



5 Things You Should Read about Gaming and Learning

The Series

This publication is the second of the ACRL Instruction Section's Research & Scholarship Committee's "5 Things" series.

The 5 Things we recommend are intended to be eclectic and thought-provoking. They may be journal articles, blog posts, podcasts, interviews, reports, or just about anything else that we think is important for librarians to read, watch, or hear about this topic. For its general concept, this series is deeply indebted to the EDUCAUSE "Seven Things You Need to Know About..." reports. (And we highly recommend you read those too!)

The Topic

Today's college students grew up in a world of console, computer, and online games, many of which have complex rules and systems. Many of these games allow players to grasp impressive quantities of complicated information in a painless fashion, seeming to promise a desideratum of instructors at every level of education—learning that engages students by making use of their natural inclinations.

The 5 Things listed here will give librarians a foundation for understanding the value games can bring to education, how games have been used in education, and the theory behind games as valuable tools for both teachers and learners. These readings illustrate some of the issues and challenges of incorporating gaming into education, highlight good learning principles, and discuss commercial, modified, and custom-designed games.

Along with these 5 Things, we recommend bookmarking the following websites.

ACRL IS Current Issue Discussion Digest
(from the 2007 ALA Midwinter Meeting)
Gaming in Library Instruction
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/sections/is/eventsconferences/discussionforum/mw07gaming.cfm>

ALA Games and Gaming Resources Wiki
<http://gaming.ala.org/resources/>

Syracuse University "Gaming in Libraries"
course (Daily video class sessions and
discussions from a course taught by Scott
Nicholson in June 2009)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5LVBy4aEMY>

The Education Arcade
<http://www.educationarcade.org/>

EDUCAUSE Games and Gaming—140 Resources
<http://www.educause.edu/Resources/Browse/GamesandGaming/30578>

We invite you to spend some time with these websites and with the 5 Things below, discuss them with your colleagues and constituents, then go forth and share!

If you have comments or questions about the "5 Things" publications, please contact the current IS Research & Scholarship Committee Chair.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/about/committees/roster.cfm?committee=acr-insressch>



Instruction Section

Association of College and Research Libraries
and American Library Association

1 Herz, J.C. (2002). *Gaming the System: What Higher Education Can Learn from Multiplayer Online Worlds*. Paper presented at The Internet and the University: 2001 Forum. <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/FFPIU019.pdf>

This article will help you understand the strengths of Multiplayer Online Worlds and what elements of those communities of learning could be modeled in higher education. Herz argues that “online games illustrate the learning potential of a network and the social ecology that unlocks that potential” and urges the academy to take note. You’ll come away with a sense of the characteristics of Multiplayer Online Worlds that encourage learning and suggestions for how one might apply those practices in higher education. Approximate reading time: 20 minutes

2 Wong, W. (2007). Gaming in Education [Electronic Version]. *EdTech*. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from <http://www.edtechmag.com/higher/may-june-2007/gaming-in-education.html>.

This article presents examples of three higher-education courses that used games to enhance learning. In a journalism course, an economics course, and a history course, faculty required students to play games that, in some cases, had been modified or created to fit the subject matter of the course. The author also touches on the role the campus IT department must play. In the schools outlined in the piece, the faculty were successful in getting the necessary support IT to facilitate game play. Approximate reading time: 5 minutes

3 Kirriemuir, J., & McFarlane, A. (2004). Literature Review in Games and Learning [Electronic Version], *Report 8*. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from http://www.futurelab.org.uk/resources/documents/lit_reviews/Games_Review.pdf.

This report provides an overview of key issues and important research on gaming, education, and learning theory. This area of research is particularly difficult to cover cohesively as the literature appears in a multitude of disciplines and often lags behind current trends in gaming due to the nature of

scholarly research and academic publishing. However, the summary the authors provide is an excellent starting point for learning about gaming and educational theory. As most of the research discussed here deals with children and teens, academic librarians will have to extrapolate findings to apply to their own users, but the gaming novice will find this a useful introduction to a complex issue. Those pressed for time will find the 4-page Executive Summary and Bibliography worth a look. Approximate reading time: 40 minutes.

4 Squire, K.D. (2005). Changing the Game: What Happens When Video Games Enter the Classroom? *Innovate: The Journal of Online Education* 1(6), Retrieved June 7, 2009 from <http://innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=82>. (FREE registration required)

Squire used the game *Civilization III* in his middle-school history class. This specific classroom experience elucidates major issues about educational use of existing commercial games, and provides the reader with questions to consider when deciding whether to employ games in a particular course. Approximate reading time: 25 minutes

5 Gee, J. P. (2007). *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (Rev. and updated ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In this very readable book, a leading scholar of learning and video games says, “good video games incorporate good learning principles.” Gee presents 36 such principles, discovered through analyses of actual video games and their relation to real-world learning experiences, some coming directly from the classroom. Particularly interesting are the analyses of video game personas and their relationship to those one may bring into the classroom, and a discussion of active and experiential learning as it relates to Lara Croft and her “professor,” Von Croy. This book will help readers understand the similarities between information literacy and video games and apply learning principles when creating tutorials and games. Approximate reading time: 6 hours