

# Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

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## ARG

(\_dataspill, \_sjanger) Forkortelse for “alternate reality game”. Et skiftende virkelighet-spill som utvisker forskjellen mellom den digitale spillverden og virkeligheten ved at det foregår begge steder, med en rekke ulike aktiviteter som utgjør en slags helhet og eventuelt leder fram til svaret på en gåte.

En blanding av digitale og ikke-digitale aktiviteter som inngår i et spill. Et slags rollespill. Målet kan være å finne en gjenstand, befri en person eller redde verden.

Spillerne kan rekonstruere en fiktiv historie ved hjelp av råd og hint spredt både på Internett og på fysiske steder. Spillet kan f.eks. foregå på et universitetsområde der det er inskripsjoner og arkitektoniske detaljer som deltakerne antakelig ikke ville ha oppdaget uten å delta i spillet. Ved å undersøke detaljer på et slikt fysisk område kan spillernes verdsetting av stedet øke (Marie-Laure Ryan i <http://narratologie.revues.org/6997>; lesedato 19.01.15). Forlag har stått bak ARGer for å reklamere for nye bøker (Porombka 2012 s. 132).

“An alternate reality game (ARG for short) combines the best elements of viral marketing, role playing games and being an insane person who can’t tell fantasy from reality. Basically, ARGs ask the players to pretend they’re living in a carefully constructed parallel universe that can include fake websites and phone numbers and even real objects hidden throughout the world ... usually for the sake of promoting a two-hour movie.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

“A few years ago, I started thinking about an entirely new way to tell a story, far different from traditional TV. I didn’t just want to talk about ‘saving the world’ in fiction, I wanted to create a narrative that spilled out into the streets. One that you could live inside of for a while. How cool would it be, I thought, to create a story that exists all around you all of the time? On your laptop, your mobile phone, on your sidewalks, as a secret message hidden in your favorite song or while standing at the bus stop on your way to work. And, taking it further, what if your participation over a few weeks or months actually impacts the story’s development and creates positive change in the real world because a philanthropic mission is integrated into the narrative itself? The Conspiracy For Good is the culmination of this dream. This is the pilot project for a first-of-its-kind interactive story that

empowers its audience to take real-life action and create positive change in the world. Call it Social Benefit Storytelling. To achieve this, I need you to participate. Reality and fiction have to blur. Every story needs a villain and you will meet the villain in the STORY SO FAR section on this site. And every story needs a hero. That's where YOU come in. As part of The Conspiracy For Good you will join a collective of thinkers, artists, musicians, and causes, creating a unified voice to fight the forces of social and environmental injustice. This is our site, where together we can follow the story and build a community that focuses on changing the world for the better, one person and one action at a time. Welcome to the Conspiracy.” (Tim Kring i <http://conspiracyforgood.com/about.php>; lesedato 26.07.12)

I selskapet Mind Candys *Perplex City* (2005) publiserte spillprodusentene merkelige avisannonser, la opp til skattejakt, telefonsamtaler mellom spillerne m.m. I andre spill kan brukerne få vite om en spesiell telefonkiosk der de skal motta beskjeder, eller et sted i byen der det er gjemt en cd-rom med informasjon osv. Spillerne må samarbeide om å tolke spor som er lagt ut på nettsider. Målet kan f.eks. være å finne igjen en “tapt” gjenstand.

Ikke alle ARGer inngår i markedsføringsstrategier. ARGer som *Lockjaw*, *Chasing the wish* og *Acheron* er utviklet av vanlige spillere. En fan av *The Hunger Games*-filmene lagde en ARG via en nettside, en twitterkonto og på det sosiale nettstedet Facebook. Oppgaven gikk ut på å finne et flagg som befant seg på et “fiendtlig” område. Denne ARGen ble stengt ned på grunn av rettighetsproblemer, og antakelig fordi den kunne utkonkurrert filmselskapet Lionsgates egen ARG (Bourdaa 2012).

ARGen *The Beast* ble kalt “a groundbreaking piece of digital storytelling” da den ble lagd for å promotere Stephen Spielbergs film *A.I.* “When it came to Steven Spielberg’s 2001 sci-fi film, *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence*, Jeanine Salla played a low-profile yet important role. Educated at Bangalore University, Salla was an expert in engineering and machine intelligence, and considered so important to the makers of *A.I.* that she was given a credit in the movie’s posters and trailers. The only thing was, Jeanine Salla never existed. [...] When the first trailer emerged for *A.I.* that Easter, Spielberg fans not only got their first proper look at the film, but also something more unexpected. At the end of the promo, three pages of credits come up, listing the cast, the effects studios and select members of the crew. And there, next to composer John Williams’ credit, is the name Jeanine Salla, who’s listed as something called a Sentient Machine Therapist. What viewers didn’t know was that a quietly groundbreaking marketing campaign had begun – and Salla was the first thread of a much larger mystery unfolding on the web. Googling ‘Jeanine Salla’ back in 2001 brought up a number of results, including her personal website and a site purporting to belong to Bangalore Worldwide University. Together, these and other web pages pitched unsuspecting visitors into a futuristic murder scenario, which in time became known as *The Beast* – the first instance of an alternate reality

game being used to promote a movie.” (Ryan Lambie i <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/steven-spielbergs-ai-its-groundbreaking-marketing-campaign/>; lesedato 18.04.20)

“In the world of *The Beast*, it’s the year 2142, and a colleague of Dr Jeanine Salla – a man named Evan Chan – has died in an apparent boating accident. Salla, meanwhile, suspects foul play. By poring through the various websites and hundreds of individual pages – as well as adverts, phone messages and other odd bits of data – players could follow Salla on her hunt for the truth behind Chan’s death. The concept was a bold one for a major Hollywood studio at the time; *The Blair Witch Project* had used the web to promote its found-footage horror a couple of years earlier, but nothing of this scale and complexity had been attempted before – and given that *A.I.* was a \$100 million summer film, not a micro-budget indie horror, the campaign brought with it a certain amount of risk. What if nobody even noticed Jeanine Salla’s name on the advertising material? Or worse, what if a few people googled the name, clicked on a couple of links, and then forgot about it? [...] for the first few weeks, the fake web pages, secretly set up by Microsoft Game Studios, remained worryingly quiet. [...] the mystique around the game began to snowball, as web users began sharing their own discoveries in message boards and comments sections. [...] Someone got hold of an *A.I.* film poster and noticed that, hidden on the reverse, a series of ringed letters spelt out the words “Evan Chan was murdered” and “Jeanine was the key.” Other clues dug up included a hidden telephone number in *A.I.*’s American film trailer, which, when called, provided the following message: “Welcome my child. Once upon a time there was a forest, that teemed with life, love, sex and violence. Things that humans did naturally. And their robots copied – flawlessly. This forest is vast and surprising. It is full of grass, and trees, and databanks, and drowned apartment buildings, filled with fish. It can be a frightening forest, and some of its paths are dark, and difficult. I was lost there once – a long time ago. Now I try to help others who have gone astray. If you ever feel lost, my child, write me at [thevisionary.net](http://thevisionary.net). And I will leave you a trail of crumbs...” On and on the mystery went, requiring its followers to translate texts from other languages, solve puzzles and sort through a bewildering mountain of futuristic news stories. One publicity stunt even involved the staging of “anti-robot” demonstrations in American cities, including New York and Chicago.” (Ryan Lambie i <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/steven-spielbergs-ai-its-groundbreaking-marketing-campaign/>; lesedato 18.04.20)

“In a bold bit of lateral thinking, *The Beast* had little to do with the plot of the movie, which told the story of a child robot, David (Haley Joel Osment) and his Pinocchio-like dream of becoming a real boy. Instead, the campaign’s aim was to draw people into the futuristic world of the movie, where robots are on the cusp of true artificial intelligence and rising water levels threaten to drown half the planet. The Cybertronics site contains no direct mention of *A.I.* itself, but one page mentions Allen Hobby, the scientist character played in the film by William Hurt. These and other small clues – such as a mention of “super-toys” – provided

tentative connections to the movie the game was advertising. The Beast was the brainchild of Jordan Weisman, the game designer of such tabletop games as MechWarrior and Shadowrun. Together with co-producer Elan Lee, Weisman began to work up an alternate reality game concept – a game which, in Lee’s words, “[blurs] the line between fiction and reality.” The story itself was written by sci-fi and fantasy author Sean Stewart. On his website, Stewart explains the meaning behind that ominous-sounding name, The Beast: when he and his collaborators drew up a list of all the assets the game took in, the number came to 666.” (Ryan Lambie i [https:// www.denofgeek.com/movies/steven-spielbergs-ai-its-groundbreaking-marketing-campaign/](https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/steven-spielbergs-ai-its-groundbreaking-marketing-campaign/); lesedato 18.04.20)

“At the time, the people behind The Beast were kept firmly out of the spotlight – presumably to preserve the game’s enigmatic aura. Even when a publication like *USA Today* began to dig into the campaign in the wake of *A.I.*’s release in June 2001, the question as to whether The Beast had successfully marketed the movie remained unanswered. How many people had actually got to the bottom of Evan Chan’s murder? Of those, how many were enticed to actually leave their office chairs and see *A.I.* in their local cinema? In a 2006 interview with *Gamasutra*, Elan Lee admitted that their ARG was, from beginning to end, something of an experiment. When The Beast first launched, the team had no idea whether people would even notice the tiny clues left lying around on *A.I.*’s trailers and posters. [...] Lee also revealed that there were a few clues that went unnoticed, even by its most ardent followers: “all the physical locations of everything we do in The Beast, if you blocked those out on a map, it would spell a word across the United States.” As far as Lee’s aware, nobody discovered what the word was. [...] A *Gamasutra* article from 2005 reports that “over a million” people played The Beast. Certainly, *A.I.* producer Kathleen Kennedy was pleased with the game’s “different type of storytelling” – a kind of pre-Web 2.0 version of viral marketing. [...] Fittingly, one of the few surviving pages is a fake obituary. It’s for Jeanine Salla, who died at the age of 77 in New York. [...] Salla was The Beast’s equivalent of the white rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland* – an enigmatic character who led unsuspecting adventurers into a labyrinthine world of intrigue.” (Ryan Lambie i <https://www.denofgeek.com/movies/steven-spielbergs-ai-its-groundbreaking-marketing-campaign/>; lesedato 18.04.20)

“Jane McGonigal, who worked with some of the Puppetmasters to develop the follow-up game [oppfølger til *The Beast*] *ilovebees*, calls the genre alternate reality gaming (ARG). She defines ARGs as “an interactive drama played out online and in real world spaces, taking place over several weeks or months, in which dozens, hundreds, thousands of players come together online, form collaborative social networks, and work together so solve a mystery or problem that would be absolutely impossible to solve alone.” True to the logic of affective economics, 4orty2wo Entertainment, the company that [Sean] Stewart and others created to advance alternate reality games, explains that such activities generate product and brand awareness: “Our aim is to carve the client’s world into today’s cultural

landscape, so that, like Middle Earth or Hogwarts, it becomes a priority destination for the American imagination. ... We create communities passionately committed to spending not just their money but their imaginations in the worlds we represent.” That’s what they must have told the funders. [...] McGonigal argues that ARGs are generating “players who feel more capable, more confident, more expressive, more engaged and more connected in their everyday lives.” [...] As McGonigal explains, “the best pervasive games do make you more suspicious, more inquisitive, of your everyday surroundings. A good immersive game will show you game patterns in non-game places; those patterns reveal opportunities for interaction and intervention.” ” (Jenkins 2008 s. 129-131)

Selskapet 42 Entertainment stod i 2004 bak en ARG som skulle fylle mellomrommet mellom Microsofts dataspill *Halo* og dets oppfølgerspill: “I Love Bees was an alternate reality game created in 2004 in lead up to the release of Xbox game Halo 2. Loyal Halo 1 followers were sent bottles of honey, inside were individual letters spelling out I Love Bees. Perplexed players were unaware of the relevance until advertisements for the then, up and coming, Halo 2 release had a flash of [www.ilovebees.com](http://www.ilovebees.com) in the place of [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com) at the end of the ad. [...] presenting problems and puzzles on almost every level within the corrupted ilovebees website, attracting a multitude of players, to use their individual skills to decipher and collaborate information they have collected. Players were required to locate payphones across the United States and answer questions correctly in order to unlock audio clips. Some calls were conversations with people acting as characters which in turn made players feel as if they were a part of the story. Once all audio clips were compiled together, it formed a narrative about the characters in the Halo universe. Some players would use their skills to decipher corrupted data or use image files found on the server to solve problems, unlocking more information. Towards the end of the game, players are sent email messages and calls which eventuated in players being invited to secret events across the U.S. to play Halo 2, multiplayer, before it’s release. [...] Hundreds of web pages [...] More than 40,000 live audio transmissions [...] More than 250,000 people viewed the website when it was launched [...] Over three million people viewed the site over the 4 months” (<https://designing-interactions.tumblr.com/post/56772666542/case-study-1-i-love-bees42-entertainment>; lesedato 04.05.20).

“Around the same time as the unexplained honey jar incident, the first trailer for *Halo 2* was released, and fans noticed that, for a split second, the [xbox.com](http://xbox.com) address at the end was replaced with [ilovebees.com](http://ilovebees.com). So the website was somehow linked to the game, but how? It appeared to be the blog of a completely ordinary bee enthusiast named Dana, which had recently been hacked and filled with strange messages, corrupted data and a series of mysterious countdowns. [...] As the players decoded the “corrupt” data, they learned that the “hacking” was actually the result of a rogue AI named Melissa attempting to collect itself in the website’s server. From her blog posts, the players learned that Dana was becoming exasperated (which is understandable given that she’s paying for the hosting and

all) and tried to erase the artificial intelligence, causing Melissa to lose parts of its memory. A virtual catfight ensued, with the AI Melissa leaving threats on the website and capturing webcam images of Dana to freak her out. At this point Dana's character fucked off to China out of sheer terror and left her readers to figure out how to deal with the AI. [...] Later, ilovebees.com visitors found a series of real GPS coordinates leading to pay phones all over the country. The phones would then ring at a designated time, at which point the nearest player was greeted by a prerecorded message and required to answer a series of questions using codewords related to the game.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

Noen *I Love Bees*-spillere “were so dedicated to this game that one of them waited by a pay phone while Hurricane Frances was literally only minutes away in Tampa, Fla. [...] Other times, when the players couldn't make it to the designated phones in time, they had to persuade employees at a Pizza Hut and an Applebee's to answer the robot's questions. These phone calls were called axons – every time a group of axons was completed, a new sound file was unlocked at the website, revealing a new recovered piece of Melissa's fragmented memory. Players were able to learn more and more of the back story: basically, Melissa was the AI onboard a futuristic spaceship that was accidentally sent back in time and crashed on present-day Earth. With the ship stranded and damaged, Melissa was forced to transfer itself to a random web server in an effort to get its shit together and call out for help. [...] And then things got really weird. As more axons were completed, Melissa's memory began to come back, and so did its deranged dominatrix-like personality. From this point onward, the players were able to have *actual phone conversations with the character*, having to obey to its increasingly bizarre requests: it once told a group of players to form a human pyramid at a certain location (which they did). At other times, it asked them to tell jokes, share personal stories or sing their favorite songs. By the end of the game, the calls routinely involved giggling, laughing and having sing-alongs with the awkward person on the other side of the line. [...] Eventually, Melissa managed to return to its own time, but not before inadvertently giving up Earth's location to an alien empire called the Covenant, thus kicking off the events of *Halo 2*. Currently, ilovebees.com displays a 500-year countdown to the exact moment of the Covenant invasion. As a reward for constantly degrading themselves to please a fictional future space robot mind, players were invited to play *Halo 2* in movie theaters before it was released.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

Det amerikanske rockebandet Nine Inch Nails brukte en ARG i forbindelse med utgivelsen av deres album *Year Zero* (2007). Under en konsert i Lisboa etterlot de seg en USB-minnepinne på et av konsertlokalets toaletter. Denne minnepinnen inneholdt mapper med krypterte dokumenter som ledet til en rekke internettsider skapt for anledningen (Bourdaa 2012).

“Rock albums don’t usually have the most extensive marketing campaigns; most of the time it’s just some online ads, a plug on *The Daily Show* and calling some other artist a twat in an interview with a tabloid if we’re talking about a British band. Trent Reznor’s *Year Zero*, on the other hand, had 17 websites and a massive alternate reality game devoted to it. [...] It all started with a Nine Inch Nails Tour T-shirt: among the words on the back, certain highlighted letters spelled out the phrase “iamtryingtobelieve.” This was actually the URL for a strange website that described a drug called parepin, an alleged immune system booster distributed by the U.S. government through the water supply to protect its citizens from biological warfare. The website posited that it was actually a hallucinogenic and narcotic drug meant to control the populace. Because people are way easier to keep in check when they’re tripping balls, apparently. [...] Things started getting really weird when a fan attending a NIN [Nine Inch Nails] concert in Portugal found a USB flash drive in a bathroom stall that contained a real song from the then-unreleased album. Embedded in the MP3 file was a link to another website filled with people posting about topics like an underground resistance, the parepin drug ... and alleged sightings of a giant hand coming down from the sky. [...] It turns out that these websites, plus others that were found soon afterward, were set in a future where the U.S. has become a Christian fundamentalist state and most civil rights have been dissolved. The large hand is known as “The Presence” and has been seen all over the world.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

I *Year Zero*-ARG’en kunne fansen “piece the game’s story together by following cryptic clues in objects found or handed out during NIN concerts, like fliers against the corrupt government, lithographs, DVDs and a few more of those bathroom stall flash drives. Another MP3 spectrogram revealed a phone number, which if called would let you hear a lengthy recording of a wiretapped conversation. Players were constantly receiving weird emails and crazy phone calls, not to mention real cease-and-desist letters from the RIAA [Recording Industry Association of America] for hosting and sharing the MP3s that the band had intentionally leaked. It was easy to mistake this for part of the game, though [...] As the story progressed, the resistance movement became more and more organized. Fans were invited to a resistance meeting in Los Angeles, where they were given all sorts of cool alternate-reality swag (including prepaid cellphones). Those who received the cellphones were summoned to a slightly more secretive meeting five days later – which turned out to be a live goddamn concert for Nine Inch Nails. This in itself would have been a spectacular enough way to end the game, but apparently Reznor didn’t think so: halfway through the concert and without a word of warning, a SWAT team busted in and shut down the entire thing. [...] After that, a few more links were found leading to one final website that seemed to describe the end of the world at the hands of the Presence. However, before that happened, a group called the Solution Backwards Initiative managed to send information back in time as a plan to warn us about the future, thus explaining the whole game.” (Andrew Lang i

[https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

En ARG ble brukt i lanseringen av en krimbok: “Blant 23.000 som har deltatt i det virkelighetstro spillet som har foregått på savnetharryhole.com, der Harry Hole var savnet under mystiske omstendigheter [...]” (*Dagbladet* på nett 23.09.09) “I høst kommer en helt ny Harry Hole-bok fra Jo Nesbø, og det skal ikke forbigås i det stille – heller ikke for dem som kanskje ikke er de ivrigste kjøperne i bokmarkedet. For, som du kanskje har sett på plakater rundt omkring: En politimann er kidnappet, og det er ingen ringere enn Harry Hole. Let the game begin. [...] Det henger plakater som etterlyser Harry Hole over hele Oslo. Allerede har den norske filmen “Rottenetter” [2009; regissert av Arild Ø. Ommundsen] nylig vært gjennom en heftig, brukerinvolvert runde med såkalt ARG-spilling (Alternate Reality Gaming), der man deltar i spillet ved å fysisk lete etter ledetråder i den virkelige verdenen. Og nå er det altså den kommende Harry Hole-boka som skal sniklanseres med litt alternativ virkelighetsspilling. Allerede før sommeren ble Harry Hole en aktiv twitrer, en aktivitet som har pågått fram til nå nylig. Da ble nemlig kontoen hans overtatt av “Al-Qassam Brigades”, som truer med å ta livet av førstebetjenten om ikke selveste Jens Stoltenberg stepper inn. Den siste meldingen kom for et døgn siden, og lyder som følger: The best men die first. @Harry\_Hole is history. Indirectly killed by @jensstoltenberg and his passivity. Why follow a ghost? Al-Q Brigades. Før det skjedde hadde Harry Hole blant annet et møte med Abid Raja, og hans kollega Bjarne Møller har etter at Al-Qassam Brigades entret bildet uttrykt sin bekymring på sin Twitter-konto. Men det er ikke bare på Twitter at spillet utspilles. Nå har en mystisk video dukket opp på YouTube, der to tilsynelatende unge piker fanger opp Harry Hole som blir kidnappet utenfor operaen” (*Dagbladet* på nett 03.09.09).

“More ambitious alternate-reality games, a genre that blends online and offline clues and relies on players collaborating to solve puzzles, have also been successful in reaching what studios call “alpha fans” (the boys in the basement). Walt Disney Studios deployed one for its forthcoming “Tron: Legacy.” [...] Marketing-driven games are free and expected to fade away after a movie’s release. [...] To get it right, companies like Trigger begin work years before a movie’s release. When Sony hired Trigger to create an alternate-reality game for “District 9,” the science-fiction thriller released last August, the studio brought Mr. Yim’s team into the process while the script was still being written.” (<http://www.nytimes.com/>; lesedato 20.04.11)

Da Jeffrey Lieber m.fl.s TV-serie *Lost* (2004-2010) ble sendt på amerikansk TV, ble det i løpet av sendetiden startet flere ARGer. Ved å gå inn på bestemte nettsider kunne seerne arbeide seg fram til kunnskaper om hva som kom til å skje i neste episode i serien (Rauscher 2012 s. 12).



*The Lost Experience* (2006) var en ARG tilknyttet *Lost*, lansert mellom seriens 2. og 3. sesong. “The Lost Experience got quite a lot of publicity during the San Diego Comic-Con [...] During the Question & Answer section at the Lost panel, a mysterious woman, who identified herself as Rachel Blake, started questioning the panel members on the Hanso Foundation. Despite the writers claims that it was just something they made up, Ms. Blake was adamant that both the films and The Hanso Foundation are real. She questioned them on Joop, fires in Iceland, organ harvesting and deaths of Hugh McIntyre and Darla Taft. Before she was escorted away by security, she screamed that the Lost writers had blood on their hands and that if the audience wanted the truth they should visit [hansoexposed.com](http://hansoexposed.com). Once at the [hansoexposed.com](http://hansoexposed.com) site, visitors need to register and start hunting down glyphs that contain codes that unlock segments of a video. These glyphs can be found just about anywhere: on websites, podcasts, magazines, and on cast members themselves. Once a new segment is unlocked, it then needs to be positioned correctly within the other segments to create a coherent video. [...] Although there is a leader board set up to track those who find the codes first, the codes themselves are spread across the globe, so cooperation is needed to find all 70 codes to expose the Hanso Foundation and tear it apart. [...] You don’t need to know everything that has come before to participate in the hunt for the glyphs. But if you are curious, Unfiction has several Quick Reference Guides to lead you through the three acts of the game. Rachel Blake also has her own version of what has occurred so far. Only by working together can the secrets that the Hanso Foundation are keeping secret be exposed. [...] There are thousands of players playing all over the internet [...] check out The Lost Experience blog which will give you the scoop on everything that’s happened so far.” ([https://www.argn.com/tag/the\\_lost\\_experience/](https://www.argn.com/tag/the_lost_experience/); lesedato 04.05.20)

En ARG kan vare i dager, uker eller måneder. *Why so serious* (2007) hadde en tidslinje med et helt års varighet (Bourdaa 2012). “Why so serious?” er en sentral replikk av skurken Joker i Batman-filmen *The Dark Knight* (2008; regissert av Christopher Nolan). I ARGen fikk spillerne blant annet beskjed om å oppsøke et bestemt konditori i New York, og der fant de videre beskjeder gjemt inne i en kake. På nettsider var hele Gotham City gjenskapt virtuelt. Omtrent 10 millioner spillere i 75 land deltok (på ulike måter) i spillet (Bourdaa 2012). *Why so serious* “was designed as a “bridge story” between *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*, so, if you played the game, you hit the ground running when the movie started. [...] Part stunt, part theme park ride, and part choose-your-own-adventure novel, they exist to draw you in and keep you engaged – which can lead to toxic results.” (Dan Jackson i <https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/dark-knight-arg-why-so-serious-alternate-reality-game/>; lesedato 03.02.20) Året etter ble filmen *The Dark Knight* en enorm kommersiell suksess.

“Perhaps the most unusual thing about the massive *The Dark Knight* viral marketing campaign is that *the film didn’t need viral marketing*. This is a movie about Batman and the Joker. Even if it had no advertising at all, it *still* would have

become one of the highest-grossing films of all time [...] This didn't stop them from creating the most extensive and insane ARG ever made. [...] The game took off with a bang when, during the 2007 San Diego Comic-Con, people found "Jokerized" \$1 bills that led them to [whysoserious.com](http://whysoserious.com), a page advertising jobs for Joker henchmen. Those eager to be repeatedly punched by costumed vigilantes and/or murdered by their own boss were instructed to be at a certain spot near the convention center at 10:00 a.m. the next day. Upon going there at the allotted time, players discovered a phone number ... written in the sky. [...] Calling the number prompted a recording of a whimpering man being forced to read instructions for what came next: a scavenger hunt. The fans at Comic-Con were then painted with Joker makeup and sent off to find clues throughout San Diego, having to cooperate with those online in order to solve additional puzzles at the website." (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

"Why So Serious: How 'The Dark Knight' Alternate Reality Game Changed Fandom Forever [...] Celina Beach had no idea she'd fallen right into the Joker's trap. But in July 2007, when someone handed her a dollar bill at Comic-Con in San Diego [...] [she] quickly realized this was no ordinary buck. For one thing, George Washington's typically stoic visage had been defaced by dark circles around the eyes and bright red across the lips. The currency had also been bowdlerized by a soon-to-be famous movie catchphrase: "WHY SO SERIOUS?" Beach followed that phrase to a website that provided recruits like her with a set of GPS coordinates for a specific location in the nearby Gaslamp Quarter and instructions to meet there at 10am. "Our elite organization is expanding!" read the website's invitation-like poster, which gave a graffiti facelift to Uncle Sam. [...] A crowd, baking under the blazing summer sun, had already gathered near 1st Avenue and J Street, waiting for a message to be relayed via friends monitoring the website online. Finally, they got their instructions: "Look up." "We're all standing around wondering what's going to happen," recalls Beach [...] "And then we hear an airplane overhead and you looked up and a skywriter writes, 'Ha Ha, Ha.' And a phone number. Of course, immediately we're all dialing the number – and that was the entrance into it." The entrance into what exactly? The dollar bill, the skywriter, the website, the phone number, and the accompanying scavenger hunt that followed opened a portal into the world of an unprecedented alternate reality game, or "ARG." Designed by the company 42 Entertainment to promote *The Dark Knight*, Christopher Nolan's highly anticipated follow-up to *Batman Begins* that would introduce Heath Ledger as the maniacal, brilliant, and unpredictable Joker, the game would go on to engage 11 million players in more than 75 countries, inspire countless posts on movie blogs and superhero forums, and even earn a spot in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. Over the next year, leading up to the release of *The Dark Knight*, the ARG would grow to be as labyrinthine as one of Nolan's painstakingly constructed puzzle films, stacking narratives upon narratives to entertain players mobilized by the whims of a team of studio-backed puppetmasters behind the scenes." (Dan

Jackson i <https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/dark-knight-arg-why-so-serious-alternate-reality-game>; lesedato 03.02.20)

*Why so serious* sitt mål “was simple: create chaos. That’s what the Joker does. For Beach and her fellow members of this ad-hoc army, that meant applying Joker makeup to their faces as they raced around completing puzzles and carrying out the bidding of their new leader. In a “Gotham City Police Report” that can still be found online, those acts include forming a “dangerous roaming mob” and terrorizing “a Girl Guide” and stealing “her cookies.” At the end of the chaos, one of the Joker’s rabid “henchmen” was picked up in a van and “killed” by the mob. “We convinced this guy to lay down in the ditch and take a bunch of photos,” explains Alex Lieu, the chief creative and experience director at 42 Entertainment. “And he was taken out.” [...] 42 Entertainment, the Burbank-based company founded by “The Beast” creator Jordan Weisman. In the mid-2000s, ARGs and the larger world of transmedia – an umbrella term used to describe stories that unfold across multiple platforms – were in the middle of a big mainstream moment, particularly in marketing departments at movie studios, record labels, and video game companies. [...] Sharing your email address with the site would remove a pixel from what was eventually revealed to be the Joker’s first big close-up. [...] the game’s voluminous Wiki [...] in December 2007, players picked up cakes from local bakeries, called a number, and discovered a Nokia “Joker phone” ringing in the center of the desert – every detail needed to be on point. Nothing was insignificant. Each element had to be as tailored as the suits Nolan wore on set. [...] In the game, you didn’t get your news from *The New York Times* and CNN; no, your favorite paper was *The Gotham Times* and you never missed an episode of *Gotham Tonight* on GCN.” (Dan Jackson i <https://www.thrillist.com/entertainment/nation/dark-knight-arg-why-so-serious-alternate-reality-game>; lesedato 03.02.20)

“At the end of the day, the online players were rewarded with the first ever trailer for *The Dark Knight*, while back in the real world one lucky winner was selected to be taken away by mobsters and “killed” in place of the Joker. [...] But wait, why would the mob want to kill the Joker? Because the game took place before the events of *The Dark Knight* and right after *Batman Begins*, bridging the gap between the two movies by showing events like the rise of the Joker, Harvey Dent’s campaign for District Attorney and Jim Gordon’s attempts to weed out the bad elements in Gotham’s police department. Players took on the role of the Joker’s lackeys, whose jobs basically consisted of finding clues and solving intricate puzzles. One scavenger hunt told players to go out and take pictures of themselves dressed as the Joker while standing near a famous world monument, or to send the ones they already had, if they were lunatics. Those who submitted pictures were later mailed actual copies of a Gotham City newspaper, which revealed a dozen more fake websites within its pages. Another time, the Joker sent the players to 22 different bakeries all over the country to pick up cakes that had cellphones stuffed inside them. Why? Because he’s the Joker, that’s why. This went on for over a year, by the way, and each puzzle would change the website in some way or reveal

a new bit of information about the film.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

“Just when it looked like the [*The Dark Knight*] ARG was going to be entirely devoted to the Joker, one puzzle that involved hacking a website was intercepted by Lieutenant Gordon, who coerced the players into cooperating with the police. These players were then commissioned to participate in a secret operation to track down 30 corrupt cops – apparently they missed a few, though, because a corrupt cop working with Gordon was actually a huge plot point in *The Dark Knight*. Meanwhile, Harvey Dent was elected District Attorney with the help of the players who joined his campaign, but we imagine that this part of the game was slightly less exciting than the Joker henchman/police informant side. [...] The game ended when, a week before the movie’s release, every single site involved in the ARG was vandalized by the Joker and his mad hacker skills. One final puzzle revealed a website that allowed players to receive free tickets to early IMAX screenings of *The Dark Knight* on a first come-first served basis, while those with Joker cellphones were personally invited through their emails.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

*Cloverfield* (2008; regissert av Matt Reeves og produsert av J. J. Abrams) er en amerikansk science fiction-film og skrekkfilm. “When the first *Cloverfield* trailer debuted in 2007, no one really knew what the hell it was for. All we saw was some shaky footage of a bunch of dudes in New York escaping from an unseen creature (little did we know that the film was basically 90 minutes of that). [...] Back then we didn’t even know the movie was called *Cloverfield*: the closest thing to a title was the date 1-18-08 at the end of the only trailer. This led inquisitive fans to the website 1-18-08.com, which showed pictures of the characters from the movie plus photos of some sort of sea accident and random Japanese people. Also, someone in the trailer was wearing a “Slusho!” shirt, which J. J. Abrams fans recognized as a Japanese slushy brand that also shows up in shows like *Alias* and *Fringe*. [...] Since at this point the desperate fans were clearly pasting every single word uttered in the trailer into a URL bar, they quickly discovered the official Slusho! Website [...] It turns out Slusho! is owned by a company called Tagruato, which has an even more extensive fake website. Besides manufacturing soft drinks, the company has apparently branched out into other ventures like deep-sea drilling and space satellites. Tagruato’s corporate website was frequently hacked by an environmentalist group called T.I.D.O. Wave which [...] also had its own site.” (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

I *Cloverfield*-ARG’en “several Myspace pages were discovered for specific characters in the film. One of those characters, a guy called Rob Hawkins, would announce in a January 2008 blog post that he had been offered a job at the Slusho!

company in Japan (that's why they're throwing him a going away party at the beginning of the movie). Among Rob's group of friends was a guy called Teddy Hanssen who was actually a T.I.D.O. Wave activist secretly planning to infiltrate the new Tagruato sea drilling station set up near New York City. Teddy's story could be inferred through postings on the T.I.D.O. Wave website, plus the private webcam videos recorded by his girlfriend Jamie Lascano (password: jllovesth). [...] In January 2008, several news clips from around the world were uploaded on YouTube reporting on the unexplained collapse of the same drilling station Teddy was supposed to infiltrate (Teddy had since disappeared, and was presumably captured by the Japanese). Tagruato Corp. blamed the activist group for the destruction of the station, but it's pretty obvious from the clips that it was actually attacked by some sort of undersea monster." (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

"Players who bought Slusho! merchandise over the website (or who won it in the contest to create a fan-made Slusho! commercial) had previously received a torn Tagruato memo mentioning a "dark secret" in the station. This, along with some other information posted on the activist site, suggested that the company found the strange sea creature with their satellites and built the "drilling station" to study it, accidentally causing it to grow larger by exposing it to the stuff Slusho! is made of. From then on, all that was left was for the monster to march into New York and go all Godzilla on it. [...] The game ended when 200 fans were invited to Rob's going away party, which was followed by a midnight screening of the film they had immersed themselves in for all those months. Of course, it turns out the movie doesn't bother to explain any of what we just told you, even in passing – the biggest reference to the ARG is when we see the girl from the webcam videos passed out on a couch during the party." (Andrew Lang i [https://www.cracked.com/article\\_19346\\_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html](https://www.cracked.com/article_19346_the-5-most-insane-alternate-reality-games.html); lesedato 04.05.20)

Det amerikanske TV-selskapet HBO leide reklamefirmaet Campfire Media til å promotere serien *True Blood* (2008-14; skapt av Alan Ball m.fl.). Campfire lagde en ARG der vampyrer finnes i den "virkelige" verden (Bourdaa 2012). ARGen "included targeted mailings, vials of fake blood, and a fake protest in NYC by the American Vampire League, an organization working to secure equal rights for vampires. HBO summarized the content with a weekly faux-documentary, *The Blood Copy Report*. [...] Campfire Media, the team behind the *True Blood* alternate reality game, created a series of videos to catch players up on the campaign. [...] the *Blood Copy Report* on HBO. The series of weekly videos summarized the game's progress and caught me up on recent developments in less than an hour." (Michael Andersen i [https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire\\_media/](https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire_media/); lesedato 04.05.20)

"Increasingly, ARG developers are releasing simplified summaries of their games to get the word out and attract a broader audience. Campfire Media has created videos summarizing past campaigns as case studies, such as the 4400's Battle over

Promicin and Audi's Art of the Heist. Millions of Us released a series of videos on BoingBoing TV summarizing Enitech Labs, the campaign for the Sarah Connor Chronicles. Brian Clark has gone on the record saying that the planned revenue model for Eldritch Errors includes releasing graphic novels and a television show based on the experience." (Michael Andersen i [https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire\\_media/](https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire_media/); lesedato 04.05.20)

"USA Network has partnered with Campfire Media to produce an extended reality promotion for the hit television show, The 4400 [2004-07; amerikansk science fiction TV-serie]. Fans of the show can join in the debate over the use of Promicin, a neurotransmitter found in each of the 4400. When injected into someone who is not one of the 4400, it does one of two things: it either kills them instantly or gives them an amazing supernatural ability. Not surprisingly, the government wants to stop the use of Promicin, but many, like Jordan Collier, think the public deserves the right to choose for themselves. While the promotion appears to be an extended reality rather than a full-fledged ARG, it's still definitely worth a look. According to the official press release, the campaign will use seven websites, 70+ videos, mobile phone network participation and several live events across the United States. The three sites found through the rabbithole are already chock-full of well done and entertaining videos, blogs and other fun goodies." (Michael Andersen i [https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire\\_media/](https://www.argn.com/tag/campfire_media/); lesedato 04.05.20)

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