

Part One THE PEDAGOGY

THEORIES RELATING GAMES TO LEARNING AND MEDIA LITERACY

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Toward a Media Literacy for Games

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“This court reviewed four different video games and found no conveyance of ideas, expression, or anything else that could possibly amount to speech. The court finds that video games have more in common with board games and sports than they do with motion pictures.”

—Senior U.S. District Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh, April 2002¹

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believing that all games are violent, misogynist, or anti-social without playing, let alone *playing* or finishing a game. Thus, writing in 2005, the question is no longer, “Is media literacy necessary?” but the question is, “What kind of media literacy is necessary and for whom?”

Imagine this preceding quote being said about books, television, or film. Imagine a federal judge reading excerpts from four books (imagine, perhaps two romantic novels, a murder mystery, and a spy thriller) and saying that books could not convey ideas. We would say that the judge is making a sampling error if nothing else. Taking a small sampling from four titles in any media obviously misses the breadth of what a medium is. For example, we wouldn’t expect someone to read the Biblical story of Jezebel being eaten by dogs and pretend to be in a position to judge the merits of the Bible, let alone books in general. Fortunately, this is an extreme position and was eventually overturned. Unfortunately, it is a common one, *watching* a few minutes of recorded game play and

We can say that Limbaugh is illiterate with the medium if for no other reason than his selection in games, which overlooks most of the most highly regarded work of this generation. But beyond sampling problems, what struck most game scholars as ludicrous was the idea that Judge Limbaugh was in any position to comment on the **meaning** of video games. Not only did he not play any games, but there is nothing to suggest that he would have understood what he was playing if he did. If he were literate with games, he might know that *DOOM* is not only a decade old, but a game about visceral reactions, adrenaline, and bleeding-edge technology, a game that is designed to make the player’s jaw drop, stomach churn, and pulse race, as opposed to causing reflection or expressing colder, intellectual ideas. When *DOOM* came out, its primary achievement was its pioneering use of the 3D camera and clever level design to create a feeling of immersion and suspense. If we look at *DOOM* in a contemporary context (i.e. *DOOM 3*) we might cite it as an example of a game that uses pacing, light, and shadow to great aesthetic effect, but not one that says, causes reflection on the state of what it means to be human (unlike *Ico*, perhaps).



A scene from *Doom 3*.

Thirty years ago, when games were little more than a fad, we might have dismissed Limbaugh's comments as silly, maybe even charming in their naivete. But games are no longer relegated to shady arcades and PC enthusiasts' garages. Games are now an established industry and maturing medium. As it has been well reported, game sales outpace Hollywood box office sales. Games are used for training, advertising, and sales in business, the government, and K-12 education and the Serious Games industry is projected to be about \$50 million annually at this writing (Rejeski, 2002; Sawyer, 2003; Squire, 2005). Game development and game studies courses and programs are now commonplace at most universities. In short, as games have become interwoven into the fabric of our social institutions, people like Judge Limbaugh will be making decisions about games, and we need mechanisms for communicating what the medium is and is about.

Once we argue for media literacy programs that investigate meaning making, we must deal with the cultural contexts of media consumption. To take the *DOOM* example, expert gamers read a franchise like *DOOM* within a context of production and consumption. They understand that *DOOM* is trying to immerse the players in a horrific environment featuring bleeding-edge graphics, and its role in the larger canon of games as the first 3D shooter.² Most gamers know that *DOOM* is developed at ID software and is the result of John Romero's design creativity and John Carmack's 3D programming genius, but is now largely a vehicle for showcasing Carmack's next generation technology and may earn more money through future licensing of the technology than through the game itself. In other words, they understand not only how to read the game, but can understand it within the modes of production of the industry and place it along side other similar games.

But games are fundamentally a participatory medium, and an equally important part in the story of *DOOM* is in how ID released level edit-

ing tools, and eventually the game's source code, making it possible for consumers to create custom characters, levels, games, and in-game movies (machinima). In other words, *DOOM* must also be considered within the context of what people do with it, which likely leads to an even deeper network of meanings which might include a knowledge of the first person shooter, competitive gaming, the Cyberathlete Professional League (CPL), Fata1ity, modding, machinima, Quake, gaming engines, and Stevie Case. These webs of meaning will differ, unique to each person and dependent on one's situation. But gamers (much like Bible study groups) experience and interpret games in social contexts, with and in response to other people, events, and practices. In the case of *DOOM*, it would be impossible for any game scholar to ignore the central role *DOOM* has played in establishing a creative ethos within gaming communities. So equally important are issues of game culture.

Games Cultures

In these pages, I argue that crucial to games literacy is not just the meaning of games, but rather, the ideologies and ethos of games cultures. They are typical (but not exclusive) sites of digital literacies that are important to success in the new capitalist societies, but largely antithetical to the cultures of schools. I begin by using Gee's notion of Discourse to suggest how games literacy programs might start with dialogue about games and gamer culture. Next, I describe a media literacy unit I developed with Deborah Briggs of Firaxis Games around the game *Pirates!*, which uses historical strategy games as a window into media literacy issues, finding that for many students, the cultural issues around game development, particularly opportunities for identity trajectories in new media, fast capitalist industries were at least as intriguing as the games themselves. Finally, I end with thoughts on how media literacy programs might move forward via inquiry-based learning approaches.

Whose Gaming Literacies

The question of media literacy in gaming, then, is a perplexing one. On the one hand, we have a generation of baby boomers, perhaps best epitomized by Judge Limbaugh with little literacy with games, and a generation of students raised with the Internet and a host of gaming literacies, many of which are not affiliated with school (Beck & Wade, 2004;

Gee, 2003). If we are going to acknowledge that today's students have literacies that their teachers lack, one option would be to "let the kids" develop the curriculum. One can imagine 14 year old "133t speaking" boys teaching media literacy courses, where all teachers, students, parents, and elected officials are required to finish a game like

DOOM3. This (hopefully) makes obvious that the question is not "whether or not one group can simply make sense of texts", but according to whose systems of interpretation. One of the core issues for media literacy, then, is *whose* literacies will be privileged, what questions will be considered legitimate and which ones are not asked.

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James Paul Gee (1996) has developed Discourse theory as a way of discussing literacy as a social achievement that is tied to particular sense making systems (or ideologies). A key achievement of Discourses is that they function to “normalize” particular perspectives, making others seem abnormal or deviant (Gee, 1996). This is how, for example, to *academics*, spending 40+ hours per week in an online game may seem deviant or self-indulgent, whereas for many *gamers*, spending 40+ hours per week writing a paper to be read by a few dozen people (at best) is deviant and self-indulgent. In the *DOOM* example, I described one type of PC gaming Discourse system (c.f. Kushner, 2003; King & Borland 2003). However, there are many overlapping and competing Discourses, and it does not necessarily follow that we want to initiate all teachers, parents, and elected officials into a “133t” gamer Discourse (although that would be amusing).³ Instead, we can use media literacy as an avenue to understand the broader Discourses in which meanings are made and reflect on different value systems.

I argue that good media literacy programs are founded on dialogue about the games people play, why we play them, and what concerns non-gamers have about game play. Having led several such discussions with children, teachers, parents, and librarians over recent years, I am surprised at how little teachers and students discuss games (c.f. Squire, 2004; 2005). In one class I visited, roughly 20% of the boys in class were playing *World of Warcraft*, yet teachers had no idea of what a massively multi-player game was, or that it was even feasible with today’s technology. They were shocked to learn that their students were going home and logging on to servers with tens of thousands of people from around the world each night. They had no idea that their students had developed virtual identities, built over hundreds of hours of game play and worth thousands of real world American dollars, sellable on ebay (Castronova, 2001; Steinkuehler, 2004). Of course, not every student is playing *Everquest* or *World of Warcraft*. However, even if not every student knows that *Everquest* was once the 77th largest economy in the world, most have an idea of what *Everquest* is.

Such dialogues let us uncover fundamental assumptions about media, particularly stereotypes about games and gamers. Most teachers have little awareness of these stereotypes they hold or the low cultural status of games (Squire, 2002). For example, most teachers express an understandable concern about their students spending too much time sitting and playing video games. When asked if they would feel better if children played traditional board games or chess, many say “yes”. A precocious student usually follows, “What if it’s computer chess or *Risk*?” One can imagine where the conversation goes from here, but obviously part of teachers’ anxiety about games is also anxiety about technological and social change, and dialogue about games can help bring these concerns to light.

A second theme underlying these discussions, however, is the relative social status of different leisurely pursuits. Sometimes I have students and teachers rank the “social acceptability” of several games and sports,

including bowling, golf, chess, computer chess, cards (e.g. *canasta*) playing football, playing fantasy football, *Dungeons and Dragons*, and *Counterstrike*. Both can do so without hesitation, and usually they come to realize that those leisure activities associated with adults and upper middle class have more status than those with lower SES or youth. Students and teachers alike need to realize that digital games are a medium with ties to earlier media (such as film and television), but also cultural practices inherently tied to social class, status, and values.

Indeed, the moment that discussions of games are evoked, it is difficult to avoid deeper issues of cultural values, particularly around work ethic and “wasting time”. Ask kids what their parents think about games, and “wasting time” usually comes up quickly. We can use this observation as an entrée to talking about the Protestant work ethic or even linguistics (i.e. why is it that we think of time as a commodity or resource to be “spent wisely?” c.f. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Further comparisons can be drawn between game play and more socially sanctioned forms of leisure.

Very real political struggles lie underneath these debates as students, teachers, parents, administrators, and activists struggle to define what media literacy might look like; look no further than the censorship issues and marginalization of Goth culture following the Columbine shootings to see the political implications of media. Although one rarely saw it, one could imagine students after Columbine rallying together to dispel myths about *Quake*, *DOOM*, and goth culture more generally, just as we saw legislatures move to ban access to violent games. The political left and political right hold beliefs about what media students ought to be exposed to (and ought to be allowed in schools), and what constitutes media literacy, but both tend to represent media issues in protectionist terms. For some, it might be a critical understanding of corporate American consumerism; for others, it might be an understanding of the cultural cancer of violent media. For gamers, libertarians, and technophiles, it might be something altogether different (c.f. Jenkins, 2000; Katz, 1999).

The good news is, as Gerard Jones (2002) argues in *Killing Monsters*, simply bringing up issues like violence in games is a very good way of reflecting on these Discourses and attendant value systems. The moment the social impact of games is raised, related concepts such as childhood, violence, innocence, and the media come to light. Most kids have strong, differing opinions on violence in media, and are inclined to share them, which can serve as the basis for student writing, artwork, discussion, or inquiry. Not only are discussions of issues of violence in the media potentially powerful interdisciplinary anchors (c.f. Barab & Landa, 1997), but I would argue, productive ends in themselves. Simply having dialogue not only makes discussions of violence “talkable,” a topic worthy of serious discussion, but also has the potential to surface core values and hopes for what societies can be like, which are at the heart of questions around violence and the media (Jenlink & Carr, 1997; Banathy & Jenlink, 2004).

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TABLE 1

Outline of Media Literacy Unit with *Pirates!*

DAY	TOPIC	ACTIVITIES
1	Introduction to games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present workshop agenda • Raise questions about games • Examine beliefs about games • Install game • Introduction to game
2	Life as a game designer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic preparation for game design • Requisite skills • Different roles and jobs
3	So you want to be a play tester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of play testing • Playing pirates • Discussing pirate readings
4	How games are made (at Firaxis Games)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The desks and desktops of game designers • Beta test <i>Pirates!</i> Xbox • Visit programmers, artists, producers
5	Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss "realism" in games • Discuss life in media industries

Historical Games as an Avenue for Media Literacy

But how do we bring games into the classroom? Given that most teachers are ignorant, even afraid of games, where do we begin? One way I've been exploring is through using historical simulation games in classrooms. Surprising to some, games that use historical eras as a backdrop for gameplay are among the most popular games on the computer. *Civilization*, *Rise of Nations*, *Pirates!*, *Age of Empires*, and *Europa Universalis* are top selling, critically praised games. Some games, such as *Civilization III* even match up pretty well to particular views of history (Squire, 2004). Historical simulation games are particularly interesting, as they allow opportunities examining how games work, how they represent phenomena, and how they differ from other media.

Over the past few months, I have been working together with Deborah Briggs from Firaxis Games, exploring how to use *Sid Meier's Pirates!* as the basis for media literacy. *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (released in 2004), is an "E" rated PC game in which the player is a pirate on the Spanish main between 1600-1700. This project stems from my own experiences playing *Pirates!* in middle school which allowed me to "sail" through A.P. colonial American history. Indeed, any *Pirates!* player worth his salt has a pretty good working knowledge of Caribbean geography, the characteristics of colonizing nations, and other basic social history of the period.⁴ Further, *Pirates!*, is *anything* but a perfect simulation of Caribbean history, producing opportunities for students to think about what is "realistic" in games vs. what is "made-up" for the purposes of fun, the impact of violence in entertainment, and how games get made.

TABLE 2

Typical Game Development Functions, Roles

FUNCTION	REQUIRED SKILLS	ROLES	SPECIAL PREPARATION
Game design	Psychology	Developer / Programmer	Rapid prototyping programming; Expertise in game play, fun, game "magic", user experience.
Creating game assets	Art / visual skills: color, art history, composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textures • Models • Animations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2D art, fashion, history, culture • Sculpture, geography, architecture • Animation
Programming	Physics, mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D programming • Artificial Intelligence • Game programming • Interface programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3D geometry • Algorithms • Game design • Human computer interface, art
Sound design	Music composition, performance, recording, editing, sound design	Sound design, music composition, effects	Everything related to music; interactive composition
Project management	Management, psychology, organization	Producer, Manager, supervisor, designer	Organizational psychology, software development, workflow
User experience	Psychology, research methods, Human-Computer Interaction	User testing, interface tweaking	Usability testing, game design, game interface

This spring, I ran a week long workshop with a group of kids playing *Pirates!*, which lasted 90 minutes per day. We played *Pirates!*, listened to talks from designers, and visited Firaxis Studios (See Table 1). We discussed what it is like being a play tester, game designer, sound engineer, and programmer. Not surprisingly, the students had a better sense of game development and the kinds of skills it requires than their teachers. What *did* surprise us, was how little students or teachers knew about the culture of a technology sector company, leading to interesting revelations about the social organization of schools.

We began the workshop with a general discussion of games and classroom learning. We took a quick poll and found out that 50% of the class had checked out a book from the library based on an interest in a subject (mostly mythology and history) generated through games. As we installed the games we studied the Caribbean maps that came with the game. I led a discussion of pirates: Who were they? Where did they come from? Were there women pirates? Are there pirates today? We walked through the initial steps of *Pirates!* together, and discussed differences between Dutch, Spanish, English, and French patterns of colonization in the context of students choosing which country to start with. Most students decided against playing as a Spanish privateer, as they clearly had the most gold (and therefore were easiest to plunder).

Students spent the last 30 minutes playing *Pirates!*. All of the participants (12 students, 6-8 grade, all boys) were expert gamers, but they had wildly divergent game experiences. Some had high level (30 and up) characters in *World of Warcraft*.⁵ Others preferred action console games. Many of the students were a little confused at the beginning, as *Pirates!* gives the user relatively little direction or opening quests and assumes that the player will quickly develop his or her own goals. Students started asking, “Wait, is this a role playing game, a strategy game, or what?”. We discussed how it fit or broke different genre conventions, particularly how the game “let you make up your own story” more than traditional console RPGs. Interesting, this is just the conversation the marketers and publishers were having in deciding how to market the Xbox version of the game. Although this “lack of direction” was disconcerting at first (leading to many funny ironic jokes such as “these modern video games have you kids too used to following directions”), by the end of the week, each of them appreciated the open-ended nature of *Pirates!* game play.

On the second day, Barry Caudill, producer of *Pirates!* addressed the kids. He described how he entered the games industry as a play tester. He discussed how play testing (most students’ dream job) demanded problem solving and communication skills; good play testers are good at methodically testing games and clearly communicating the conditions under which games crash. We discussed which academic subjects were good preparation for the games industry (all of them, roughly speaking), and what kinds of opportunities were available for them in the games industry at the moment (See Table 2). We also discussed how by the time these kids graduated from high school, the games industry will have evolved at least two generations of hardware, so these roles will have changed in new and unpredictable ways. Barry described how “learning to learn” and being comfortable learning new skills were probably the most important skills they could have; no one is ever “done learning” in the games industry.

By the third day, students were starting to understand the game. As students played, they generated questions about the game, focusing specif-



Scenes from *Pirates!* *New caption? Placed together, OK? Specifically referenced somewhere in text?*

ically on issues of accuracy. Students wondered about the accuracy of sword fights, ship battles, and pirates’ lives. They wondered about pirate brutality, life in pirate cities, and how it was that in this era, pistols and swords co-existed. Perhaps due to the cartoony graphics, students actually assumed that the game was far *less* accurate than it really was, and were surprised to find that pirates frequently did all the things they were doing in the game (signing letters of marque, acting as “unofficial navies”, sacking major Spanish settlements, and establishing buccaneer settlements).

We read excerpts from texts (most of which overlapped text in the “pirateopedia,” which is available in game) focusing on the biography of pirates, famous pirate stories, and modern pirates.⁶ We wanted to be sure to dispel romantic images of pirates in movies, books, and in *Pirates!* itself. The stories of modern day pirates in the South Asian Pacific, particularly ties between pirates and Al Qaeda seemed to dispel any romantic myths of pirates.

On day 4, we visited Firaxis. Students met designers, beta tested *Pirates!* for the Xbox, and discussed the art of game development with Firaxis artists, programmers, and usability testers. Outside of playing *Pirates!* for the Xbox (the first kids to have done so), the highlight for most students was, oddly, simply seeing the work environment of a modern gaming company. As the producer of *Pirates!* Barry Caudill opened up his computer, students asked questions about the many applications on his

desktop. Questions included, “Do you really get to use messenger at work?” and “Have you played all of those games?”

Seeing students’ reactions to a modern game development studio – which is not unlike any other .com startup was illuminating. Workers’ desks covered with game figurines, legos, and posters, and desktops covered with digital tools, .mp3s, and IM conversations looked a lot more like students’ bedrooms than it did their school environment. In fact, these successful game designers looked a lot more like the *students themselves* than their teachers did. It was not hard to see that some in this class could go on to work at a games company; others might work in computer science, academics, publishing, or the media industry – all of which looked a lot more like work in a game company than in their schools. None of the adult identities routinely shown in school – administrators, teachers, service workers have anything much to do with the skills, literacies, and identities these students saw at Firaxis.

Oddly, I had expected the highlight of the field trip to be the chance to see game artwork and meet these “game designer heroes”; instead, the highlight seemed to be seeing that their literacies – their ways of consuming information, making meaning, and being in the world which are largely banned from school had *much* value outside of school. Using instant messenger to get the answers to problems (something that most schools discourage, to what extent they are even aware of it) was actually a sign of intelligent problem solving. Management work, including budgeting wasn’t done by hand; work is distributed into intelligent tools like Microsoft Excel. Couches, televisions, and foosball tables replace punch clocks and time cards. The values of new capitalism (people working in cross functioning teams according to their needs and schedules) replaces the industrial model of social organization (everyone working in carefully regulated projects and time scales) on which schools are organized. Life in the (sadly quickly fading) independent game house is organized around what Himanen (2001) calls the “hacker work ethic”. Work can and should follow from one’s passions. Activity should follow creative rhythms rather than time clocks. People’s best work is done when they “join forces in imaginative ways” and individual autonomy, responsibility, creativity, privacy, and dignity are more important than simply profit. Firaxis’ noted profit sharing piqued the interest of many students, and as they prepared to leave, Caudill reminded them that even though games are now very complex projects requiring dozens of creative, talented people, it is still possible to create a game in a garage with a group of friends.

On the fifth day, we reconvened to let students finish their games and debrief the experience. Much discussion focused on the work environment in Firaxis, particularly concepts like flex time, profit sharing, and “an instant messenger friendly workplace”. I also warned them that a life like that they saw in Firaxis is unusual for the games industry; with a good contrast being Electronic Arts, which is currently under a class action lawsuit by its developers for unpaid overtime. But we also dissected the game and discussed the various design decisions developers

made. We discussed what they might have done to make the game more gender friendly. We discussed the current state of the games industry (including the impact of MMORPGs on the industry and the chances that World of Warcraft would sell 1 million copies). In short, we engaged in the kind of analysis, speculation, and argumentation that students do when they review cases in the Harvard Business School (although admittedly a bit less sophisticated).

We also discussed the geography and history of the Caribbean, as well as historical accuracies and inaccuracies in the game. It was clear that students had mechanisms for judging what was accurate in the game and what was not. The map was accurate. Time was somewhat accurate; they did not detect how the game manipulated time to create a more engaging experience. They “read” the game as having very unrealistic sword fights, and the class as a whole noted that no one ever died, or was gruesomely killed the way they were in the stories of pirates. The ship battles seemed more realistic, although they deduced some logical inaccuracies in the ship battles (i.e. why can pirates only attack with one ship). Building on stories we heard at Firaxis, we discussed how in play tests the game designers found that giving people control over one flagship was more fun than multiple ships, because the player was more likely to identify with the flagship, developing an emotional tie to the ship as one might a vehicle.

As the week ended, the teachers and students were interested in doing another workshop. The partnering teachers and administrators who were sympathetic toward games, started to recognize that they had not really played a modern commercial video game. They knew that game development involved computer programming, but had no idea that game production also had ties to physics, mathematics, art, sculpture, architecture, psychology, and marketing.⁷ In post-interviews, partnering teachers shared surprise at how complex games and gaming culture were, and how it engaged their students.

Implications: Games as Inquiry-Based Learning

Judge Limbaugh’s ignorance about games suggests the importance of media literacy programs for elected officials, educators, parents, and students. Given that the Nintendo generation is now having children of their own, social institutions like schools and government risk lampooning themselves by making such statements. Games are only one site where we can see this divide happening, but they seem to be a critical one, providing a crucial inroads to digital literacies where students learn to think with digital tools, use sites of collective intelligence, network socially via communication tools, and become producers, not just consumers of information. As Pew Internet studies (2002) have shown (and these students’ visit to Firaxis would suggest), there is an ever-widening gap between those who use technologies Internet generations’ relation to information, social networks, and learning, and those who do not. If media literacy programs are seriously going to engage with the deeper cultural significance of media shifts, they will need to take seri-

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ously the social and cultural differences between digital generations and more traditional ones.

Historical games provide one opportunity for getting students to think more deeply about media, including not just the meanings in texts, but also the politics behind **their** production and consumption. When situated within a program that discusses how games are made it provides one inroads for talking about not just games, but how these games change the way we work, think, learn, play, and interact. Perhaps surprisingly, the most deeply engaging part of this unit may not have been the games themselves, but students' realization that there is a place for their literacies outside of school, and trajectories for them to develop these identities in professional settings. Of course, not every school can go to a games studio, but it's very possible for many schools to go to web publishing houses, interactive media developers, or other similar digital production facilities. This article suggests just one approach to media literacy; I believe that good media literacy programs will need to go much further, being more fully integrated into other curricula.

Pedagogical models such as inquiry-based learning provide one promising avenue for media literacy. Becky Rosenberg, a 4th grade teacher in Madison, Wisconsin has been working with our research group to build

inquiry-based lesson plans around gaming. Most students have a keen interest in questions around gaming, particularly in finding what games their peers are playing, different gender preferences with games, or how their attitudes toward games differ from their parents. With a little scaffolding, it seems possible to get students to ask intelligent questions around games and do some complex thinking around core issues in psychology, communications, and media studies. Given student's interest in games, how little we know about games and how quickly the field is changing, games seem like an excellent location for inquiry-based approaches to education.

Ultimately, such an inquiry-based approach to media literacy which draws on students' questions and involves gathering and examining data, and building coherent arguments, and critiquing them within interpretive communities is what we want media literacy to be. I suspect that few of us particularly care if students know that Carmack and Romero developed *DOOM*, but we do care that they learn to ask questions, construct arguments, communicate effectively, and listen to their peers. Evolving toward a mindset where media literacy is not an end state but a continuous process of inquiry, investigation and self-reflection would serve not only our students, but our media and policy makers as well. •

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 See the Interactive Digital Software Association v. St. Louis County <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data2/circs/8th/023010p.pdf>
- 2 There is in fact some trickiness as to what was the first purely 3D shooter. Without getting into all of it, I recommend Kuser's Master's of Doom, and Wagener Jame's Au's excellent review in *Salon*.
- 3 Of course, there is no "one" gamer Discourse, any more than there is any one academic (or even media literacy) discourse. The web of meaning suggested in the previous Doom example is one that will be familiar to many gamers (particularly older PC or LAN gamers), but might be foreign to console, strategy, or Japanese RPG fans. There are, however, points of intersection, places where these discourses. Ironically, just at the time of this writing, Microsoft released a parent's guide to gamer speak. <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/children/kidtalk.msp>
This example makes fairly evident the dangers of just discussing the surface features of a Discourse without dealing with its underlying politics.
- 4 For a longer description of this experience, see, Kurt Squire: *Reframing the Cultural Space of Games* at <http://cms.mit.edu/games/education/research-vision.html>
- 5 This study occurred in January of 2005. If you were playing World of Warcraft at the time, you would know that this was a somewhat impressive achievement for a middle school student, requiring at least a few hundred hours of work and implying some dedication to gaming.
- 6 Most were culled from websites including Cindy Vallar's excellent *Pirates and Privateers: The History of Maritime Piracy* <http://www.cindyvallar.com/pirates.html>
- 7 As a good example of this cultural and knowledge divide, the partnering school had a difficult time recruiting a teacher to go on a field trip of Firaxis. Imagine, for a second, 40 years ago a school having the chance to visit Abbey Road, and teachers not going.