Shhh! We're Making Games in the Library and You Can Too

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ABSTRACT

Libraries are known as community spaces; however, librarians can be excellent partners with game developers. In recent years library administrators have begun exploring ways to better serve patrons who participate and consume media across a diversity of new platforms, including digital games (Wieder 2011). Most libraries focus on creating digital game collections or hosting events to play digital games (Bishoff et al. 2015). At the University of Utah a game development lab is housed in the Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library and collaborates with librarians. This poster will highlight reasons for partnerships, best practices, and how to start conversations at your university.

Keywords

game development lab, game developers, library, librarians, collaborate, best practices

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library (EHSL), the Center for Medical Innovation (CMI), and the Entertainment Arts and Engineering (EAE) program partnered to create The GApp Lab. The CMI and The GApp Lab are located in EHSL basement, creating an epicenter for medical innovation. The GApp Lab connects game developers to medical professionals to create collaborative projects that change the future of healthcare. Each semester, The GApp Lab personnel averages twenty-five graduate EAE students, one lab coordinator, three game studies faculty, and a librarian.

This poster will focus on one case study where a game development lab creates games within a library. Libraries offer physical, as well as intellectual collaborative spaces for creative initiatives. Partnering with game developers, librarians contribute throughout the game making process. Best practices and negotiation tips from this case study will be shared.

PARTNER ATTRIBUTES AND BENEFITS

Libraries offer a neutral space and services for anyone at a university. Likewise, game development labs can leverage transformed library spaces as print collections shrink and mirror the library's neutrality mindset to work with anyone. Furthermore, librarians are very connected and can refer gaming faculty to appropriate contacts and resources. If game development labs are housed in libraries, labs can test games with library users providing a more diverse population compared to a solo game studies department.

By partnering with the library, game development labs have access to expert searchers. Librarians can quickly find needed evidence for game projects; this includes background literature, market research, relevant data sources, prior art, and discipline-specific knowledge. Additionally, both partners care about maintaining the intellectual content developed and can work together to document and preserve games and associated developmental history.

BEST PRACTICES
One best practice is to designate a library liaison for the game development lab who is located nearby. This individual facilitates communication between the game development lab and library by addressing questions raised or referring to appropriate people. To create community, another best practice is to introduce and acquaint personnel by presenting at the each other's meetings and posting photo directories. A common café area offers an ad hoc collision space. The third best practice is to recognize and honor each other's culture and professional demeanor. Over time cultures have blended in that game developers have adopted to more formal scheduling and security measures, whereas librarians have become more flexible with hours, after-hours building access, and less structured meeting styles. Finally, explore together. Through mutual exploration of complex and unanswered questions, librarians and game developers can set the future for both professions. For example, how can student games be archived? How can games demonstrate their influence and significance in research-settings? How can evidence be incorporated into games?

TIPS FOR NEGOTIATION
As you approach your librarians to discuss creating a game development lab, be clear that you want a collaboration that will be beneficial for both entities. In other words, the game development lab will be more than just a tenant. Librarians want to be partners in creating new knowledge; be prepared to give examples of how this will be achieved. Also be ready to address space needs such as security, equipment, scheduling, and data networking, and ideas for sharing associated resource and facility costs.

CONCLUSION
As places of discovery and knowledge creation, gaming labs are a natural fit with libraries. Through several years of co-habitation, many lessons have been learned. This poster highlights best practices and tips for others to emulate.

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