Playing in the Past: A History of Games, Toys, and Puzzles in North American Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Games and other forms of play are used in today's libraries to attract underserved patrons, to introduce patrons to other library resources and services, and to facilitate engagement between library patrons. While many perceive gaming as a new library service, gaming services have been part of librarianship since the nineteenth century through chess clubs. During the Great Depression, libraries supported patrons with puzzle contests and developed circulating toy and game collections. Academic libraries built game collections for research and classroom needs, while school libraries collected and facilitated educational games to aid teachers. Video games have been used in libraries to help patrons learn to use technology and to bring groups of patrons together to enjoy shared experiences. The goal of this article is to demonstrate the different ways in which libraries have used games, toys, and puzzles over the last 150 years through both collections and services.

Edythe Cawthorne, who was in charge of children's services for seventeen branch libraries in Prince George County in Maryland in 1975, commented in an interview: "I considered toys, games, and realia as the logical next step in our acquisition of 'non-print' materials" (Cawthorne 1975, 24). Libraries supporting recreation is not a new concept. Fictional materials in the library have been a way to support recreational reading. Most public libraries have recreational music and movies as popular forms of media. Gaming stands alongside movies and music as a popular form of recreation, so it follows that libraries supporting recreational media should also support games and gaming. Library historian Jesse Shera noted in his classic work on the foundations of the public library: "If future generations can learn anything from an examination of library history, it is that the objectives of the public library are directly dependent upon the objectives of society itself. The true frame of reference for the library is to be found in its coeval culture" (Shera 1949, 248).

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A survey of public libraries in 2007 showed that over 70 percent of public libraries supported gaming in some way (Nicholson 2009b). During this survey, anecdotal evidence suggested that games were not new in libraries despite the current focus on modern video games in libraries. What has changed is that the role of gaming in society has grown as a gaming-literate population has grown into adulthood. According to a report by the Entertainment Software Association, in the United States, 72 percent of households contain someone who plays video games and 82 percent of all gamers are adults (Entertainment Software Association 2011).

The purpose of this article is to start from the 1850s (the earliest mention of games in libraries that could be found) and show that games and gaming have been part of library services since then up to now. The literature—research articles, library magazines, and library event notifications—provides these pointers into the past. The goal of this article is to provide a snapshot of how games have been supported in libraries over the years. This will not be a comprehensive review of all gaming programs in libraries; instead, the focus is on evidence that documents the variety of gaming experiences in libraries over the past 150 years.

Defining "Games"

In today's society, the terms "games" and "gamers" often are considered to refer to video games. When "games" and "gaming" are used, many will think of digital games or gambling. But the concept of a game is much broader. The term "game," or "a form of play with goals and structure" (Moroney 2001, 1), refers to all types of games—board and card games, computer games, role-playing games, console games, and other types of games, without preference to one type of game. "Gaming" is the act of playing a game, and a "gamer" is someone who plays games. Libraries may have collections of games for patrons to borrow and play at home or libraries may have games selected for patrons to play within the library as a gaming service. When the gaming is done within the library at a specific time where players come together, this is known as a "gaming program."

The organization of this article will first be by major developments of different types of gaming programs in libraries, as most of these developments are still in place today. Within each development, evidence will be presented of that development from its beginning until the present day. The developments will be introduced in chronological order. The result will allow the reader to understand how the offering of games in libraries has broadened throughout the years and how the present situation is not something new but simply an evolution of multiple themes from the past.

Gaming Programs for Moral Betterment

The growth of libraries and other structured recreational areas like museums and parks came from the social movement of rational recreation (Cross 1990). As workers were afforded

more free time due to the shortening of workdays in the industrial revolution, there was a growing need for activities to fill leisure time. Social reformers saw the opportunity to structure leisure activities to support the personal values of "self-control, familialism, and 'respectability'" (Cross 1990, 88).

In the mid-nineteenth century, libraries in Great Britain were changing to embrace not only their traditional educational and moral pursuits but also recreational interests. The introduction of recreational fiction into library services attracted readers, but other services were designed to reach out to the urban working man. During this time, gambling and gaming were commonplace social leisure activities for adult males, and, in response, social reformists created spaces like "Henry Solly's Working Men's Social Clubs" to combine recreation with education in a controlled setting (Cross 1990). Along these lines, libraries created game rooms and billiard parlors as a service designed to lure people out of the public houses and into a more "appropriate" location for these games. While the games in this context were not used directly for educational purposes, the moral context and setting in which the game was being played were key (Snape 1992).

This concept of games for social betterment fits in with the themes of many board games of the time. The game Chutes and Ladders had its origins as an Indian board game about Karma called Nāgapāśa (Shimkhada 1983). This model of a game that teaches good moral choices was popular in both Great Britian and the United States in the mid- to late nineteenth century (Cross 1990) and came about at the same time as advances in publication such as chromolithography, which made these colorful game boards and boxes easier to reproduce so that games did not have to be hand-colored (Hofer 2003). Many of these games had players rolling the dice to move around a board as they encountered good moral actions, which moved them ahead in the game, or poor moral choices, which sent them back. One of the early board games published in the United States was the Mansion of Happiness: An Instructive Moral and Entertaining Amusement, which rewarded the virtues of honesty, temperance, truth, and hard work and punished players for landing on spaces representing vices (Adams and Edmonds 1977; Hofer 2003). Another early game published in America was The Checkered Game of Life, where players advanced toward old age, accumulating points for morally correct behavior and moving toward jail, ruin, or suicide for immoral actions. Just as the games of the era promoted social betterment, many libraries of the era supported by memberships or donations, known as social libraries, furthered social concerns by collecting materials supporting a specific social viewpoint (Sessa 2010).

In the 1850s, there was also a realization of the importance of providing recreation through the public library. As the Boston Public Library was being founded, the concept of supporting books for recreational reading was discussed. While not all of the founders agreed that this was a good idea, after debate, they decided that it was important for the library to support the popular literature of the day (Shera 1949).

Chess in Libraries

One of the oldest gaming programs in the United States on record is the chess program of the Mechanics' Institute Library in San Francisco. This library, founded in 1854 during the gold rush, housed what is now the oldest chess club still existing in the United States. While the library has changed locations since its inception, the chess room has always been an important service of the library (Donaldson 2011).

Chess has continued to be a mainstay in public libraries. A 1997 article reports that in Florida, volunteers from the Scholastic Chess Association worked with the Seminole Public Library to run Saturday chess workshops. In nearby Alachua County, 2,500 children were registered (out of a population of 181,000) to play organized chess (Harkins 1997). A November 2011 Google search for "chess club" and "public library" turned up almost two million hits, with page after page of listings for chess clubs meeting in public libraries.

All libraries have not always been willing to support chess. One heavily reported case of such resistance was at a public library in New Rochelle, New York, in 1992, where the library had a patron arrested for playing chess at a reference table. The patron had been playing with another patron when the librarian informed him of the library's policy against games. The patron stopped playing but kept the board out to follow along with a chess book. The patron was arrested and later convicted for trespassing ("Chess-Playing Patron Convicted" 1993).

This represents the conflict in libraries with regard to a new type of activity in public spaces—some librarians see it as an opportunity to grow and adapt to their community, while others see it as a threat that should be stopped through new policies. The same thing has happened with latchkey children in libraries: some libraries prohibit children from coming to the library each day after school until their parents get off work, while other libraries have taken this as an opportunity to create after-school programs.

Many of librarians' objections to gaming in libraries come from the belief that some patrons will get upset about the library spending resources on gaming services instead of other services. The underlying belief that libraries are for books raises the concern about the role of games. Other issues of concern stem from the violent and sexual content found in many modern games and the belief that gaming would create too many challenges. As with any new program, some library staff object to gaming as it is an additional burden and a noisy and disruptive activity (Petryk and Carter 2009). As with any program in the library, for a gaming program to be justifiable, it must match the library's goals, missions, and user needs.

These two early instances of games in libraries—games to lure people from the public houses and chess in libraries—set the stage for many future uses of games in libraries. Most libraries today are using games for either or both of two purposes—as an educational tool or as a way of bringing in patrons. Using games as an educational tool is very popular in school libraries, and providing tools such as chess to develop strategic thinking continues to be popular in all types of libraries. Games have had a long-standing place in the classroom as an

educational tool that allows students to explore knowledge in larger context. The idea, known as situated learning, creates a situation where the learner must connect concepts and facts with larger strategies. Games and simulations are one tool that educators can use to facilitate situated learning (Gee 2007). Using the recreational value of games to bring patrons to the library to discover what else is in the library and to socially connect with each other in a safe public space are among the most popular primary goals for games in libraries (Nicholson 2009a).

Toy Libraries

During times of economic stress, libraries have become a valuable shared resource for communities. One reason for this is the reduction of other publicly funded recreational services such as playgrounds at a time when recreation has been needed for "emotional relief from pressures of economic insecurity" (Chudacoff 2007, 124). One new application of games in libraries that arose out of patron needs during the Great Depression was toy libraries.

Inspired by noting the need for children to have access to toys and games, a dime-store manager in Los Angeles started the first toy library. Children were stealing toys from his store, and after learning that the children were good children just seeking recreation, the manager worked with a school principal to get funding for the first toy library. The idea behind the toy library was that children could check out the toys, and if they returned them in good shape, they were given a "good mark." Upon receiving twenty good marks, the child would get a reward of a title and a gift to keep. The goal was to teach positive character traits like responsibility and integrity. This library got funding through the federal Works Projects Association, but it was closed in 1942 when the WPA lost its funding (Moore 1995).

In the 1960s, interest in toy libraries grew again through the Head Start program as resource centers for teachers to borrow toys for their classrooms. After this, federal legislation helped the development of toy libraries focused on providing access to specialty toys for disabled children. Through the 1960s and 1970s, toy libraries grew up affiliated with a variety of institutions. More recently, many toy libraries have been independent organizations funded by a local community tax base or government institution. In some cases, however, toy libraries function as part of a public library or school. Most of these toy libraries are designed for families to check out toys and games, but some are designed for caregiving institutions, teachers, or therapists (Moore 1995).

The American Library Association supported this movement through the publication of *Toys to Go: A Guide to the Use of Realia in Public Libraries* (Moore 1995). In 1975, an article in *School Library Journal* discussed the toy and game lending program in the seventeen branch libraries in Prince George's County in Maryland. After its first two years, the popular program was completely funded from a special appropriation from local taxes (Cawthorne 1975).

The Cuyahoga County Public Library in Ohio is one example of a modern library with a toy library as part of its normal services. Library cardholders can borrow two toys and games at a time for a three-week period. The library has over 700 different toy and game titles, with multiple copies of many of these (Cuyahoga County Public Library 2011). There are many public libraries that circulate toys and games for children; many more examples from the United States and around the world can be found in "A History of Toy Lending Libraries in the United States since 1935," a masters thesis by Julia Moore (1995).

One example of the importance of games in libraries given in Moore's thesis is the story of the Columbus Metropolitan Public Library. This library had developed a collection of over 5,000 items from the 1970s through to 1993. The library's administrators found that the collection was too time-intensive, and they were concerned that too many children were coming to the library and only playing with toys instead of interacting with any books in the library. They shut down this service, which drew national attention as an irate parent organized protests against the decision (Moore 1995). This anecdote carries several warnings for libraries starting gaming programs today. As gaming is something that some people get quite passionate about, a library that starts and then ends a gaming program may find that this draws negative publicity. There will be attendees who come only for games in libraries and do not interact with other items in the library; this may or may not be of concern, but the library needs to be prepared to answer critics who point this out.

The USA Toy Library Association (USATLA) was started in 1984 to support the needs of toy libraries, with initial funds coming from a grant from Fischer-Price. The USATLA continues today: it provides a regular newsletter, information for the media, a directory of toy libraries from around the world, and publications for sale to help toy librarians. The International Toy Library Association was started in 1990; it hosts a conference every three years (International Toy Library Association 2011).

Puzzle Contest Support

While many libraries have had jigsaw puzzles as part of their collections for years, another type of game-related service involving libraries emerged in the 1930s out of the desperation stemming from the Great Depression—the puzzle contest. Puzzle-based contests offered ways for those willing to spend time working through challenging puzzles to win money. The first large-scale contest was a picture puzzle contest sponsored by Old Gold cigarettes; it offered over $100,000 in prizes. Since this came at a time when many people were out of work, had free time, and were seeking a way to feed their families, this drew a frenzy of over two million entries. One result was that "public libraries all over the nation had been forced to limit each person's time at the dictionary lectern to fifteen minutes" (Elrich 1955, 326).

These large-scale puzzle contests continued over the next fifteen years, taxing specific library resources. Libraries responded in different ways. Some found that the puzzle research

was overly destructive to the books containing the answers and that too much staff time was spent dealing with frantic puzzle-solvers. Others focused on making this an opportunity for education and taught patrons how to find the answers; some opened their doors and turned the contest puzzle into a display of the reference works needed to solve the puzzle (Elrich 1955).

The parallels of this situation to gaming in the libraries today is intriguing. Some libraries around the world have realized that gaming can bring people into the library, while other libraries have had to deal with policies that forbid gaming in the library, many of which are created by school boards or advisory boards. Some libraries believe that gaming programs can be noisy and disruptive to other library patrons or that physically active games can damage library computers or library facilities. Other libraries are concerned about wasting library resources on games when these resources should be used for more important needs.

A Growth of Recreation through Public Libraries

After the Great Depression and World War II, the country started to rebuild. The libraries were involved in helping returning soldiers and their families find their place in a changing society. Between 1947 and 1952, a large-scale analysis known as the Public Library Inquiry explored what libraries were and what they could become if more state and federal aid were provided. Significant federal funding programs helped libraries to grow in their service offerings (Martin 1998).

Another significant shift was the growth of the target groups of public libraries. As schools stressed math and science in response to the launch of Sputnik, school children needing support that went beyond the resources of their local school libraries came to the public library. An increased level of support for those under age 18 was changing what the public library looked and sounded like. In addition, as race relations improved throughout the decades, the libraries went from supporting the reading habits of a single predominant group to ensuring that they had works to support the interests of a more diverse clientele (Martin 1998).

As the country headed into the turbulent times of the Vietnam War, the libraries provided a place of solace. To strengthen their voices, libraries joined together into larger library systems and were able to attract additional federal funding. Eisenhower's Library Services Act was the first in a series of funding campaigns that helped libraries to grow. Branch libraries made possible an extension of library services into previously underserved areas. The libraries became hubs of community activity in places where there was little else (Martin 1998).

A 1942 essay by Mary Taylor in *Library Journal* discussed the role that libraries should play in supporting recreation. In this article, Taylor laid out broad areas in which libraries should consider ways to support the recreational interests of patrons. Two of the areas relevant here are the social area, which includes dancing, picnics, and games, and the mental area, which includes puzzles, genealogy, and games of skill (Taylor 1942).

A 1966 article entitled "Reaching the Unreached" by Harriet Bard presented ways for libraries to reach out to groups of patrons who were not typical library users. These plans started with libraries hosting a Boys' Club and bringing in high school library aides. Along with other services, the libraries introduced games as a service and eventually put high school aides in charge of the gaming programs for the Boys' Club (Bard 1966). Given that both public libraries and the Boys' and Girls' Clubs came from the same roots in social reform, this was a natural match.

Another popular library program encouraged its attendees to create their own games. In 1974, the New York Public Library advertised in the *New York Times* for children to come for a four-week program where they would develop their own games and the program would end with a game-playing session where the young inventors could show off their work ("Why Not Make Up Your Own Game?" 1974).

While today's libraries do not have a primary goal of teaching morals, this concept of providing the same games that people play in homes or arcades in a different context is still thriving. When supporters of having games in libraries are questioned about why the library is the appropriate place for games instead of, say, the YMCA or the community center, a common response given is that it is the literacy-positive environment of libraries that is important. This falls in line with the continued shift of libraries from places of moral education to places of recreation that support literacy (Martin 1998). There are other literacy-focused services in the library besides gaming, and anecdotal evidence supports that the circulation of teen-related materials goes up after a teen gaming program has begun (Mori 2008). In this way, gaming is used like other non-book-based activities, such as movies, guest speakers, hobby groups, and social functions, to bring people to the library and introduce them to other library services.

Games as the Subject of Collections

In order to run a gaming program, libraries have to build up a collection of games. Some libraries build up collections of games for other purposes, such as for patron circulation or for the study of games as information-bearing objects. Many of these specialized collections typically either start with a dedicated gift or come out of an unmet need of the library's patronage.

The Providence Public Library in Providence, Rhode Island, has a gaming-related collection that was started through a donation to the library in 1923 upon the death of Edward Hanes, one of the checkers experts of the time. The Hanes Checkers Collection is made up of 560 items about checkers that go back as far as 1572 (Providence Public Library 2011). Another large chess and checkers collection is at the Cleveland Public Libraries. Collector John G. White donated his personal collection in 1928; along with an endowment, this has created of one of the largest chess collections in the world (Cleveland Public Library 2006).

Many academic libraries do have collections of nonbook artifacts due to gifts or the research of faculty members; like museums, these libraries will create exhibits from those archives and allow scholars access to the collection for research. One of the earliest game collections in academic libraries was started in 1945 when Mrs. Samuel Fisher bequeathed a large playing card collection going back to the fifteenth century to Yale University. The collection was enhanced by a significant gift of cards and an endowment by Mrs. Melbert Cary in 1967. At this point the collection was named after Cary, and the Cary Collection of Playing Cards is now one of the finest collections of playing cards in the world (Yale University 2011).

Special collections departments in academic libraries are another home for games. The Browne Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green was founded in 1969. It collects board and card games from the past few centuries for scholarly study (Bowling Green State University 2011). The special collections department in the library of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, features one of the strongest collections in the world on gambling and the casino industry (Schwartz 2011). Founded in 1967, this collection is part of the Gaming Studies Research Center at the library (Chung 2011). In the 1970s, the University of South Florida acquired a collection of children's books and games. It has developed this into a collection of games from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1]

Games as collections have continued to grow in popularity. In 1976, Gordon Law wrote a paper entitled "The Librarianship of Games," which covers description, cataloging, collection development, reference, and instructional services involving educational games (Law 1976). As games continue to become part of library services, libraries will collect, present, and deselect games just as they do with other forms of media.

Many individuals spend a significant amount of money developing game collections. As these collectors decide to get rid of their collections or pass away, some of them will donate their collections to libraries, so the number of game collections in libraries will rise. One excellent example of this is the Cabrinety Collection on the History of Microcomputing in the Stanford University Special Collections. It was started in the late 1990s through a bequest from a twenty-nine-year-old alumnus and is focused on the growth of computer games from the 1970s through the 1990s (Wohlmut 2011).

As colleges add game programming and game design programs and degrees, academic libraries are called upon to provide support for those degrees. Students in these degrees are expected to have familiarity with core collections of games, just as students in a literature program must have familiarity with a body of core literature. Academic libraries are called upon to support the curricula by working with game design faculty members to identify the core games needed for course work and providing students with access to these games. One of the strongest collections, started in 2006, is the undergraduate video game collection at the Uni-

1. Jamie Hansen, personal communication, January 6, 2009.

versity of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (Lankowski and Ward 2009). This collection supports the curriculum for those studying games while it also supports student leisure activities, both with student gaming groups and by allowing individuals to check games out (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 2011).

A significant shift in academic libraries is a focus on providing services to students. Since a growing number of academic publications (both current issues and back volumes) are accessible online through library subscriptions, the physical space of academic libraries is not needed for collections of periodicals. The concept of the "learning commons" has become popular on US campuses in the past decade; it combines traditional library resources and the availability of library staff members with group work spaces, computer access and assistance, and writing assistance to provide one place where students can get assistance with course work. In addition, many of these learning commons also include cafes, social spaces, and other support of the social lives of students, and it is in this role that academic libraries provide access to collections of games.

Games in School Libraries

Many school libraries provide games for classroom use or game activities within the library. One of the first published guides for school libraries, the *Standard Library Organization and Equipment for Secondary Schools of Different Sizes*, put out by the American Library Association in 1920, states that activities such as "story telling and book games" should be used to stimulate interest in reading (ALA 1920, 26). Further evidence of games in school libraries comes from a 1966 document detailing how school libraries can catalog nonbook materials. One page of this document focuses on how to catalog, affix a call number to, mark, and house board games (Westhuis and De Young 1966).

An ERIC document from the Portland (Oregon) Public Schools from 1975 presents a series of treasure hunts, games, and puzzles that a library could use to help patrons learn basic skills of library use (Portland Public Schools 1975). In 1979, two school media specialists wrote an entire book about games that could be used to teach students how to use the library and related services. The book is still useful today as a reference for creating games to teach students about the library, the Dewey Decimal system, and print reference works (Bell and Wiecker 1979).

In 1979, a *School Library Journal* article presented a model that librarians could use to develop a learning game for their own needs. The model takes librarians through the process of developing the theme, goals, and format; designing the equipment, roles of players, and roles; and finally play-testing and debriefing to redevelop the game. The stages in this article are useful today to anyone looking to create a game for a library setting (Tassia 1979).

This theme continued in a 1989 article in *School Library Journal*, in which a librarian developed a *Jeopardy*-inspired game to use in an instruction session. This librarian also detailed

a quiz given using the school's announcement system for National Library week, where students with correct answers were entered into a drawing for prizes (Trotier 1989). An article from 1990 in the *Boston Globe* discusses another school library that uses *Jeopardy*-like games and Dewey Decimal bingo to inspire children (Franklin 1990).

In a 1993 issue of *Book Report*, librarian Nancy Rebore describes a school-wide program where 200 high school students in nineteen classes across the curriculum created board games about environmental issues throughout the semester as a research project. For an Earth Day festival, 100 of these games were selected for participants to enjoy. This project encompassed many traditional information literacy skills in a framework of a game (Rebore 1993).

School media libraries also have collections of games for teachers to borrow and use in their classrooms. These games support the curriculum in a different manner by providing the teachers with the tools needed to effectively teach their lessons. In this case, the collections are designed for the teachers to borrow to use in the classroom. The recent book *Libraries Got Game* (Mayer and Harris 2009) guides school media librarians in selecting recreational board and card games that match to learning standards.

Within the schools, the library can become the center for games alongside other materials. The librarian can select and acquire games for the classrooms to use and can then work with teachers to select the best games and facilitate the gaming experience. In addition, some school librarians are hosting recreational gaming events as a way for students who enjoy games to meet each other. These gaming clubs create a social setting for students who play games at home to come together and talk about something they love. These clubs provide a sense of belonging and confidence to students who previously felt alone.

Summer Reading and Community Programs

One of the more popular uses of games in libraries is in summer reading programs, where games and mechanisms such as points and prizes are used to encourage reading. The use of a reading incentive game to encourage children to read books during the summer is common and effective. In 1984, patrons of the thirty-two libraries of the library system in Westchester, New York, could become a "Time Voyager" with a system-wide summer reading game (Macauley 1984). In 1998, the *New York Times* had an article about a New York State–wide mystery-themed summer reading program in many libraries that included a variety of scavenger hunts, puzzles, and mystery-themed games (Buckvar 1998).

In 1988, librarian Patricia Manning wrote a piece for *School Library Journal* about the problem with the basic summer reading game that awards the person who reads the most books. She points out that this system rewards a few students who are already strong readers, and she proposes a new game structure that uses random drawings for prizes instead of awarding the children who read the most (Manning 1988). The concept of gamification is based on the

idea of applying a game-like scoring system to a nongaming activity, and it has been growing in popularity. The traditional summer reading games in libraries where patrons count the number of books read over the summer is an example of how libraries have been involved in gamification for decades.

Some libraries have branched out from this traditional summer reading program. In 1994, the Multnonomah County Public Library in Oregon created a murder mystery game that was shared through the American Library Association with over 16,000 other libraries (Grossman 1997). A clever library in the United Kingdom in 1997 created a live Clue-inspired game, where a library officer had been "murdered" and members of the public unraveled the mystery through questioning; those with correct answers got a chance to win a copy of the Cluedo game ("Cluedo in Library" 1997). Similar programs have since been run in various US libraries, especially with the popular summer reading program theme of "Get a Clue @ your library" (Collaborative Summer Reading Program 2011). The summer reading program is typically one of the most successful programs at a public library, and reading games are an important part of that program.

One reason that these programs are so successful is that they are well integrated with other library services. They use programming space, take advantage of the collection, and inspire kids to get engaged with the library. While the activities may not be directly related to books, the idea is that the activities inspire an interest in reading. Games are a natural fit as part of these services, as one goal of gaming in libraries is to engage and inspire patrons to become involved with other library resources and services.

Once these children become too old for story time and summer reading programs, many no longer see the value of library services. Youth are less focused on static print and more focused on digital activities; libraries that do not adapt will continue to lose the interest of this user group. Libraries, realizing this, are improving their teen areas and programs and adapting them into game spaces and maker spaces. One of the current popular uses of games in libraries is as a way of drawing in teens. Many teens are passionate about games, and clever libraries use that passion to get teens interested in other library services. In addition, they are finding that those teens who are passionate about gaming can be of incredible value as volunteers to help not only those of younger ages but also adults and seniors through gaming programs. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several articles highlighted libraries creating teen spaces that had games offered alongside movies, music, and books (McCabe 2002).

As companies became able to offer pensions to allow their employees to retire after a certain age, seniors with leisure time turned to the library for activities for decades. One early piece of evidence about gaming for older patrons came from the Cleveland Public Library. In 1943, a German refugee began a "Golden Age" program, working to create programs for the elderly who were seeking activities after retirement, and she created a partnership with the library for gaming programs (Long 1968). Library gaming programs featuring Bridge and

Scrabble have continued to draw in senior citizens over the years. The 1981 book *Intergenera-tional Programming in Libraries* outlines a gaming program for libraries that brings seniors to the library to teach games of their past to youth (Green 1981).

Library Gaming Goes Digital

In the digital age, libraries serve as a portal to digital information literacy. For many, the library was the first place they were able to spend time with a computer in a nonwork and nonschool setting. As more people got their own computers, the libraries became places for computer classes, and they are, even today, one of the few places where members of the public who are not in school can continue learning about their systems for free. In many communities, the library serves as the point for those without Internet access to get online and for those who have Internet access at home to learn how to use the Internet safely and more effectively.

In 1979, the Oakville Public Library in Ontario, Canada, incorporated games into their services as they purchased their first computers for patrons—they brought in four Commo-dore PET computers over a few months. They put together library programs for children, us-ing computer games, realizing that "playing the games, in addition to being fun, apparently goes some way toward teaching motor skills, coordination, logic, and such" (Moses 1983, 13).

One claim that is made about games in libraries is that users who attend gaming programs do other nongaming events in the library. In California, the Menlo Park Library began a gaming program in 1980 where young patrons could learn how to use computers and then sign up for slots where they could use the computer however they liked, including playing games on the computer. This program had an impact on the library in that it "upped the use of the other library facilities considerably" (Sewell 1980, 6).

Some public libraries have built up circulating collections of video games. In a 1982 article, Carol Emmens reported on four libraries that had circulating video game collections. All of the collections discussed in her article were Atari 2600 cartridge collections, and the circulating collections varied from twenty to 105 different titles available for checkout. Most of the libraries charged a fee along with these circulations in order to replace failing cartridges. All of the libraries reported that their programs were very popular, with high de-mand on the items. The advantages of the Atari 2600 cartridge were its durability and ubiq-uity; while there were other video game consoles, Atari had the dominant position in the marketplace (Emmens 1982).

In the 1980s, there were reports of libraries running role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. In Fairfax, Virginia, in 1981, the Fair Oaks Mall branch library partnered with a local game shop to provide Dungeons and Dragons to their patrons (Sager 1981). Another game popular in libraries (and with many librarians and other word lovers) is Scrabble. In 1983, the Hudson Park branch of the New York Public Library started regular Scrabble play in

the early evening on a weekly basis, as reported in the *New York Times* (Fraser 1983). Role-playing games and board games still are part of many library gaming programs.

As libraries began to bring in computers, many of them also brought in computer games. In 1983, the New York Public Library purchased five computers with a grant and put them in some of branches serving the poorest communities. Patrons were able to come in and get comfortable with the computers and try out different computing tools and games ("New York Library System Offers Computer Time" 1986).

In a 1993 article in *School Library Journal*, Gloria Skurzynski wrote about virtual 3D worlds where players put on helmets and enter another world, tying this experience into reading, where people enter another world through their imagination. She talks about ways to experience another life: "When I'm 80, I'd love to program myself to be strong and beautiful with free and fluid motions and limitless horizons" (Skurzynski 1993, 37). *Second Life*, a virtual world in which many librarians have been involved, is a graphical 3-D environment where people can create their own avatar and develop an imaginary world.

Console games have also had a history in libraries. In 1994, the Nepean Public Library in Ottawa, Canada, held a video game trading day, where children under the age of sixteen could bring Nintendo and Sega games to trade ("Weekend Best" 1994). As CD-ROM games became available, many libraries added them to their collections. One example of this is a public library in Tampa that opened a branch of its library in a local science museum. The library had computer games that correlated with the exhibits in the museum (Caning 1995). In an OCLC Worldcat search in August 2008, there were over 9,200 different computer game titles indexed in library catalogs.

Video game circulation in libraries continues to grow as in popularity. For example, the Baltimore County Public Library has over 5,000 video games in its circulating collection ("Libraries Circulating Games" 2011). In addition, many libraries circulate strategy guides for video games, which are books that can help players who are stuck on a game. A large-scale study of public libraries in 2007 showed that about 20 percent of the libraries surveyed circulated games of some type (Nicholson 2009b).

Today libraries have discovered that programs using the Wii can be attractive to seniors and teens alike (Fuoco 2008). Many libraries partner with local senior centers to host Wii bowling tournaments, where seniors form teams, wear matching shirts, and sit as though they are at a bowling alley. These gaming events are not so much about the game of Wii bowling but rather about the overall gaming experience; they allow seniors to relive a social time in their life that was very important to them.

Gaming Becomes "Just Another Library Service"

As interest in gaming has grown in society, the support for gaming in libraries has also grown. Jenny Levine of the ALA has been a leader in bringing large-scale organizational support for

gaming in libraries. Levine is the author of three issues of *Library Technology Reports* about gaming in libraries (Levine 2006, 2008, 2009), and she worked with Scott Nicholson to start the Games and Gaming Members Interest Group for the ALA (which JP Porcaro led into the Games and Gaming Round Table). Levine and Nicholson also started National Gaming Day @ your library, which is an event that has brought about 30,000 patrons to libraries to play games on the same day (Levine 2012); it has now become International Games Day @ your library. Levine says that "2008 may well be remembered as the year in which gaming became just like any other service in libraries" (Levine 2009, 1).

One significant event that pushed gaming forward was a $500,000 grant by the Verizon Foundation to the ALA to fund an exploration of libraries, literacy, and gaming.[2] This grant brought together a team of library gaming experts to create a gaming in libraries toolkit, to hold an annual convention, to run a gaming event at the ALA annual conference, and to fund a number of gaming programs in libraries (ALA 2008). Many of the experts wrote books that provide a breadth of options for librarians interested in bringing in gaming.

Most of the books written on this subject are focused on public libraries. Eli Neiburger wrote one of the first books about gaming in libraries, *Gamers . . . in the Library?!* (2009), which focuses on running video game tournaments in libraries. Beth Gallaway wrote *Game On! Gaming at the Library* (2009), which is a broader exploration of video games in libraries. *Gaming in Libraries*, by Kelly Czarnecki (2010), looks at all sorts of games, including video games, board games, card games, and role-playing games.

Outside of public libraries, Brian Mayer and Chris Harris wrote *Libraries Got Game: Aligned Learning through Modern Board Games* (2009). In this book, the authors focus on board games and how schools can select recreational board games and match those games to the curriculum. Another member of the expert panel, Paul Waelchli (2008), wrote a chapter entitled "Leveling Up: Increasing Information Literacy through Videogame Strategies" for Amy Harris and Scott Rice's *Gaming in Academic Libraries: Collections, Marketing, and Information Literacy*, a book of case studies of gaming in academic libraries.

All of these books were written by library practitioners, so all were focused on specific library settings. Scott Nicholson taught a freely available series of thirty videos on YouTube (2009a) and then wrote a book from the perspective of an academic called *Everyone Plays at the Library: Creating Great Gaming Experiences for All Ages* (Nicholson 2010). Rather than focus on a type of game, library setting, or patron group, this book presented several conceptual models for the library gaming experience. The book was organized around the SNAKS framework, which groups all of gaming into one of five types of experiences: Strategy, Narrative, Action, Knowledge, or Social. Libraries should start by considering the goals for gaming,

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2. The grant was originally for $1,000,000 over two years, but it was ended after one year.

then use those goals to select a type of experience, and then select the game for the library gaming program (Nicholson 2010).

Conclusion and Future Paths for Gaming in Libraries

There are some common themes across different types of games and library services. Games and supporting materials are information containers that can be brought into libraries using the same selection, collection development, and organization techniques as other items in the library. In order to satisfy a variety of patron ages and interests, libraries present a variety of games and gaming services just as they purchase a variety of books and other media. Gaming services in libraries are not designed to replace other library services but rather to complement and draw attention to other library collections and services.

Today, more attention is being paid in the media to recreational gaming, which leads to more attention for libraries and their gaming programs. One issue facing most libraries is that of continued outcome-based assessment for continued funding and improvement. Libraries must consider their goals and then assess outcomes from games and gaming programs in line with those goals. If a library's goals are being met effectively through gaming programs, evidence from the systematic assessment of these programs will be invaluable in addressing concerns about the appropriateness of games in the library. Even though games may be fun, the development, marketing, execution, and assessment of game collections and gaming services must be taken as seriously as any other library service in order to have continued successes (Nicholson 2010).

The important message librarians can take from this article is that gaming in libraries is not a new service. Libraries have supported gaming services through programs and collections for over 150 years. Going forward, libraries will continue to support various types of gaming. Just as libraries provide access to print books, books on tape, books on CD, and now downloadable e-books, libraries provide access to changing forms of gaming, from chess to modern board games, to computer games, to console games, to virtual worlds. The type of game may change, but the goal of meeting the needs of the users remains in the forefront.

There are several future paths for gaming in libraries that stem from extending the conceptual model. In the gaming world, there is a focus on the concept of "serious games," which would include simulations used by the military to train for operations and by doctors to train for surgery. The work category would also include games such as professional sports and professional gambling, where the goal is not the play but to perform effort for money. This represents an untapped area for libraries to explore with gaming. Libraries could be places where patrons can play games to learn new topics or explore in topics in different ways and with members of the community they do not normally engage with.

In regard to the type of service variable, there is a new category that is becoming more popular in libraries: creation. Some public libraries have created maker spaces where patrons

can come in and create digital information through audio and video tools and create physical objects through 3D printing and workshop areas. These maker spaces are playgrounds for the mind in which to create; in fact, the popularity of the maker movement stems from the desire of people to play. Creating a space where patrons can come to the library to create games (which can then become part of the library collection) is an exciting possibility. Creating a game not only allows for the social and mental benefits of game play but also introduces design, creation, art, writing, planning, testing, and other skills. Many of those who play games are easily engaged in the creation of games. Some libraries have already started game-creation programs that are tied into career workshops in order to inspire teenagers to go on to college to pursue programming, art, writing, or design.[3]

Another upcoming area of gaming in libraries is gamification. Gamification is the application of game design elements to a nongame setting (Deterding et al. 2011). Libraries have been using gamification for summer reading programs for some time, but now there are systems that add a game layer to library visits, circulation, and use. As patrons come to the library, they get points and earn badges for special activities ("Running in the Halls" 2012). In the model, this would be a service focused not on leisure or study but on marketing. This type of reward-based game layer may have short-term benefits, but it is very risky in the long term. Research shows that if someone does something for a reward, then their intrinsic motivation to do that thing decreases; therefore, if the reward is later removed, the drive for the person to do that thing is lower than before the rewards were put in place (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001). Nicholson has presented a model for meaningful gamification in which the focus of the game elements is to help the patron find a deeper connection to the library services (Nicholson 2012).

Bringing this concept back to gaming programs, some public libraries are using gaming programs as a reward or a lure for patrons. This is problematic for the same reason—if people come to the library in order to get a reward, then their internal drive to come back to the library without that reward in place dwindles. Gaming in libraries should be used as a service in its own right and on its own merits by ensuring that it is aligned to the goals and outcomes of the library. Libraries that depend on rewards instead of creating engaging services that meet the needs of patrons are at risk as budgets continue to be cut. Rather than relying on rewards, libraries are the reward! Libraries are places for the mind to play, learn, and explore; as games, puzzles, and toys are tools for people to play, learn, and explore, it makes sense that these forms of recreation have value and continue to fit well alongside other library services.

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