

Game On! Gaming at the Library

Beth Gallaway

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www.informationgoddess.info/go.html

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Preface

The public library's computer area is deluged every day with adults playing chess and poker while chatting, e-mailing, and surfing the Web. The students in the school library media center who want to log on to *RuneScape* or care for their virtual penguin outnumber the students seeking homework help or book recommendations. Patrons at the special library are seeking multimedia training for their legal or health care positions. The local senior center is looking for an alternative venue for its Wii Bowling League. The children's librarian has just asked the director to consider circulating video games in the public library. The Teen Advisory Board suggests having a *Dance Dance Revolution* tournament. A group of concerned parents want to know more about video game ratings. A work-study student wants to have a LAN party in the college library's information commons. Several adult patrons come in regularly to download cheat codes for games. You haven't picked up a joystick since *Pong* and want to know a little more about how games have changed since 1972.

To some of you, these situations are familiar; others may be wondering: What's a LAN? What's a Wii? Don't panic! The purpose of *Game On!* is to educate the beginning gamer and support the master gamer, so, whether you want to develop links to Web sites for cheat codes, write a policy for the circulation of PlayStation 3 games, or just understand a little bit more about the games your patrons are most assuredly playing, this book is for you.

Why is there a need for an entire book about video games? According to researcher NDP Group, the video game industry netted over \$21.33 billion in 2008,¹ surpassing box office ticket sales and CD sales. In fact, over 80 percent of the population under the age of 34 has played a game,² and the average age of the gamer continues to rise—28 in 2003, 29 in 2004, and 35 in 2007.³ Gaming has become ubiquitous: it's something most people do, from 97 percent of teenagers⁴ to 26 percent of adults over age 50.⁵ Video games have become a permanent part of mainstream culture for all ages, classes, races, and genders. As media continue to converge into multiple formats, patrons will demand to have many options for information formats, and libraries that value excellence in customer service will be obligated to begin treating games as yet another medium format that patrons want to access.

The introduction of any new medium requires the same careful planning and justification that libraries undertook when adding videos, DVDs, CDs, the Internet, and graphic novels. These media formats were once thought to be outside the

jurisdiction of libraries, yet, today, the library that does not provide them is viewed as archaic or incomplete.

This book, designed a bit like a video game, will bring librarians working in school, public, and academic libraries up to speed on the topic of video games. The premise? You, the Hero Librarian, are on a quest to provide a superior gaming experience to your patrons, including the best games, as well as the top gaming magazines, books, programs, and services related to gaming.

Level 1, “The Backstory,” provides an overview of pivotal moments in the development of video game history and culture.

In Level 2, “Video Games at the Library,” you face the challenge of advocating for library services, programs, and collections to serve gamers. Along the journey, we’ll gain experience points as we gather definitions of the “need to know” terms, tie gaming to the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets® for teens, and debate the controversies involving video games. The “Level 2 Strategy Guide: Gaming Resources” provides annotated lists of valuable online resources that you can consult in your quest to develop a comprehensive gaming library.

Level 3, “Providing Library Services to Gamers,” challenges you to provide services that don’t involve picking up a controller, once your advocacy mission is complete. The “Level 3 Strategy Guide: Recommended Gaming-related Literature” offers core lists of fiction titles based on gaming and popular magazines for gamers.

Level 4, “Games and Programs,” provides model programs to duplicate at your library. Although the primary focus is young adult audiences, many programs can be customized to fit children, seniors, college students, and families. The “Level 4 Strategy Guide: Forms and Flyers for Video Gaming Programs” includes many useful “cheat sheets” for creating your own gaming programs.

Level 5, “Selecting, Collecting, and Circulating Video Games,” adds evaluating and selecting games to your newfound skill set; once games are in the library, storage, marketing, and display are the next puzzles to solve. The “Level 5 Strategy Guide: Recommended Gaming Collections” presents comprehensive lists of the essential games for your gaming library.

Level 6, “The Future of Games,” concludes with a look at the future of games and gaming; think of it as a preview to the sequel.

The core collections and ready-to-go programs included in *Game On!* will get your quest off on the right foot, but I encourage you to “hack” by modifying these lists and programs to fit the special needs of your patrons, libraries, and communities. Also, don’t miss out on the companion Web site for this book: to download forms and handouts and get access to updated core collection lists, visit www.informationgoddess.info/go.html.

Consider this your call to adventure: You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a small mailbox here. The small mailbox contains a book,⁶ which reads: “WELCOME TO GAMING! Gaming is filled with adventure, danger, learning and literacy, identity formation, role-playing, hand–eye coordination, and many, many other unique skills. While gaming, you will explore some of the most amazing territory ever seen by mortals. No library should be without games. Good luck, Adventurer!”

Notes

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