



Gaming in Academic Libraries: Collections, Marketing, and Information Literacy

Amy Harris and Scott E. Rice. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2008. 231pp. ISBN: 978-0-8389-8481-9. \$38.00.

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Academic libraries contemplating the incorporation of games for curricular support, marketing strategies or for information literacy initiatives will find the ACRL publication *Gaming in Academic Libraries* a worthy guide. Sixteen college and university libraries of varying sizes, budgets, facilities, and populations discuss academic gaming implementation strategies. The result is a collection of checklists, lessons learned, and approaches for libraries to examine when embarking on similar enterprises. The emphasis is on video and online gaming, with a few examples representing board games and mystery solving, carnival, or scavenger hunt events.

The first section, "Game Collections and Curricular Support," presents the development of five gaming collections supporting credit courses, computer mediated learning experiences, and videogame related industry and career resources. Issues, policies and solutions related to the acquisition, circulation, and cataloging of games and equipment are discussed. Topics include licensing and legal issues, software/hardware selection, the purchasing of new and dead formats, solo versus multiplayer games and related space considerations, storage and security of expensive and/or odd shaped equipment, lending and check-in procedures, lending versus in-house use, and the cataloging of

various formats and equipment. Of special note are approaches to managing game rooms and labs, with discussion addressing staffing, the scheduling of rooms, events programming, equipment maintenance, local area network security, noise issues, and collaborations with IT departments and student gaming clubs. Appendices for these chapters provide an example lending agreement, code of conduct for game rooms, and a sample MARC record.

The “Gaming and Marketing” section contains five gaming efforts implemented to increase student awareness and use of library services and resources. For these libraries, student outreach is the primary justification for gaming - not linking gaming strictly to educational objectives. Attracting new users, promoting libraries as a comfortable and/or lively space, improving student perceptions of library resources, decreasing library anxiety, and promoting the roles of librarians are specific goals of the marketing efforts, and further rationalizes staffing and budget requirements for gaming programs. Strategies are decidedly festive and introduce gaming through the creation of game rooms, during orientations, through self-guided or solo games, and by holding tournaments within the library. The strength of this section is the array of games presented, which includes traditional board games, event-based games (mystery solving theme nights, carnivals, scavenger hunts), hybrid games requiring both physical onsite and online activities, and geocaching (a global positioning system treasure hunt). Tips are provided for scheduling game events, and using social networking sites, email, and student clubs to promote game collections, events, and student registration for events and competitions.

The third section, “Gaming as Information Literacy Tool,” illustrates how six academic libraries applied the learning potential of games to ACRL Information Literacy standards for instructional purposes. Nearly all opted to create Web-based games or hybrid games with a Web-based component, and many did so by using the skills of librarians and IT departments. Due to varying purposes and uses, there are a variety of game styles and designs that address critical thinking skills, selection of appropriate library resources, and navigating a library. The marketing and introduction of these games occurred during orientations, through library websites, via course management systems, and in collaboration with credit courses. This section is a useful manual for game creation as it chronicles game, character, and plot development; programming and software choices; pre-testing procedures; and feedback or survey tools. Admirably, most institutions have offered their files for free to other libraries to customize. The final chapter in this section presents videogame strategies and how they can be applied during teaching sessions for library and research presentations. This approach suggests teaching methods emphasizing active learning, risk taking, immediate feedback, random access points, and the encouragement of inquiry as opposed to a step-by-step approach.

Although this publication provides excellent examples of gaming for curricular support, marketing, and information literacy initiatives, it surprisingly lacks a discussion on assessment. With a few exceptions, most cases merely provide informal or anecdotal feedback or surveys. Despite missing examples of formal assessments, this publication is recommended for any library contemplating the incorporation of academic gaming.

Due to the variety of approaches, budgets, and further resources presented, libraries can easily adapt and customize a gaming approach best suited for their population and instructional needs.

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