GAMING IN THE LIBRARY

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League of Librarian Gamers
www.facebook.com/ groups/MTGLibrarians

This is a closed social group on Facebook. Easy to join, this group is mostly comprised of young adult and adult services librarians in the United States. The group allows for interaction with fellow librarians regarding gaming of all types and provides a forum for learning how to build a game collection, how to run events, and more. The League of Librarian Gamers also has a list of nearly every board game publisher and the typical response of those publishers to donation requests. As Daley (2013) states, "Sharing creates a win-win-win situation… By sharing with other school librarians, we improve our own and others' school library programs" (p. 76).

Libraries are vital public spaces which benefit from a variety of collections. While video games may be a relative newcomer, board games have had a place in libraries since at least 1933 ("Broadening our definition," 2008, p. 7) and promote "collaboration, inquiry, and critical thinking" (Crews, 2011, p. 10). For a new generation intent on having fun while learning, games can be a vital resource to improve social skills, problem solving, and leadership development ("Broadening the audience," 2008, p. 28). Here are ten online resources to help librarians build a game collection, collaborate with other librarians, start a game night, or just learn more about how games can contribute to the mission of the library.

Image from pixabay.com

Colorado Department of Education: Gaming in Libraries
www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/teengamingpack

This informative handout provides guidance for both school and public libraries looking to implement gaming activities and events into their programming. It includes a handy startup guide with tips for budgeting, purchasing, and maintaining a video game collection (Colorado Department of Education, 2014, pp. 4-5), as well as marketing and promotional ideas and staffing recommendations. The handout also includes a list of sample gaming events that libraries can consider adopting, with a focus on programming events that will appeal to patrons of all ages. Additionally, this resource provides libraries with a background of scholarly research that can emphasize and reinforce the benefits of employing games as an educational tool.

Web Junction
www.webjunction.org

WebJunction is a project of the Online Computer Learning Center (OCLC), and has been an online community and resource for librarians since its inception in 2003. Funded through the IMLS and the Gates Foundation, the site offers webinars, training, and resources on a huge variety of subjects related to librarianship, including gaming and games. Librarians and library workers (including volunteers!) can create a free account to access dozens of self-paced courses, live training events, and the webinar archive. Among the offerings are the six-part article series Board in the Library and a webinar, the Golden Age of Gaming. From gaming program ideas to safety tips, WebJunction is a vital and useful online learning community. The "positive and supportive environment" (Mason, 2009, p. 704) of the site supports the continuous learning that librarians need to best assist their patrons' changing information
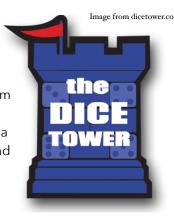
Board Game Geek
www.boardgamegeek.com

Board Game Geek, or BGG, is the most comprehensive board game database that exists on the internet. The information on the site is freely provided by the community users, whom offer not only statistical data but publishing, review, and purchasing information. The site can seem intimidating at first, but a quick orientation or user search will provide a significant amount of information. In regards to libraries, the book Libraries Got Game: Aligned Learning Through Modern Board Games (Mayer & Harris, 2010), BGG can also provide patrons a chance to post information and read about the games they enjoy, as well as offer feedback to other users through reviews, ratings, and tags (p. 28). It is only through user information and updates that BGG can continue to offer the best database.

Games in Libraries
www.gamesinlibraries.org

Scott Nicholson, a professor at Syracuse's iSchool and the LIS Program Director, has a blog about gaming in libraries that is a highly informative resource with a lot of nice extras. He has a course on the subject in the form of a collection of YouTube videos that covers all kinds of games and answers questions on how it relates to libraries. He also had a podcast on the subject that he links from his blog. Most importantly, he has a collection of information that includes a book and scholarly articles. This would be a great resource for people trying to convince other professionals to add games to their library's collection and need to find some "proof" that it is a good idea and more than a passing fad.

The Dice Tower
www.thedicetower.com

A quintessential resource for all things board games, The Dice Tower was founded ten years ago by Tom Vasel. Tom and his crew have created "a network of video and audio podcasts dedicated to promoting board and card games" (Dice Tower, 2015) that is every bit as entertaining as they are informative. The site also features a series of "Top 10" and "Top 100" board game lists, as well as convention coverage and an annual "Dice Tower Awards" list. The Dice Tower's extensive database allows users to search for game reviews based on game title, release date, review score, and reviewer name, making it a gold mine of knowledge for librarians seeking information on particular board games. Dice Tower also provides helpful introductory video tutorials that explain board game basics and terminology.

Internet Arcade
www.archive.org/details/
internetarcade

The Internet Arcade is an off-shoot of the Internet Archive, originally created by Brewster Kahle. Through the efforts of Jason Scott, a programmer at archive.org, the site was able to create a software environment that could play over 900 original arcade titles from the 70's and 80's directly in a web browser, allowing even the most basic computer to emulate these games. This software isn't just for gaming, it has been modified to run multiple historical operating systems as well (Scott, 2014). For a library on a budget, and with the rise of vintage and retro gaming amongst both young and old, having the ability to experience these games for free in a near-perfect emulated environment is the best possible solution for archiving these fantastic gems.

Metacritic
www.metacritic.com

Metacritic is a review aggregator for movies, music, T.V. shows, and games, but is most well known for its reviews of video games. Metacritic takes the reviews of a variety of professional reviewers and combines them into one averaged number - its "metascore" - with more weight being given to more well-known critics (Metacritic, n.d.). Additionally, colors are employed (green, yellow, and red) to give a visual cue for quick rating browsing. Metacritic also allows for user reviews and scores, but they are often quite polarized and not utilized to create the Metascore. This is a great way to get some good game review information, as blurbs from multiple reviewers, professionals and users alike, are available on each game's page. Developers, genre, and ESRB ratings are also available, as well as the release date and available gaming platforms.

Metacritic is also beneficial as it allows you to see what's popular by checking the "Top Games by Metascore" on the homepage. The service breaks game reviews down by platform (PC/Xbox One/ Playstation 4/etc.), since it can affect gameplay. Additionally, the popular PC game distribution platform, Steam, publishes each game's Metascore directly on the game's page in their store so that you can see professional reviews at a glance.

Image from gamerdad.com

Gamer Dad
www.gamerdad.com

Gamer Dad is a blog run by Andrew Bub, who is a journalist and father, turned video game and movie critic for children. His goal is to bring in the perspective of parents, and also to advocate for video games for children as a fun educational tool. His perspective is that too often ESRB ratings are oversimplified, and that video games are a valuable and misunderstood medium. Timely new game reviews go into great detail to help parents understand what games their child is or might be playing. This would be a wonderful site to make use of when looking for games for younger patrons, or even to give to parents who express concerns about video gaming and their children. Named in the School Library Journal as "one of the most respected gaming bloggers" (Schwarzwalder, 2008, p. 31), Bub was a keynote speaker at the ALA TechSource conference in 2008, and has been featured in numerous popular publications.

Minecraft in Your Library
www. tln.lib.mi.us/committee/
tech-comm/files/docs/minecraft/
minecraft-in-your-library-TLN-
Tech-Comm.pdf

"Minecraft in Your Library" is a great introduction explaining the basics of the ever-popular Minecraft and how libraries can set it up. Minecraft brings people to the library with its built-in fan base and can increase the reputation of the library's technology department. While that is a good start, library literature is full of exciting ideas including designing libraries both collaboratively with young patrons (Cilauro, 2015), librarians creating a virtual version of their own library on a server they provide to their patrons (Barack, 2013), and creating a Minecraft Olympics for patrons to compete in as part of a summer reading program (Gauquier & Schneider, 2013). There is a huge variety of things libraries can do with Minecraft and The Library Network's resource is a good instructional on how to get there.

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