

# International Journal of Role-Playing

The aim of The International Journal of Role-Playing is to act as a hybrid knowledge network, and bring together the varied interests in role-playing and the associated knowledge networks, e.g. academic research, the games and creative industries, the arts and the strong role-playing communities.

## **Editorial Special issue: Role-Playing in Games**

*This special issue contains five articles chosen from amongst those presented at the Role-Playing in Games seminar at the University of Tampere, Finland, April 10-11, 2012. Several others from that seminar will be appearing in future issues of this journal.*

**J. Tuomas Harviainen**

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## **Social Conflict in Role-Playing Communities: An Exploratory Qualitative Study**

*Much of the current research in the field of role-playing studies focuses upon the positive impact that games can have on the lives of participants. This research describes potential problems within role-playing communities.*

**Sarah Lynne Bowman**

4-25

## **Cultural Languages of Role-Playing**

*Role-play interaction in live role-playing games is also language interaction. Role-playing language is different from everyday language, because the worlds created in role-play are not just a reflection or extension of everyday life.*

**Angelina Ilieva**

26-38

## **A Closer Look at the (Rule-) Books: Framings and Paratexts in Tabletop Role-playing Games**

*As texts which are based on collaborative and interactive narration, tabletop – also known as “pen and paper” – role-playing games (TRPGs) are distinct in their technological simplicity.*

**David Jara**

39-54

## **Edu-Larp as Revision of Subject-Matter Knowledge**

*The paper presents theoretical foundations of the author’s approach to the design of edu-larps. It is deliberately steering away from cross-disciplinary teaching, artistic education or soft skills training in order to advocate larps tailored to single school subjects, focused on integration and consolidation of curricular knowledge.*

**Michał Mochocki**

55-75

## **Between Game Facilitation and Performance: Interactive Actors and Non- Player Characters in Larps**

*The challenge of combining narrative and gameplay in live action role-playing games (larps) has been successfully negotiated with the use of runtime game mastering and interactive actors (ractors) performing non-player characters (NPC).*

**Jaakko Stenros**

78-95

# Editorial

## Special issue: Role-Playing in Games

*Welcome to issue four of the International Journal of Role-Playing.*

This special issue contains five articles chosen from amongst those presented at the Role-Playing in Games seminar at the University of Tampere, Finland, April 10-11, 2012. Several others from that seminar will be appearing in future issues of this journal. In a way, this is a homecoming for IJRP - the journal was first established as a result of another seminar in the same series, in 2006. Over the years, the style of such events has remained the same: each of the seminars has been free of charge, and about providing expert feedback to works in progress, rather than something where participants would bring ready papers for the purpose of publication. Nevertheless, the events have produced high quality research articles as well, by either helping the authors refine their work for eventual peer reviews - papers from earlier seminars have appeared, for example, in the journals *Fibreculture*, *Game Studies* and *European Journal of Cultural Studies* - or with cherry-picked special issues. Many good examples are included the *Research Methods in Gaming* issue of *Simulation & Gaming* (Mäyrä et al., eds., 2012).

These five contributions represent various facets of role-playing that takes place in games, ranging from game fiction to educational uses. Most of them focus especially on live-action role-playing, yet they all also contribute to our understanding of tabletop and digital role-playing. I believe this reflects the fact that a very high number of scholars in the study of role-playing are arising from the ranks of live-action role-players, many of whom also engage in other forms of game-based role-playing, and are thus particularly familiar with

what research is being done on various platforms in the field.

All of the articles in this issue received their first rounds of critique and feedback during the seminar itself, after which seven of the seminar papers were chosen for further development. The selected, revised works then went through standard double-blind peer review, in accordance with this journal's specifications. In the end, these five were selected for publication. Due to the multi-stage production of this issue, it has its own editorial board, who did the initial paper selection, and review board, consisting of those reviewers who wanted their names publicized. We are very thankful to both, for their very valuable time in making this special issue as great a contribution to role-playing studies as possible.

In *Social Conflict in Role-Playing Communities*, Sarah Lynne Bowman takes a qualitative, ethnographic approach to describe interpersonal tensions in communities of live-action and tabletop role-playing, identifying several factors that contribute to it during, and in connection, with gameplay.

Angelina Ilieva, with *Cultural Languages of Role-Playing*, shows how the fictions of role-play are not just reflections of mundane life and fantasy, they are actually created through the use of shared cultural knowledge that plays on known stereotypes and archetypes, borrowed from myth and folklore.

In *A Closer Look at the (Rule-) Books: Framings and Paratexts in Tabletop Role-playing Games*, David Jara analyzes the paratexts of tabletop role-

playing manuals, pointing out the complexity of emergent game discourse and narratives.

With Edu-Larp as Revision of Subject-Matter Knowledge, Michał Mochocki argues for the lightening of educational goals for edu-larp, in order to increase both actual learning and teacher willingness to accept larp as a potential tool.

Jaakko Stenros examines the role and functions of non-player characters and ractors in *Between Game Facilitation and Performance: Interactive Actors and Non-Player Characters in Larps*, finding that they can be divided by function into distinct categories that tie into the use of game master power during play.

These five represent just a small selection of what was presented at the seminar. May they serve as an inkling on a phenomenon currently taking place in the field of role-playing studies: innovative looks at existing phenomena that have been observed in play for a long time, but not really analyzed in-depth until now. They build on the tradition of existing research, instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, yet definitely provide new, innovative angles to that tradition.

J. Tuomas Harviainen

## REFERENCES

- (1) Mäyrä, F., Holopainen, J. & Jakobsson, M. (eds.) 2012. *Symposium: Research Methods in Gaming. Simulation & Gaming*, 43(3).

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