Digital Media, Society, and Culture

Angus A. A. Mol

AMS2019

- T.L. van der Linden Ah… The Memories
- Iman and Caressa ask Is Fake News Conquering the World?
- Zeynep On Podcasts
- Liona on The Joker: A Story of Controversy
  - See also Alejandra on From Joker, With Love
- Social Games
  - Bernardo on Gaming Friends in a Fight Against Solitude
  - Petra on Socializing in Online Games
  - Previously by Kevin (in DH2019): My Life Through Video Games
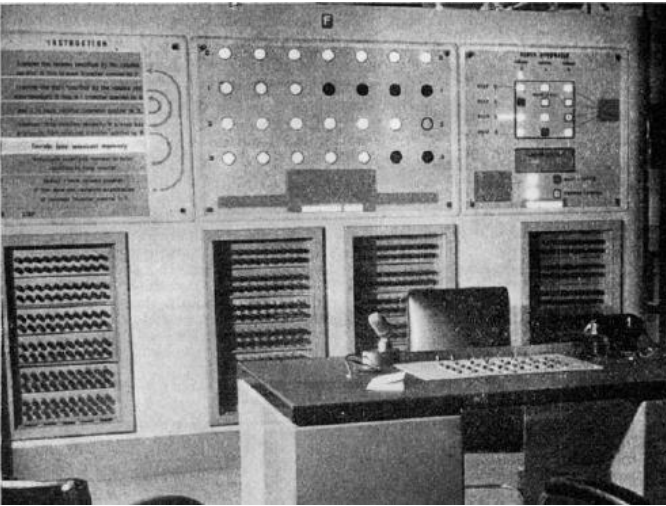
DH2019

- Hiba on [All is Fair in Love and Cookies](#)
- Philippe on a [Da Vinci Robot](#)
- Sanem on [What Color Are Bananas?](#)
- Connor has been [Playing with Social Media](#)
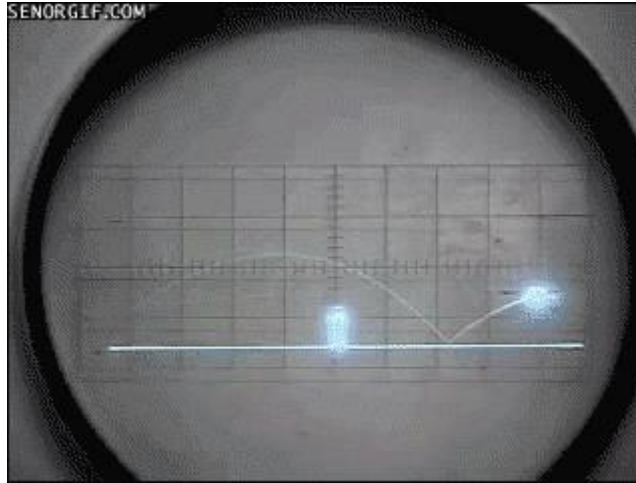- Kevin L. has been [Playing in the Sandbox](#)

Video Games
and other
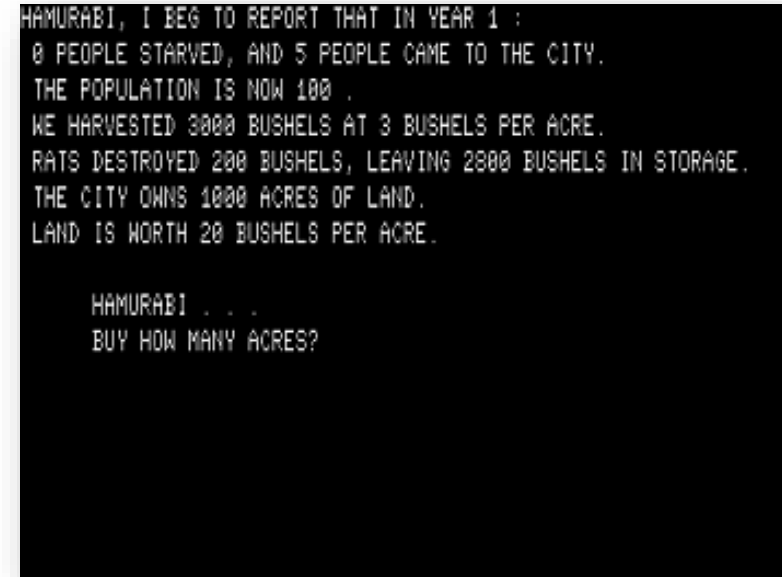# Digital Playgrounds
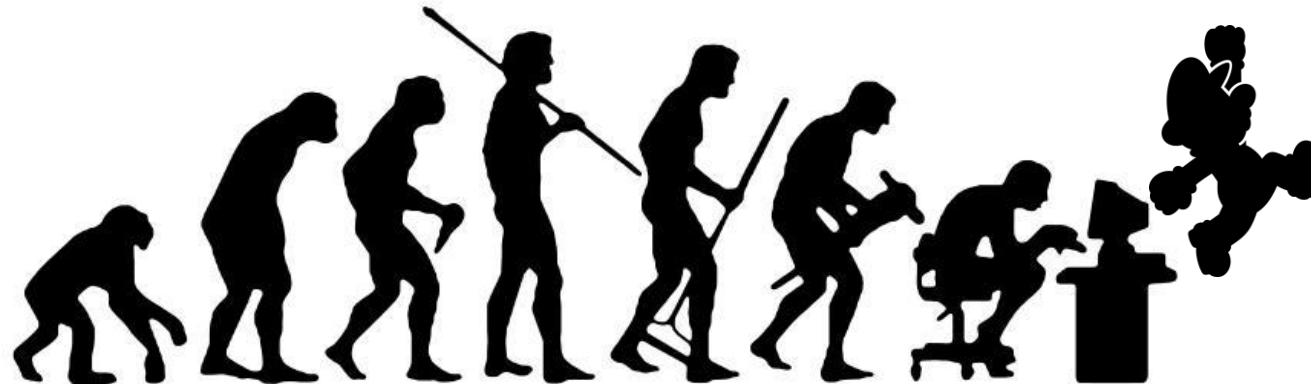
Video games are ancient…

Nimrod (1951), world's first videogame-playing computer
Check it out

Tennis for Two (Brookhaven, 1958)

Spacewar! (MIT, 1962)

The Sumerian Game(1964)

Check it out (Hamurabi, BASIC version)

… Video Games are now!

Untitled Goose Game (2019)

Modern Warfare (2019)

In the 20th Century, the moving image was the dominant cultural form.
While music, architecture, the written word, and many other forms of expression flourished in the last century, the **moving image came to dominate**. Personal storytelling, news reporting, epic cultural narratives, political propaganda – all were expressed most powerfully through film and video.
The rise of the moving image is **tightly bound to the rise of information**; film and video as media represent linear, non-interactive information that is accessed by a viewer.
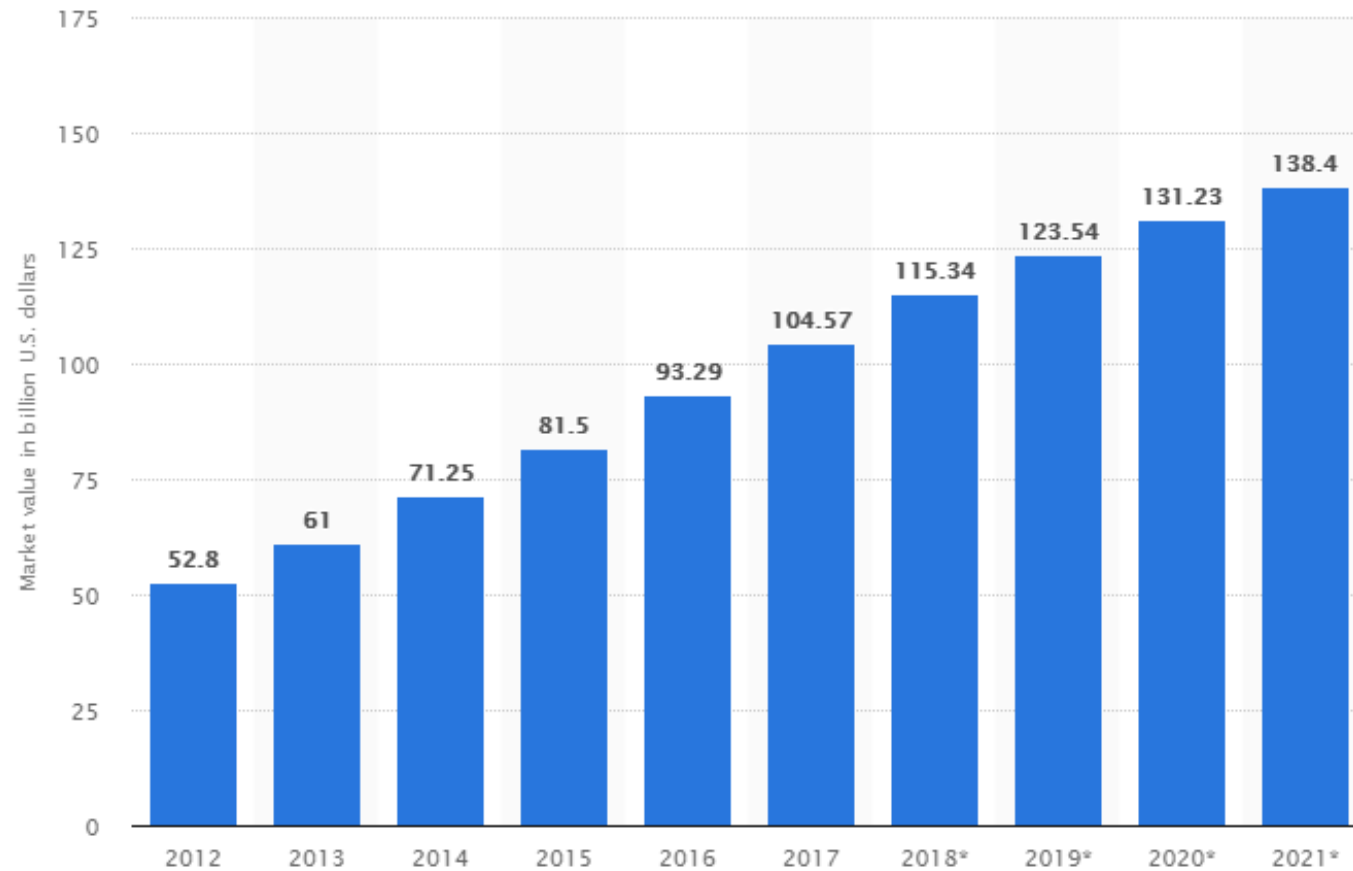
The Ludic Century is an era of games.
When information is put at play, game-like experiences replace linear media.
Media and culture in the Ludic Century is increasingly systemic, modular, customizable, and participatory. Games embody all of these characteristics in a very direct sense.
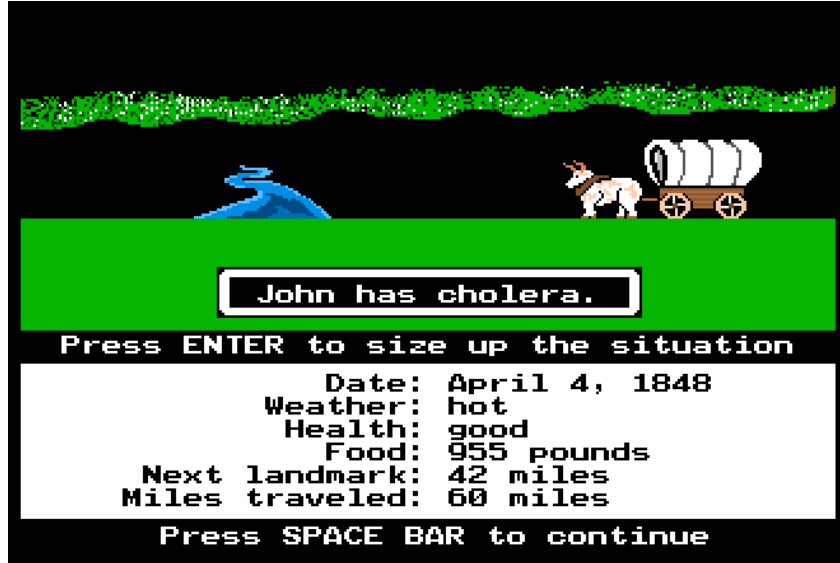
~ Eric Zimmerman, Manifesto for a Ludic Century

Video games are big business

Source: Statista
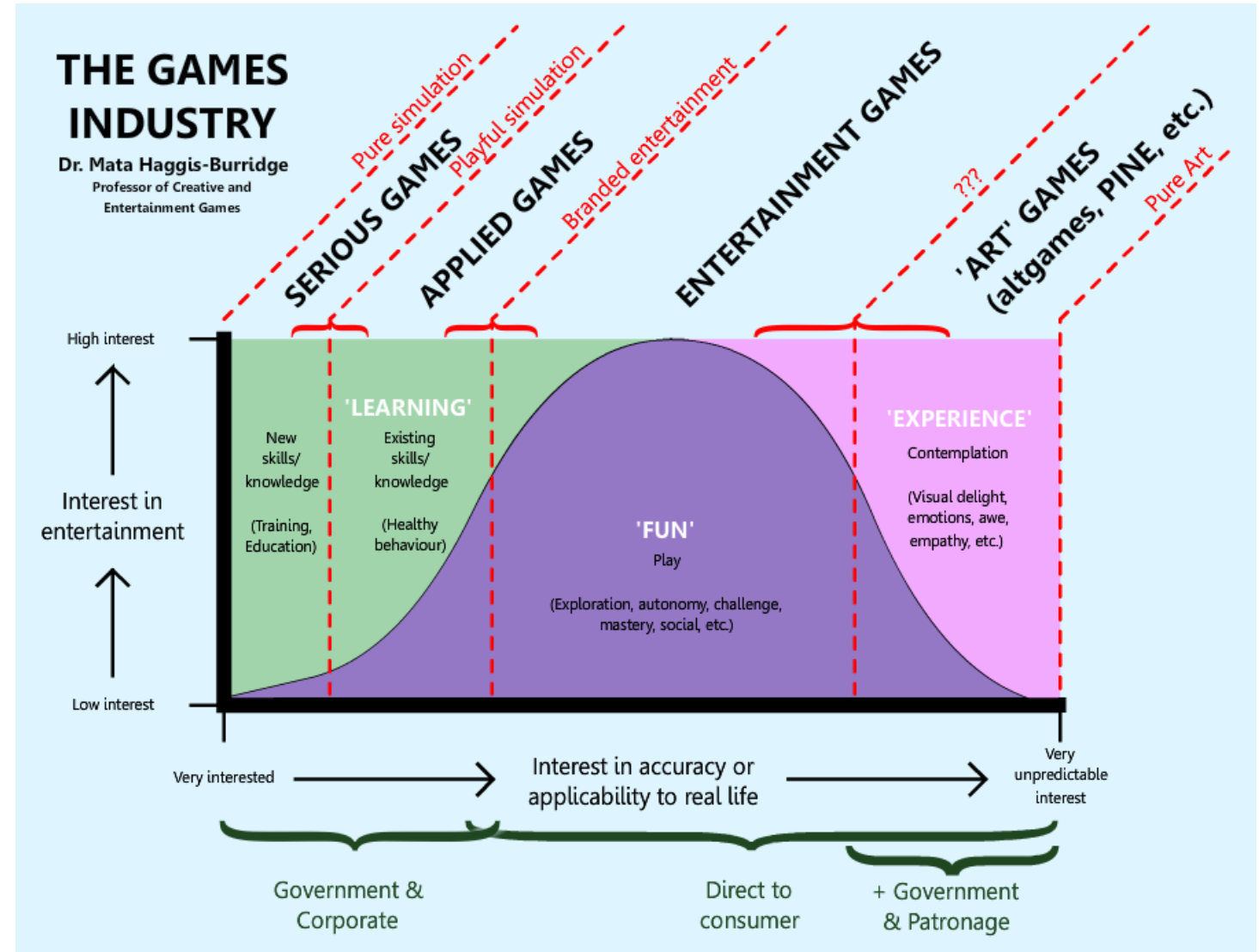
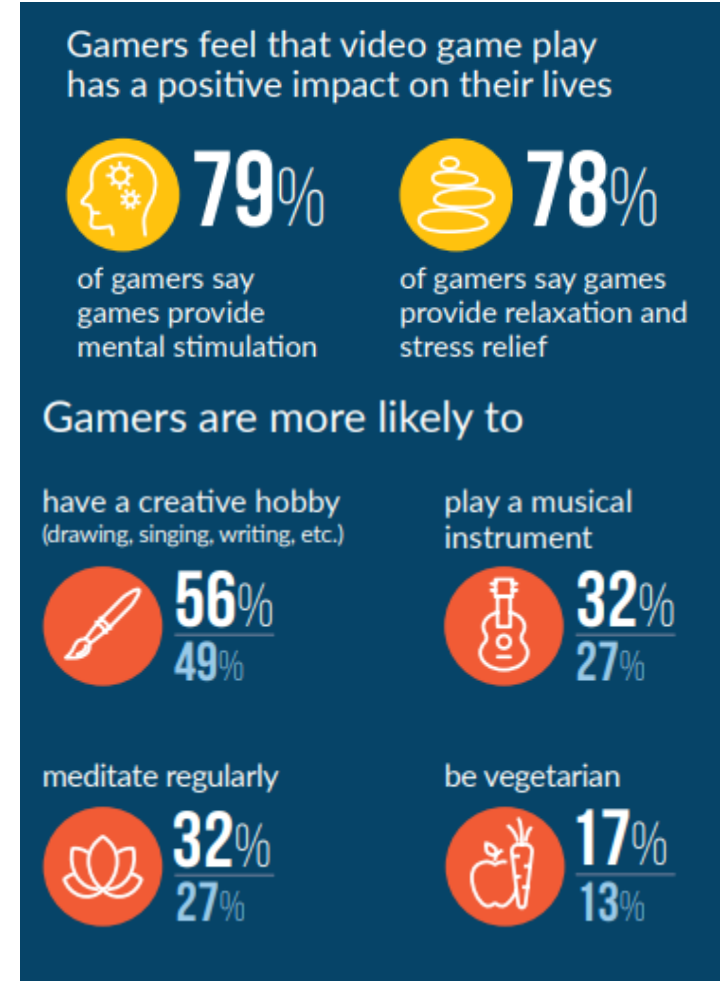# Video games come in many shapes and sizes

[Oregon Trail]():
The 'only' successful edutainment game

Mata Haggis-Burridge ([BUAS]())

THE GAMES INDUSTRY

Dr. Mata Haggis-Burridge
Professor of Creative and
Entertainment Games

Pure simulation — *Playful simulation* — *Branded entertainment* — *???* — *Pure Art*

SERIOUS GAMES — **APPLIED GAMES** — **ENTERTAINMENT GAMES** — **'ART' GAMES** (altgames, PINE, etc.)

High interest

Interest in entertainment

Low interest

'LEARNING'

New skills/ knowledge

(Training, Education)

Existing skills/ knowledge

(Healthy behaviour)

'EXPERIENCE'

Contemplation

(Visual delight, emotions, awe, empathy, etc.)

'FUN'

Play

(Exploration, autonomy, challenge, mastery, social, etc.)

Very interested → Interest in accuracy or applicability to real life → Very unpredictable interest

Government & Corporate

Direct to consumer

+ Government & Patronage

Everyone and their mother plays video games

AVERAGE GAMER

46% of gamers are **female**

54% of gamers are **male**

Average age for **women**: 34

Average age for **men**: 32

• Overall average age of gamers is 33

Gamers feel that video game play has a positive impact on their lives

79% of gamers say games provide mental stimulation

78% of gamers say games provide relaxation and stress relief

Gamers are more likely to

have a creative hobby (drawing, singing, writing, etc.)
56%
49%

play a musical instrument
32%
27%

meditate regularly
32%
27%

be vegetarian
17%
13%

What are video games?

- "Any forms of computer-based entertainment software, either textual or image-based, using any electronic platform such as personal computers or consoles and involving one or multiple players in a physical or networked environment" (Fraschi 2001, in line with OED)

- Seems simple, but videogames are also "artifacts that evaluate performance" (curious about this and other definitions, see here)

Table 2.1 The elements of a videogame

Graphics	Any images that are displayed and any effects performed on them. This includes 3D objects, 2D tiles, 2D full-screen shots, Full Motion Video (FMV), statistics, informational overlays and anything else the player will see.
Sound	Any music or sound effects that are played during the game. This includes starting music, CD music, MIDI, MOD tracks, Foley effects, environmental sound.
Interface	The interface is anything that the player has to use or have direct contact with in order to play the game . . . it goes beyond simply the mouse/keyboard/joystick [and] includes graphics that the player must click on, menu systems that the player must navigate through and game control systems such as how to steer or control pieces in the game.
Gameplay	Gameplay is a fuzzy term. It encompasses how much fun a game is, how immersive it is and the length of playability.
Story	The game's story includes any background before the game starts, all information the player gains during the story or when they win and any information they learn about characters in the game.

Source: Adapted from Howland 1998a.
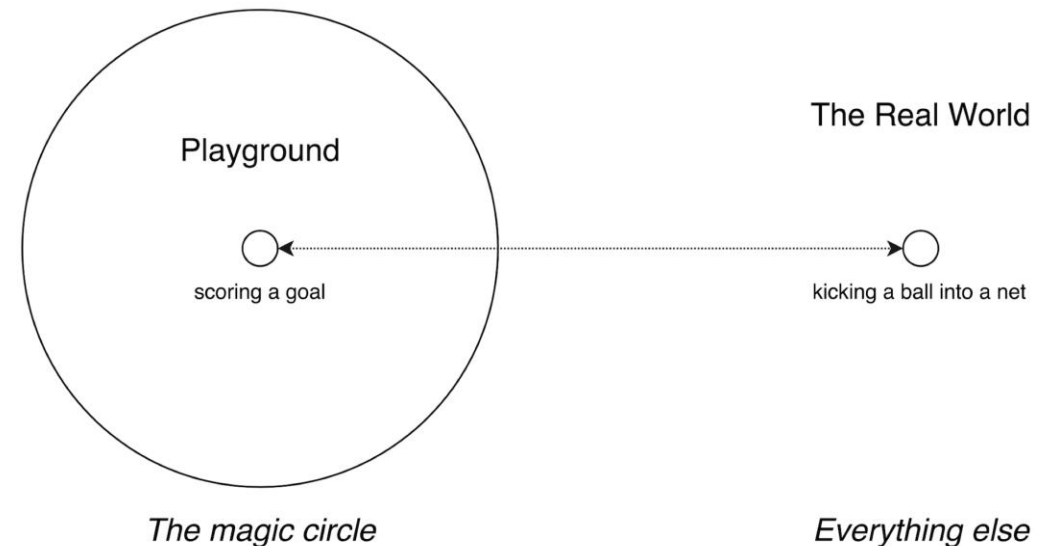

Pong

a game is *not*:

- A bunch of cool features
- A lot of fancy graphics
- A series of challenging puzzles
- An intriguing setting and story

(Rollings and Morris 2000: 19–20, original formatting)
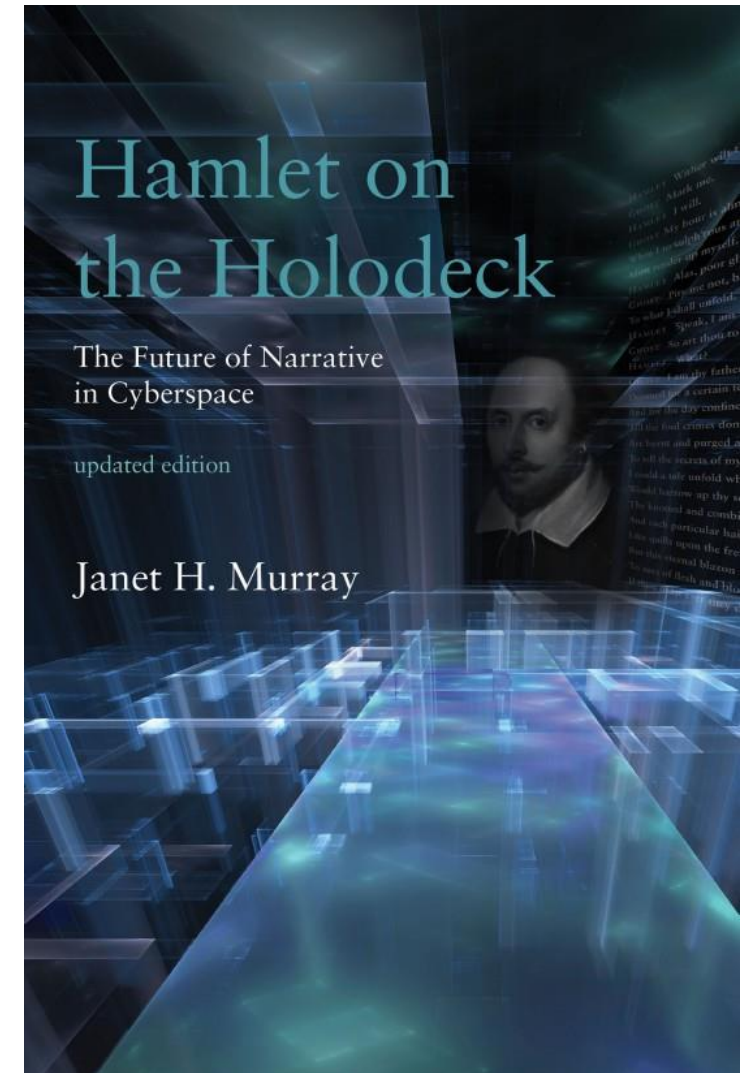
From Newman's *Videogames* (2010)

Homo Ludens (Huizinga 1938)

- Play (1955, p.8-10):
  - **Free**: freeing and voluntary.
  - **Imitates**: is not "ordinary" or "real" life.
  - **Set apart**: is distinct from "ordinary" life both as to locality and duration.
  - **Rule-based**: creates order, is order.
  - **Seriously not serious**: connected with no material interest

Playground

scoring a goal

The Real World

kicking a ball into a net

The magic circle

Everything else

So… What's new?

- Murray suggests digital environments (with reference to storytelling) are:
    - Procedural: computers execute a series of rules
    - Participatory: Computers respond to human interaction
    - Spatial: Computers provide a space for humans to move through
    - Encyclopedic (see quote below)

- Ludological definition: "The only radically novel [thing] about computer games in comparison with analogue games are their ever increasing ability to handle vast amounts of information extremely quickly and the machine's position as referee as well as definer and executer of mechanisms. (Iversen 2010, p. 33)"
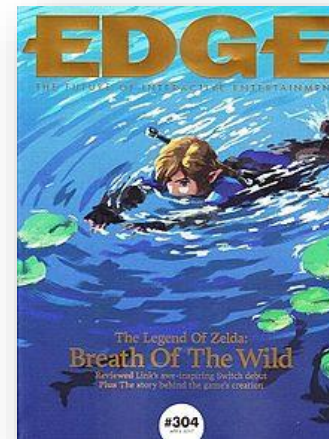

Hamlet on the Holodeck
The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace
updated edition
Janet H. Murray

Disciplines "involved with" videogames

- Computer Science & Engineering
- Game Design
- Game Studies
  - Game Studies Journal
  - Games and Culture
  - Ludology vs. Narratology
- Media Studies
  - Media Archaeology
- Game Journalism
  - Many news outlets
    - Kotaku, Rock, Paper Shotgun, Eurogamer, Polygon
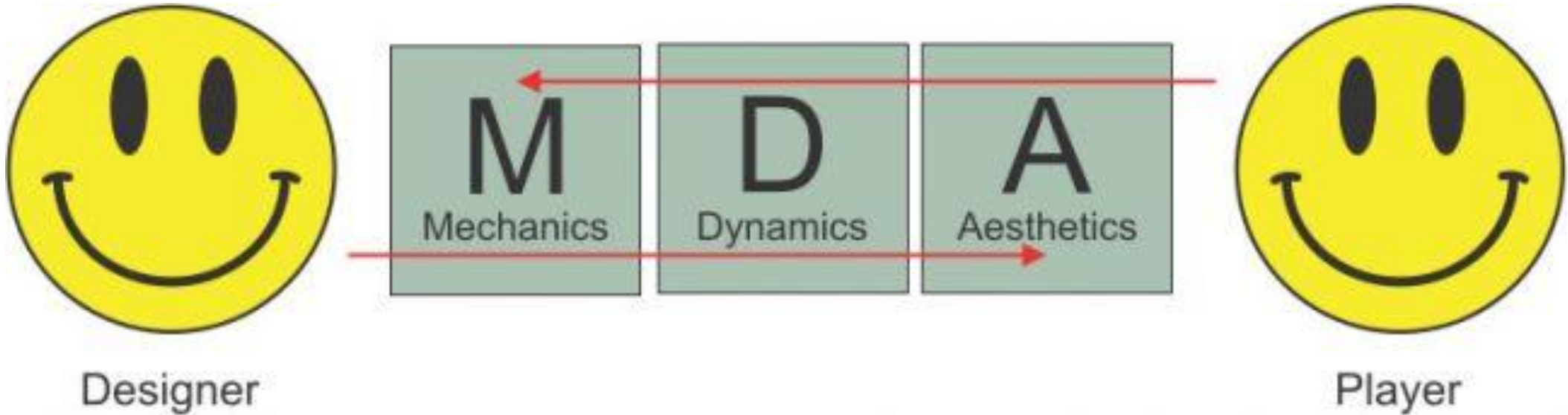 - Declining number of print magazines
    - Edge

Spacewar!

How to think about games?

MDA framework (Hunicke et al. 2004)

My own research and outreach videogames

How do contemporary interactive, digital media afford experiences of the past?

&

**How can games help drive the democratization of the past?**

VALUE

Knowledge at Play

The Ivory Tower meets the Playground

△Playfulness
△Accessibility
△Knowledge

Play Anything (Bogost, 2016)

- Builds on *Huizinga*'s 'Magic Circle' (*Homo Ludens)*

- Playgrounds: anything with boundaries and content that is experienced as fun.

- Fun: any activity that is related to with commitment, attention, and care.

- The Past *is* a playground.
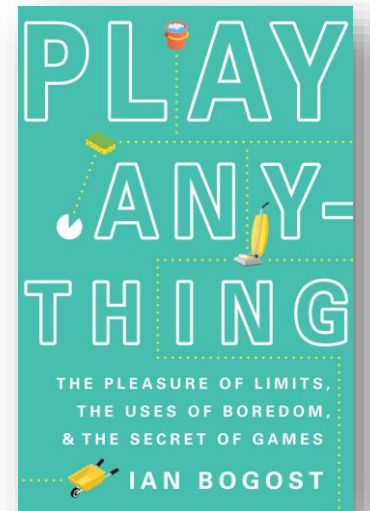
Coming up!

- Literature online (Blackboard)
- We will discuss:
  - Virtual Worlds
  - Cyborgs and Playful Computers
  - The Economy of Fun
- Mandatory play with every topic:
  - First one: Flappy Bird!