

Proceedings of the 4th Research Support Games Day (RSGD #4).

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Research Support Games Day #4: Notes

This is the agenda and communal notes document for Research Support Games Day #4. All attendees are welcome to contribute to these notes, which will be shared after the event. Each of the planned sessions has a separate section. There are also sections at the end for other notes and comments, and for leaving any feedback about the event.

Don't forget to check out our list of games and related resources, held on Figshare:

<https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.16652701>. If you know of something that is missing from our list, let us know using the "Other Comments" section below or by emailing g.r.bray@rgu.ac.uk.

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Schedule

Here's a link to the schedule for the event: <https://tinyurl.com/rsgd4-schedule>

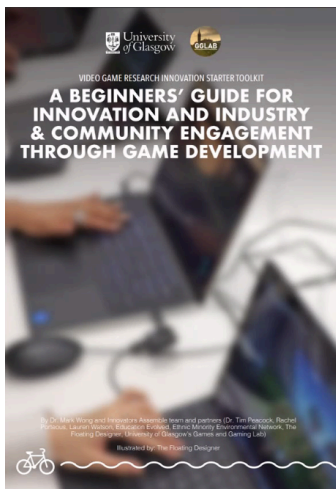
Sessions

Welcome

- Talk recordings and a copy of the shared notes document (including notes arising from the game jams) will be shared after the event.
 - There is a busy agenda, so we may need to follow up on any unanswered questions or unconcluded discussions after the event.
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Talk 1: Mark Wong (University of Glasgow) on *SEvEN: Seven Voices, One Future*

- Game link = <https://www.educationevolvedltd.com/seven>
- Recording of the talk = https://mediaspace.gla.ac.uk/media/SEvENA+Seven+Voices%2C+One+Future/1_b47q1tnh
- For this game a realistic representation of Scotland and the people was important.
- Expertise was sought from domain experts.
- The project published a toolkit that may provide some useful tips: <https://eprints.gla.ac.uk/305795/>



- Games may help to reframe people's perspectives on a real-world situation/concept.
- Game development projects can encourage diverse stakeholders to work together, helping stakeholders to understand each others' values and work towards establishing shared values.
- It was important to celebrate success with the partners when the game received e.g. nominations for awards or recognition from external bodies like the Scottish Government.
- Shout-out to the University of Glasgow's "Games and Gaming Lab" group, which is open to people from beyond Glasgow as well:
<https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/arts/research/artslab/labsandthemes/ourlabs/gamesandgaming/>
- QUESTION: How long did it take you to develop the game? Did you test it before launching it?
 - The game was developed between Sept 2022-May2023. Yes there was some testing.
- QUESTION: How many FTE were working on this?
 - Technical development was undertaken by the tech company partner, so would likely have been full-time work on their side. The academic partner was responsible for organising workshops and public events to get input and test the game, which was done alongside routine academic workload.
- QUESTION: What are the goals of the game? Are you trying to "win" something?
 - The game is more of an immersive experience featuring various "mini games". The mini games have different goals relating to the learning topic at that point in the playthrough, e.g. collecting solar panels. Players aim to gain points against the clock in each mini game.
- QUESTION: You mentioned wanting to collaborate with educational institutions. I'd love to hear more about this - I could imagine this being a game used as part of the Scottish curriculum. Do you have any concrete plans for this kind of collaboration at all?
 - The next step is that an intern will develop additional materials like lesson plans, and facilitator plans, that could be used for an education setting.
 - If anyone is interested in collaborating or following up please get in touch with Mark Wong directly. <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/staff/markwong/>
- QUESTION: Have you given much thought to digital preservation, ensuring long-term access to and playability of the game?

- There are arrangements in place for hosting and updating. Looking at commercial options for future solutions to this..
 - COMMENT: 'It looks amazing by the way, beautiful'
-

Talk 2: Jane Secker and Chris Morrison (UK Copyright Literacy) on *The Publishing Trap v2.1: Supporting Open Educational Practices*

- Game link (v2.1) = <https://copyrightliteracy.org/resources/the-publishing-trap/the-publishing-trap-online/>
- Game link (v1) = <https://copyrightliteracy.org/resources/the-publishing-trap/the-publishing-trap-resources/>
- Recording of the talk = https://mediaspace.gla.ac.uk/media/The+Publishing+Trap+v2.1/1_qonjptn2
- Chris and Jane created the UK Copyright Literacy platform (<https://copyrightliteracy.org/>) to help achieve their goal of making copyright more engaging, empowering and fun.
- The team take a playful approach to copyright to make it more attractive.
- They also have a podcast, *Copyright Waffle*, with the catchphrase, "It's not legal advice, but it'll have to suffice" (<https://copyrightliteracy.org/resources/copyright-waffle/>).
- The first game they developed was the Copyright: the Card Game (<https://copyrightliteracy.org/resources/copyright-the-card-game/>). The Publishing Trap was a later development, originally created as a boardgame for in-person play. The second version was in development, again focused on in-person play, when COVID-19 happened. It then had to adapt into an online version. The latest version, 2.1, reflects the return to in-person teaching and a desire for hybrid events.
- The game itself is a roleplaying game; players take on one of four characters and are encouraged to make decisions as those characters.
- The online version uses interactive features of Powerpoint presentations to guide the players' journey through the game.
- With the latest version and some return to in person teaching, the Powerpoint still forms the basis of the gameplay experience; however, a physical board and paper forms have been used with good effect to capture comments at recent events.

- Jane and Chris' have published an article about their games:
<https://www.journalofplayinadulthood.org.uk/article/id/1034/>
 - Some other recommended things:
 - Recommended event: <https://playfullearningassoc.co.uk/conference/>
 - A useful group to join if interested in copyright and online learning
<https://www.alt.ac.uk/groups/special-interest-groups/copyright-and-online-learning-sig>
 - QUESTION: What duration do you recommend running the game for?
 - Typically two hours. Could manage a shorter version in one hour.
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Mini Game Jams

Game Jam Instructions

Each group will have 40 minutes to produce a rough game proposal for their chosen topic. We recommend structuring your discussions as follows (based on materials by Stephanie (Charley) Farley at the University of Edinburgh - <https://open.ed.ac.uk/run-your-own-board-game-jam/>):

1. (10 minutes) What are the main learning points that the game will cover?

What is it you want the players to learn? What should be their key takeaways after the game has finished? Try to shortlist no more than three points that the game will cover, as it will be difficult to cover too many in this mini game jam.

2. (5 minutes) What is the game's premise or theme?

What sort of activity are the players going to be doing? For example, they might be exploring something, going on a quest or adventure, making something (e.g. in a lab or factory), trading or collecting things, racing, or solving a mystery or puzzle.

3. (5 minutes) Does the game have a setting? If so, what is it?

Is the game abstract and without context, or is it set in a particular time and/or place? For example, a modern university campus, a post-apocalyptic Earth, a spooky office, a scholar's library in 1750s Germany, etc.

4. (15 minutes) What will gameplay look like? How does the gameplay support your learning points?

How will the players learn what you want them to learn during play?

Will the game be for solo play or for multiple players? If multiple, will it be co-operative (where the players work together to achieve an outcome) or competitive (where they are playing against each other to be the winner)?

Will the game be physical or digital?

What will be the two main mechanics that affect gameplay? For example:

- *Rolling dice*
- *Drawing / playing / managing a hand of cards*
- *Placing tokens onto a board, or moving tokens around a board*
- *Swapping cards/tokens with other players*
- *Making sets of cards/tokens, or identifying matching pairs of things*
- *Creating during play (e.g. building something out of LEGO, or placing tiles to create a game-board)*
- *Looking in various locations or exploring an environment (e.g. a video game set in a university campus, or an escape room with clues/puzzles in different areas)*
- *Gathering clues or evidence before making a deduction*
- *Answering questions*
- *Making decisions / choosing from a range of options*
- *Roleplaying (i.e. pretending to be a character in the game)*

5. (5 minutes) How does the game end?

How long do you want gameplay to last? What happens to cause the game to end?

Results of the Game Jams

[Note: the number of attendees who were able to stay for the game jams meant that only nine of the potential twenty-four groups actually ran. This is why the group numbers in the list below do not form a complete sequence.]

General Feedback

- Attendees noted how much they enjoyed these sessions. There were many positive comments, for example:
 - “I would play this 100%”
 - “Thanks everyone, really fun!”
 - “I enjoyed it a lot. So much creativity. Thanks to the hosts!”

GROUP 03: Determining whether a publisher is trustworthy

- The game teaches people about how predatory publishers behave (what to look out for), and how to consider important aspects when choosing a publisher.
- The game is a roleplaying murder mystery, where the “murderer” is the predatory publisher (inspired by games like *Cluedo* and *Werewolf*).
- The game is set at a university campus / academic publisher.
- Gameplay and learning takes the form of asking questions, and reading information on physical or virtual cards.
- The game ends once all information on the cards has been released and everyone has made their final guess (in sealed envelopes). Everyone’s envelopes are then opened, followed by the final envelope with the actual solution. Anyone who guessed correctly is a winner (can be more than one winner).

GROUP 05: Documenting practice research (exhibitions, artworks, etc.)

- The game teaches people about reflective writing, and how to preserve and document practice (both during and after).
- The game is focused on making something - perhaps a collage, or a map (geographical or mind map), a weaving of different threads coming together, or a series of mini-games that go into a bigger collage at the end. (The rest of the game idea is based on a collage.)
- Players can customise the setting they want to use for the game, choosing from either a predetermined setting or using their own materials.
 - If using a predetermined setting (e.g. a beach or an abandoned factory), the player gathers various objects (washed-up or lying around) that represent different aspects of research.
 - If using their own setting, the player uploads their own materials and then could explore these in a theme of their choosing.
- The game is intended for solo play. Aiming to help the player reflect on their process, the gameplay and learning take the form of bringing separate components together, with the act of selecting something for the collage itself being reflective. The end result is a bigger piece, similar to the thesis process.
- There are a predetermined number of slots for collage items and the game moves to the final stage once all slots are filled. The player has the option to add more slots at the beginning. The final stage involves a prompt for the player to reflect on the collage as a whole; this is timed.

GROUP 07: Encouraging engagement with our information system (e.g. research information system or repository)

- The game teaches people how to create a full research profile on the repository. It aims to make them aware of the reasons/benefits for adding outputs to the repository and making them open access, beyond just the REF or other regulations. It also aims to educate people about the consequences of not engaging with the system, e.g. extra admin, missed funding opportunities, missed potential citations, non-compliance with REF.
- The game might focus on collecting cards that match different stages or systems (e.g. ORCID, CRIS...). Alternatively, it might be a “choose your own adventure” game, with the option for players to get things right or wrong in order to understand the consequences of engaging (or not) with the repository. Alternatively, the game might take the form of bingo, where full house represents a complete research profile. (The rest of the game idea is based on bingo.)
- The game is fully immersive, as it is based on the researcher’s own profile.
- One factor in determining the nature of the game is that it should be something that people can receive as an email link, because some of the target audience don’t always engage face-to-face; this will also help to catch new-starters as it could be emailed to them as part of their induction. However, while able to be undertaken as a solo game (either by the player themselves, or as part of an online/in-person induction session), there is also the option for it to be played with a group of players in a more general workshop environment. It is something that the same person could play multiple times over their career.
- Gameplay takes the form of conventional bingo, except players cannot mark something off on the board if they haven’t yet engaged with that item on their actual profile. The player receives a prize / digital certificate / digital badge or similar when they return a “full house”. There is also potential for having different boards for different topics, e.g. REF, compliance or funding.
- Game sessions should take no more than 1 hour, ideally just 10-15 minutes. The game is meant to be a quick and light-touch activity, because people are busy.

GROUP 12: Tracking research impact

- The game teaches people about mapping out different pathways to impact, finding stakeholders, building relationships and developing skills. The game also teaches people about different examples for what impact might be (introducing researchers who are new to REF), and about monitoring and evaluating impact (not a linear process and one that takes a long time).
- The game is based on the idea of a non-linear quest or adventure, in which players navigate through different pathways to achieve impactful outcomes. (Inspired by “choose your own adventure” games, *Snakes and Ladders*, and *Dungeons and Dragons*.)
- The game might have a realistic setting, starting at a university and then moving outside into the “real world”, to represent the idea of impact beyond academia. Alternatively, the game might have a fantasy setting, with the player moving between different “worlds” of impact, with the option to jump between impact worlds if they have gained certain skill tokens, etc.
- Gameplay and learning take the form of objective cards (e.g. “Achieve Social Media Engagement”, “Instigate Policy Change”, “Change Public Opinion”, etc.):
 - Each player has a secret personal objective card. Although this is kept hidden from other players, there is a trade-off, in that the player still needs to work collaboratively with the rest of their team in order to fulfil their own objective.
 - Additionally, the players also have a shared team objective card, which all players can see and everyone is aiming to complete together.
 - Completing an objective requires a number of tokens:
 - Person tokens represent public engagement
 - Money tokens represent grants or stipends
 - Lightbulb tokens represent skills learned
- Players are also roleplaying, selecting from a range of premade researcher characters who have different skill sets (e.g. one character might have great social media skills, but relatively few research outputs).
- Players also choose the type of impact they want to explore at the start of the game, e.g. cultural, policy, legal, public awareness, health/medical, etc.
- The game is intended for 2 to 6 players and should take 30-45 minutes. The aim is to achieve your team objective card (with added individual objective cards).

GROUP 13: Tracking research impact

- The game teaches people that impact is about the change being made, not about the activity being done, and that it is about depth as well as reach. The game also aims to teach people that impact is an intentional (not accidental), embedded research activity, and that they should capture evidence of impact at the time. Further, the game aims to raise awareness that impact isn't just about the REF - it is actually part of the evaluation of research, and will be beneficial to the researcher and their career.
- The game focuses on tracking impact - engagement first, impact later. It could be structured around a quest or task involving a three-stage process: planning, collecting, using. The premise might be based on the idea of a journey or destination, and designing the bags that you take with you.
- The game's setting could be focused on saving something (e.g. a habitat), or going on holiday with Ryanair (though this might not be particularly environmentally-friendly), or some sort of fantasy "Quest for the Sword", or some other motivation chosen by the player. Another potential idea is that it could be focused on a river, buying boats on one side, retrieving cargo (i.e. potential impact) on the other, then returning to the starting side to get the benefit/profit/resources (i.e. actual impact).
- The game is intended for two players, representing two different parties: one player represents the academic project and the other player represents the beneficiaries - they both want to work together to provide evidence of impact, but the game is about whether the academic side has planned for this sufficiently.
- Gameplay takes the form of three quick acts - planning your bags, filling them with stuff, using the stuff to show impact. This can then be repeated so that players can learn from the previous journey. There might also be some random aspects - perhaps cards - that need to emphasise the latter points of the learning objectives: impact should be intentional and embedded, and that it isn't just about REF; it's all part of the same journey, not separate from other parts of research. Also competing interests for both parties.
- The basic game mechanics are:
 - "Buying" a certain kind of "container" to hold the evidence the academic thinks will be most valuable;
 - Beneficiaries "filling" the containers;
 - Academics getting the filled containers back.
- The game is intended to be played over X number of rounds (non-competitively) before leading into a discussion to reinforce the learning points.

GROUP 15: Understanding options for Open Access (e.g. document versions and publisher terminology)

- **“Open Access Arcana” / “Open Access Alchemy”**
- The game teaches players about several specific things: Open Access “types” (Gold, Green, etc.); licence types (BY, NC, ND, etc.); and document versions (VoR, AAM, etc.).
- The game is focused on building a deck of cards based on licence, publisher, OA type, etc., playing these to overcome obstacles (e.g. getting funding, choosing where to submit), and then eventually winning the game by e.g. making a “complete deck”, “securing funding”, “academic success” or “high readership”.
- The game is set in a “Wizard University”, where mystical academics build their proposals (i.e. their card decks), selecting different options for how to proceed. These choices determine their class of wizardry and eventually contribute to how successful their research is.
- Gameplay is card-based with some dice rolling. Players select different classes of cards to create a complete deck and then face their wizarding opponents in rounds of “academic combat”:
 - Players roll a die to determine the amount they can afford to spend on APCs (i.e. how many magic coins they have). They then use this to purchase the following:
 - Choose a class (fire/ice/chaos magic): Are you looking to reuse your thesis? Republish with a different publisher? Share your work for a third-party project or for AI purposes? Use it for a clinical trial?
 - Choose a tool (wand/staff/orb/no tool): This is your OA type (green, gold, diamond). Perhaps “no tool” is subscription-only?
 - Enhance your tool (as above, but slightly different): This is a subtype, allowing users to learn about licences.
 - Choose a spell source (scroll/tome/incantation): This is the version of the document that is made OA.
 - Choose a target (goblin/orc/wraith): This is your publisher - a well-known or more obscure one? Published by your institution? Self-published?
 - “Trial by academia” - this is where players compare their results and defend their choices. Is each player able to republish, or does their spell fail?
 - Wild cards! Random events that change the circumstances, e.g.:

- “Your institution has implemented a Rights Retention Strategy / new Read and Publish deals” - makes some wizards stronger/weaker
- “Your funding situation has changed / Your funder has withdrawn their block grant. Please discard cards up to value X” - forces players to choose other cards/licences and learn about their restrictions
- In the final round, the scoring system is revealed. Players total up their points to compare how “successful” they were at achieving their goals.

GROUP 18: Using bibliometrics responsibly

- The game teaches players (aimed at early career researchers) about how bibliometrics work within their particular area of academia. It also shows them how to be ethical in their use of bibliometrics, needing to know how people gamify systems and how to recognise when someone is gaming the system (e.g. through self-citations). The game helps players to develop knowledge of DORA and the Leiden Manifesto, and to understand how these can relate to their own research behaviours.
- The game takes the form of a *Dungeons and Dragons*-style quest, set at a conference or university.
- During gameplay, players choose a character to roleplay (e.g. researcher / research admin / early career researcher / etc.) and go on an adventure that requires them to make various decisions and encounter various challenges/obstacles. Some ideas for topics that would form the basis of quests/decisions/encounters:
 - Getting published
 - Getting a job promotion
 - Knowledge exchange and impact
 - Getting funding
 - Beefing up your research track record
 - Collaboration
 - Finding a collaborator? Maybe required to pick between several options - what might influence the decision? Perhaps SciVal / Scopus output; how to link to responsible metrics? Highest citations? Highest number of collaborators?
 - Where you’ve published - citations, impact

- How to spot a predatory journal?
- Copyright / who owns your work?
- Zombie journals
- PubPeer, ThinkCheckSubmit
- Non-player character helpers that might be met along the way, to help improve the research track record (e.g. scholarly communications teams)
- Pitfalls - predatory publishers; paper mills
- Gaining research integrity

GROUP 20: Going through an ethics approval process

- **“A Bureaucratic Waste of Time”**
- The game teaches players to think about what they want to learn from their research and what they want to do with the data that they collect. It aims to get players to think about ethics early in the process and to plan ahead. It also aims to help players understand why they need ethical approval - and that it is not a “bureaucratic waste of time”!
 - Doing it makes the researcher’s life better, but if the researcher skips sections then it won’t be any good.
 - If a researcher skips data processes, it leaves them with nothing but notes and good intentions. Data are the building blocks of what the researcher is doing and why they’ve been funded. Data are the researcher’s resources and currency.
 - Information becomes research data a long time before the researcher is ready to publish.
 - Getting ethics approval helps participants and the researcher to avoid harm and helps to mitigate risk.
- The game is a boardgame focused around the concepts of risk and risk-mitigation, alongside chance cards. It takes players through an ethics journey - ideally a smooth journey through to publication.
- The game might not have a specific setting, or perhaps might be set in a committee meeting, going through agenda items.
- Gameplay doesn’t start until some small and seemingly arbitrary task has first been completed (e.g. can’t start until someone rolls a 6 on a die, or guesses a secret word, or successfully navigates some

sort of word association, etc.) - something to waste a small amount of time at the beginning. (Inspired by e.g. *Taboo* and *Articulate*). Perhaps the result of this is shown to have significance later in the game.

- The game is co-operative, rather than competitive. Perhaps there is a mechanism for players to make deals with each other? The more the player collaborates, the better the outcome. Perhaps different players represent different characters - e.g. ethics committee member, early career researcher, senior clinician, data manager, research participant. It is inspired by *Pandemic*, with the tone being that it is the players trying to beat the game. Alternatively, the game could perhaps be mixed co-operative and competitive, e.g. with players having secret identities and one player taking the role of “secret malefactor”. Perhaps the dealer knows more? Issues with balance of power?
- The game involves some sort of resource, with players starting with e.g. 100 points that are to be spent on various things. A data management plan will cost a lot of points early on, but will also be worth more at a later stage.
- Gameplay is otherwise card-based:
 - “Situation” cards - typically dangerous, risky, potentially risky ethics process situations.
 - Go around the group to come up with help, mitigations or actions.
 - Perhaps some form of “dealer” mitigations could be thrown in, to make the situation easier/harder to resolve.
 - Cards would have situations from all stages in the ethics process (pre-approval up to and beyond the end of the study / data publication).
 - Sequential cards - don’t have to be played in order, but the group do need to “win” a card from each stage of the process, e.g. pre-approval, ethics board, data collection, data sharing
 - Wildcards, e.g. some sort of utter disaster post-publication; how do you resolve it?
- The game ends when the group have won a card from each stage. Perhaps colour-coded? Build up a set of successfully-solved situations? Approximately five levels, with five minutes per level.

GROUP 23: Publishing/depositing FAIR data

- The game teaches players about best practices for open research. In particular, it focuses on helping people to realise that they need to plan things in advance, and that it is not just about putting something into a repository, but rather about going through a process of curation/checking.
- The game is focused on the idea of putting people into a situation where they have to try solving a problem with bad/incomplete documentation, in order to demonstrate the importance of good documentation. (e.g. using LEGO as an example - some have full instructions, some don't).
- The game idea is inspired by *Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes*, where each player has only partial information and they have to work together to win the game. An audience member also mentioned the card game *Mao* as having a similar idea of players having incomplete information. Also influenced by escape rooms as a game format.
- Gameplay could involve:
 - Showing bad examples
 - Showing good examples (e.g. consent forms, README files)
 - Building a "recipe" for good research (topic or research question)
 - Emphasising that people need context to fully understand things (and understanding why there are gaps)
 - Presenting players with a research claim. Do they trust it? Why?
 - Getting players to think about how replicable they want their project to be.
 - Presenting players with a lot of data and getting them to find the one relevant part that they need.
 - Getting players to think about what research data are, what they are used for and why.
 - Helping players to understand various acronyms.
- The game could be pitched to players as needing to do something quickly / in a certain amount of time - e.g. gathering information (is it accurate? Is it trustworthy? What instruments/equipment do you need?)
- Potential challenges of turning something digital (i.e. data management) into a physical, playable form. Perhaps have people located in different physical spaces, with access to different things? Perhaps use a computer with a locked-down browser? What space is available for running this sort of thing? Having physical media (floppy disks) could help to create a sense of fun and make people interested.

- Game audience should be considered:
 - Graduate students? Early career researchers? Experienced researchers?
 - Tailor the game for specific disciplines?
 - How relevant is the game for different departments?
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Close

- Many thanks to our speakers and attendees, in particular everyone who contributed to the mini game jams.
 - We hope to do another event at some point in future. If you are interested in presenting or helping to host, please let us know: g.r.bray@rgu.ac.uk ; valerie.mccutcheon@glasgow.ac.uk
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Other Comments and Feedback

- [None recorded]