic: the Gathering: Closed Set
- Subsets
- Completion Bonuses
- Blurry Sets

Opt-In, Lateral Gameplay

- Players can play at their own pace.

- Players can do things in almost any order.

- Multiple tasks may be needed to collect the object.

- Goal without a treadmill.

- Given how long we have to entertain these people, this is significant.

Scarcity

- Commons, uncommons and rares

- Super-rares (foil-lined cards)

- Modifying rarity on the fly (automated or by hand)

- Retention value of rare objects.

Intermittent Rewards

- B. F. Skinner on operant conditioning:
  - 1. Behavior that is followed by positive environmental effects (positive reinforcement, or reward) increases in frequency.
  - 2. Behavior that is followed by the withdrawal of negative environmental effects (negative reinforcement) also increases in frequency.
- Slot Machine mentality vs the Treadmill
- "Chasers"

Valueless Components

- Treadmill exists due to amount of time we are forced to entertain these users.

- Collectible items are a way to grant more frequent rewards that may have no intrinsic value on their own.

Collectibles and Online Games

Why is it such a good match?

Persistence

- Storage of your virtual goods
- Arbiter of distribution.

Community

- People to trade with.
- People to brag to.
- People who understand your obsession.

A need for goals

- Players want continued rewards.
- Players also want to play for thousands of hours.
- Players need to play at their own pace.

Integrating Collectibles

Thoughts on making it happen

Build with Collecting in Mind

- Item Storage
  - Asheron's Call's "Pack Animals"
- Item Display
  - Ultima Online's "Green Armor"
  - Experienced players get to show off
  - Newbie players get a taste of the breadth of the world.

Use Existing Physics

- Collecting should mostly be data.
- Collectible items are mostly aesthetically different from other items (no gameplay advantage) so have no balance issues.
- Which means it should be cheaper and lower-risk than other features you could add.
- So use existing object distribution models (Crafting, Loot, Quests, etc)
- Use a variety of systems to complete one full set, to broaden the game.

Don't Go Overboard

- A key component of collectibility is the goal. Don't move the finish line too drastically.

- Use subsets.

Add Replay Value

- Use collectibility to put a new slant on content.
  - Sly Cooper and the Thievus Raccoonus.

In conclusion

- Collectible items are powerful motivators in virtual worlds as well as in real life.

- Collectibles create opt-in, lateral goals which can be distributed in a way which broadens the apparent scope of the game.

- Collectible items are relatively low-risk to implement.