LOADING...

Introduction to Issue 6, Volume 9:
Scholarship, Learning and the Digital Video Game

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This issue of *Loading…* is primarily, but not exclusively, comprised of articles from a symposium held at the *University of Calgary* in February 2011. I was one the organizers of that symposium and am grateful to have been granted the privilege to sit in as editor for this issue.

The *Scholarship, Learning, and The Digital Video Game* symposium was held in conjunction with the opening of the Taylor Family Digital Library here at the *University of Calgary*. The Taylor Family Digital Library, through its design, collections and program offerings, recognizes and supports academia's shift towards the digital. A major area of the library's focus is on games and related media with the aim of providing support for the university's many games scholars and their students who are not centralized in any one department or faculty, but are scattered across disciplines. The goal of the symposium was therefore to highlight the breadth of research that involved games, featuring the work of scholars from as far away as Japan and as regional as the *University of Calgary* itself. It even featured an excellent keynote on the state of Canadian game studies and game design presentation by the *Canadian Game Studies Association's (CGSA)* own Nick Taylor.

The symposium was limited to fifty participants in order to promote the exploration of alternate forms of presentation and encourage the use of new interactive technologies. I have occasionally thought it a shame that time and resource constraints often result in so many conferences that feature research on rich interactive media to proffer so little in the way of genuine participant interaction. To address this concern, the library's collection of game hardware and software was fully leveraged to ensure that every session could offer hands-on components. But of course while many sessions did indeed allow for a more hands-on interactivity, the papers you see here are offered to you in the more traditional text based format. As such, I would encourage readers to play the games mentioned by the authors, as it often seems that one "reads" a game through play and a bit of play-time will surely contextualize and deepen a reader's understanding of the related research.

This issue is broken up into four sections, three of which gather together articles of a similar type. The fourth section features the abstracts from the Exergaming Symposium held at the *University of Calgary* in August 2011 that came about in response to the earlier symposium. The abstracts are printed here to help raise awareness about the research being done in exergaming

across the Canadian game studies community. When I look at the literature in the field of game studies in Canada exergaming seems often be on the margins, not fitting into the predominate social sciences, arts, humanities and education approaches to the field. While it is not possible or desirable to print every paper presented at every game studies conference in Canada, hopefully we will be able to see more of their abstracts, and from them, be energized and inspired in our own research and collaborations.

The first section, Dimensions of Design, features two articles that deal with different aspects of game design.   *Beyond the "Historical" Simulation: Using Theories of History to Inform Scholarly Game Design* puts forward a case for creating and designing gamic modes of history that conform to current understandings of the past and fit within the current scholarly debates. It suggests that gamic modes of the past and more traditional textual modalities can coexist as part of the same historical debate and share the same epistemology, arguing that how we know the past does not necessarily need to change in the wake of new forms of communication. *Designing Digital Games to Teach Road Safety: A Study of Graduate Students' Experiences* looks at the other end of game design. It attempts to look at what graduate students learned not from a game, but from the experience of building games. It provides useful insights for anyone considering game design as part of their course content.

Probes and Enquiries, the second section, has three papers grouped together that look at different aspects of current game studies practice. *Playing Attention: The Hermeneutic Problems of Reading Ico Closely* was not presented at the Calgary symposium but thematically fits very well with the other papers here--particularly alongside Dr. Mackey's paper *To Automaticity and Beyond* which can be found in the Reflections and Review section.
The practical and theoretical implications of flow theory and intrinsic motivation in designing and implementing exergaming in the school environment is the second article in this section and fits well with *Designing Digital Games to Teach Road Safety* article as it explores another aspect of using games in a school setting. In this case it focuses not on the university classroom, but on the elementary school, exploring physical literacy and fitness. The presentation of this paper in Calgary was the catalyst that prompted the follow-up Exergaming Symposium in August as participants from the original showed an enthusiasm to experience exergaming for themselves.

Finally *A Comparison of Exergaming Interfaces for Use in Rehabilitation Programs and Research* rounds out this section by giving researchers a solid overview of the main attributes of the most commonly available motion control systems. This article is seminal reading for anyone considering moving into the area of exergaming or motion control.

Reflections and Review features articles that provoke a reconsideration of how we look at video gaming software and hardware, both past and present. Montfort and Consalvo's *The Dreamcast, Console of the Avant-Garde,* while not a paper presented at the symposium, lends a most apt voice to this issue given its focus on retro hardware. A major part of the Taylor Family Digital Library's support of game studies is its large collection of retro hardware and games, and this article shows what can be done with studies of that hardware. Dr. Mackey's formerly titled, *Narrative experience in games- and other fictional universes* was a popular paper at the Calgary symposium.   It felt particularly appropriate given that a digital library hosted the event as Mackey's work brings together gaming and reading in a discussion of how both media can

construct and facilitate narrative. It can be found in our issue as *To Automaticity and Beyond: Narrative Interpretation in Game and Novel.*

The editors-in-chief, Suzanne de Castell, Jennifer Jenson, managing editor, Nis Bojin, along with myself, would like to thank all the authors and reviewers who contributed to this issue. As guest editor for this issue, it is my hope that this issue will not only broaden and deepen our readers knowledge of game studies, but also inspire our readers to take on new research or take their research in new directions.

Game studies is surely an exciting and varied area, and it is by communicating new research in this burgeoning field - whether in person, at symposiums, or asynchronously through publications such as this - that it will continue to be so.

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