Editorial
Special Issue: Role-playing and Simulation in Education Conference 2018

Welcome to Issue 8 of the *International Journal of Role-Playing*. In the past few years, the educational role-playing game (RPG) has evolved from its roots as a curious hybrid of leisure role-playing and experiential learning to an increasingly widespread practice around the world. This year saw the publication of the first textbook in our field, *Role-Playing Game Studies: Transmedia Foundations* (2018), edited by José P. Zagal and Sebastian Deterding, a collaboration between dozens of scholars and practitioners from several countries. The book features significant contributions on topics pertaining to virtual, tabletop, and live action role-playing (larp) from a multitude of disciplines and approaches, including a chapter on the use of role-playing in education. This special issue of the *International Journal of Role-Playing* further demonstrates this expansion in our field, featuring peer-reviewed articles from Singapore, the United States, Brazil, and Canada. This edition highlights papers selected from a excellent group of presentations at this year's Role-playing and Simulation in Education Conference, which took place on May 17, 2018 at Northeastern University in Boston, MA.

As with its previous iteration, the event was held in concert with the Living Games Conference 2018, which is devoted to the academic and practical study of larp in all its forms. This year, Evan Torner and I collaborated with Celia Pearce from the Game Design Program of Northeastern University's Department of Art+Design. The conference featured a wide range of topics, including two exemplary keynoters: Elizabeth Fein from Duquesne University, who discussed larp interventions for children with autism at a summer camp, and Northeastern's Kellian Adams Pletcher, who explored the use of role-playing and games in museums. Role-playing and Simulation in Education aims to include many forms of experiential learning under a broad umbrella with the goal of exchanging expertise and inspiration among practitioners, scholars, and players alike.

The articles featured in this issue are no exception, representing a fascinating array of applications of educational role-playing in various contexts. Ken Koziej and Mikael Hellström's "Year Zero Economics: Using Edu-Larping to Explore Economic Systems in the Ninth Grade" discusses their experimental design of an economics unit for high school students in

Alberta, Canada. Adapting the setting of the popular video game *Mutant: Year Zero*, the authors applied principles from gamification, game-based learning, and edu-larp to help students better understand the social, political, and economic constraints caused by scarcity. The authors evaluate their educational design according to scholar Michał Mochocki's (2014) suggested criteria for effective edu-larps. This application demonstrates how theories and practices in the field of role-playing studies are becoming influential in wider circles.

Magdalene Loh presents another interesting application geared toward a wider range of ages. In "Edu-Larping for Career Design," she discusses the Career Design Life Game that she helped develop in Singapore, which was tested by 216 participants aged 12-65. The game is designed to mimic the types of challenges individuals must face when pursuing a career in today's volatile job market. The game establishes a character sheet-like Identity Document that highlights the character's skills based upon Howard Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences and Paul Tough's (2012) synthesis of Performance Character. The game allows participants to pursue various career strategies and obtain feedback from game masters regarding the relative success of these approaches. This work received positive qualitative reviews from participants of all ages, indicating a re-freshing direction for individuals wishing to expand upon their career development skills.

Next, the issue features a fascinating exploration of the philosophy behind creativity and how card-based storytelling games might inspire new channels of expression. In "Wonder Cards Storytelling: Imagi-nation, Storytelling, and Role-playing in the Creation of Objects, Spaces, and Experiences," Rian Rezende, Sabrina Araujo, and Denise Portinari discuss the de-velopment of their game system. The Wonder Cards prompt players to develop stories based upon a sequence of randomly chosen cards. This design is aug-mented by the Storytelling expansion, which inspires groups to create role-playing scenarios based upon the constraints offered by the cards. The authors found that students in their design classes at Pontifi-cal Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, were able to take new creative leaps by using the random-ness of the cards to inspire new avenues for story-telling.

Our final article also discusses the use of role-playing in the college classroom, this time applying the method to scientific subject matter. In "Case Studies as Tabletop RPGs," Susan Weiner uses her considerable experience as a role-playing game designer to create tabletop scenarios for students to solve case studies. She discusses examples from her undergraduate and graduate-level medical physiology course, in which students practice diagnosing and treating diseases. Weiner discusses the ways in which role-playing im-proved student engagement by providing increased opportunities for agency within the fictional scenar-ios. Her work nicely complements previous publica-tions on the use of educational role-playing games to help augment simulations for training in the medical field (cf. Standiford 2014; Bowman and Standiford 2016), further helping to contextualize the role of RPGs within the overall scope of experiential learn-ing for professional training.

These articles represent a few examples of the ways in which educational role-playing, gaming, immersive environments, and simulation are evolving around the world. The *International Journal of Role-Playing* is honored to further this important discourse on expe-riential learning in our increasingly interactive, par-ticipatory times.

-- Sarah Lynne Bowman, Ph.D.
Coordinating Editor
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