

Digital games in the academic library



John Kirriemuir is a researcher in the use of digital games and worlds in education. He is not a librarian, finding it less stressful to marry one instead.

www.silversprite.com



Carnegie Mellon University library provides an against-the-clock shelving game to help students learn LoC classification.

Digital, video and other games, their development and use, are taught and studied in many universities. Game study itself is a multi-disciplinary activity across subject areas including sociology, psychology, the media and culture, economics, education, computer science and IT. This isn't surprising, when you consider that digital and video gaming is a multi-billion pound industry and one of the most popular global entertainment media.

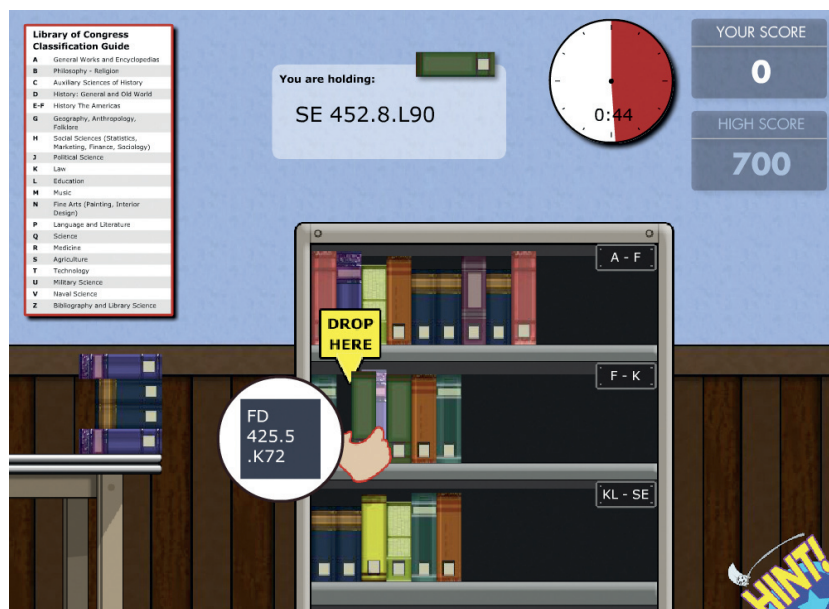
In this piece, we'll point to a few examples of academic game use, mostly from US universities. There are various books pertaining to these uses; the gaming researcher Scott Nicholson has written various articles on implementing games in libraries.¹

Facilities for game study and play

A few university libraries house gaming facilities for academic use. For example, the main library of Miami University (confusingly in Oxford, Ohio) contains a well-equipped gaming lab² for game study courses. Some universities allow any academic to borrow games or consoles. For example, the library of the University of Wisconsin at Madison has nearly 300 video games for loan,³ while the Science and Engineering library⁴ at the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California has 600+ games and 40+ gaming consoles available for loan.

Some universities are collecting and archiving games with a long-term preservation ethos. One of the most impressive collections is in the library of the University of Michigan in the

Below: Shelve the books as quick as you can!



Gaming

The latest news on games in libraries

pretty city of Ann Arbor, where the Computer and Video Game Archive⁵ contains titles from the 1970s to the current console generation. In Japan, Meiji University is building the worlds largest library⁶ of manga, anime and video games.

Encouraging library resource use

Games can be used to encourage library resource use, of which there's an excellent UK example. Andrew Walsh of the University of Huddersfield outlines Lemontree, a passive collect-and-progress game developed by Running In The Halls⁷ for the university library.

'Lemontree is aimed at all students, but particularly at people that come into the library but don't use our information resources (print books, online articles, etc.) as much as they should.

'We've shown a correlation between the use of books and e-resources and academic achievement. Therefore, our "gamification" is quite targeted and has a serious reason behind it – aiming at low users of resources and encouraging positive behaviour from them that could make a difference to their degree. For example, you can get points/ badges for coming into the library, but you'll only get the full range of badges (or have a chance of getting on a leaderboard) if you borrow a good range of books and login to electronic resources.

'Once registered, we poll various library systems to look for activity from Lemontree users and push this data out to Lemontree, which then generates points, badges and so forth, so only data from registered users goes to the game. Key achievements get pushed to Facebook; to see everyday activity they need to visit the website.⁸ Some activity can also be carried out within Lemontree

itself, such as leaving comments or reviews on books, or building social networks within the game.'

Gaming in information and library literacy

Since PCs started appearing in universities, various game-based systems to teach information literacy have been developed, especially in the USA. For example, Fletcher State library at Arizona University developed a game⁹ to simulate the complex processes of selecting, using and evaluating multiple sources of information within a library setting.

Other game-based training systems can be played by anyone online. The University of Illinois at Chicago developed a game-based course¹⁰ to introduce online searching. The University of Washington also provides an online game, to teach students how to correctly format APA or MLA citations.¹¹ Carnegie Mellon University library provides an against-the-clock shelving game¹² to help students learn LoC classification (rounds three and upwards are high pressure, even for librarians). The same library offers 'I'll get it',¹³ a game where you play a librarian trying to fulfil students information resource needs before they get angry and leave.

Shout-out: International Games Day

Applicable to all libraries, the 2012 International Games Day @ Your Library takes place on Saturday 3 November. This is a global initiative of the American Library Association 'to reconnect communities through their libraries around the educational, recreational, and social value of all types of games'. As of mid-August, nearly 600 libraries have signed up for gaming activities and tournaments. The website¹⁴ provides various resources and further information for participants. [I]

References

- [1 http://is.gd/ScottN](http://is.gd/ScottN)
- [2 http://is.gd/GamingLab](http://is.gd/GamingLab)
- [3 http://is.gd/WisconsinGames](http://is.gd/WisconsinGames)
- [4 http://is.gd/SantaCruzGames](http://is.gd/SantaCruzGames)
- [5 http://is.gd/Michigan](http://is.gd/Michigan)
- [6 http://is.gd/Manga](http://is.gd/Manga)
- [7 http://rith.co.uk](http://rith.co.uk)
- [8 http://is.gd/LemonTree](http://is.gd/LemonTree)
- [9 http://is.gd/Fletcher](http://is.gd/Fletcher)
- [10 http://is.gd/Chicago](http://is.gd/Chicago)
- [11 http://is.gd/Citation](http://is.gd/Citation)
- [12 http://is.gd/Shelving](http://is.gd/Shelving)
- [13 http://is.gd/GetIt](http://is.gd/GetIt)
- [14 http://ngd.ala.org/](http://ngd.ala.org/)