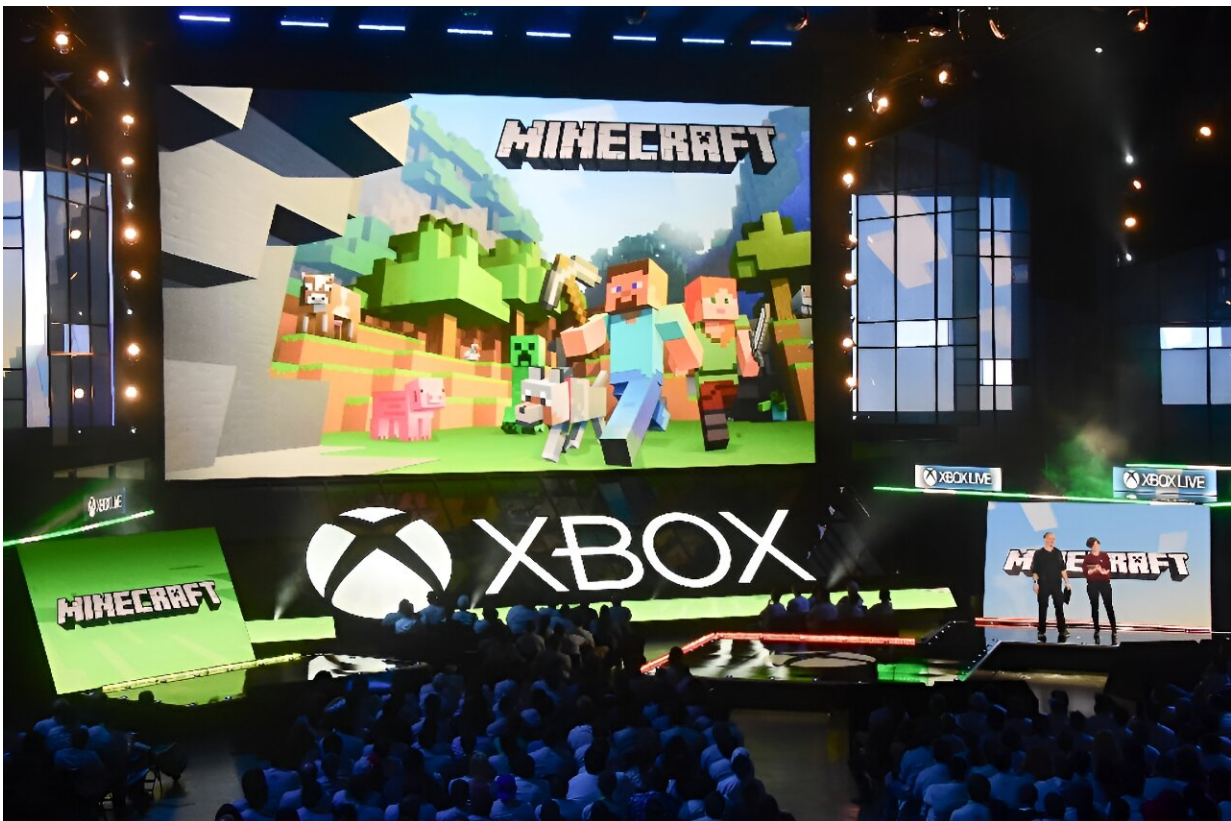


Students, activists, entertainers: Minecraft's global appeal

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Players of all ages and backgrounds have used the game for everything from educational projects and architecture to building communities and creating artwork.

With more than 300 million copies sold, it is the best-selling video game of all time.

AFP spoke with four Minecraft users about how the game has impacted their work, and their lives:

The streamer

Yang Ji-yeong became one of South Korea's most prominent gaming influencers over the past decade, growing an audience of millions over multiple streaming platforms including YouTube. The main attraction: videos of her playing Minecraft.

"I think Minecraft's greatest asset is the pure freedom it offers. It doesn't have a fixed set of rules and objectives but instead gives the player the freedom to play whatever way they see fit," the 34-year-old told AFP.

Yang's broadcasts, initially just one on weekends, became so popular that she was able to quit her job and focus on streaming full-time, she told the Yonhap news agency in 2016.

Today, Yang said, Minecraft continues to offer her novel ways of connecting with people.

"I recently was also invited to play on a foreign server and I was surprised to learn I could play, interact and communicate with users from different parts of the world without sharing the same language or

culture," she said.



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The student

Paris native Raphael Mesbah says he discovered Minecraft when he was five or six years old.

Around 15 years later, he is a medical student and still deeply devoted to the game.

"Minecraft is like a [second life](#)," the 20-year-old told AFP.

In 2022, Mesbah decided to embark on a hugely ambitious project: building the Paris metro system, line by line, in Minecraft.

The grand plan required help, and Mesbah found it on Grindr. Building a community of Minecraft players through the gay dating app, he has managed to complete three subway lines already.

"It's a simple and inexpensive game, many people of my generation already have an account on it," he told AFP.

"It's the game of my heart, and I always end up coming back to it."

The virtual library

Minecraft offers a colossal canvas to build entire worlds for its players to explore, and people have built everything from fantasy homes to highly detailed replicas of real-world structures such as airports.



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Reporters Without Borders (RSF) showed how the game could aid the fight against censorship in parts of the world where access to information is strictly controlled or even banned.

The non-governmental organization opened "The Uncensored Library" inside Minecraft on March 12, 2020, containing banned writings from journalists in more than seven countries, including Russia, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"All [online platforms](#) are channels that allow censorship to be circumvented," Vincent Berthier, technology manager at RSF, told AFP.

"Minecraft, which has enormous firepower, still flies under the radar," he said.

"Minecraft or Fortnite are certainly video games, but they also help people communicate and exchange."

Built with more than 12.5 million blocks by the internationally acclaimed design studio Blockworks, the library is regularly updated by RSF teams.

Nearly 25 million people from 160 countries have visited the library since its creation, according to the organization.

The school teacher

When Graham Warden became a school teacher in the US state of Texas, he found that Minecraft was "a ubiquitous part" of students' lives.



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The 32-year-old told AFP that the structure of the game presents a useful tool for learning and problem-solving because players are "thinking in a different way" while they manipulate objects and environments in Minecraft.

"These are all things we don't get to do in real life and so being able to change the mental environment makes it a great tool for all kinds of things, learning included," he said.

Warden said Minecraft has also become a way for him to connect with

people.

"Recently, as I've discovered I am autistic, I've needed to find ways to connect in a different way, because I've never really felt that I connected with anyone," he said.

"I met a group who use Minecraft as a means to have community. Having a repetitive task like mining in the game, can provide the monotony necessary to inspire conversation, weird as that sounds."

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