THE CRPG BOOK: A GUIDE TO COMPUTER ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

PEPPE, F. (ed.): *The CRPG Book: A Guide to Computer Role--Playing Games*. Bath : Bitmap Books, 2019. 528 p. In press.

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There have been a lot of books about games history written so far. Some better than others, but none with such an interesting and moving story behind its creation as *CRPG Book: A Guide to Computer Role-Playing Games*. It all started in 2014 when Felipe Peppe (@felipepepe), a Brazilian emigrant, currently living in Japan, published a list of the70 best RPG games on the RPG Codex forum. It was received so well within the community that he decided to further enrich this list of games with short descriptions which he managed to put together with help of the forum members. And so he did. It took him far more time than he expected but the result is amazing and available for free to download for anyone under the Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial License.

According to the official website, the goal of the project is to gather all the knowledge currently spread across countless websites, books, forums and minds in a single, accessible and visually pleasing tome – for free. It shares the Internet Archive's belief that *"access drives preservation"* and aims to demystify gaming history, offering a reliable and attractive resource for people seeking information – or just a fun game to play.[1]

Across its 528 pages one can find information about over 400 RPGs, from the early PLATO games to modern AAA releases grouped into 8 chronological chapters with short introductions (similar to how Matt Barton's 2008 book *Dungeon and Desktops*[2] is divided) and one chapter containing early Japanese JRPG's and a selection of Fan-Translations, hidden gems and curiosities. The reviews written by a team of 112 volunteers from all around the globe are accompanied by Articles & Guides section with basic info on how to use the book, FAQ and some well-written texts giving the reader broader context on RGP genre specifics and some technological background information. The book was originally published in February as a well-formatted PDF file that can directly be downloaded by anybody without any payment, subscription or registration. It might seem strange at first but Peppe provided a sound explanation on why he decided to make it free for Forbes magazine: "I find it amusing how people are used to getting excellent roguelikes and massive game mods for free, but think a book like this should be sold. Truth is, I believe something like this can ONLY be made as a free project. Just imagine how many copies I would have to sell to pay over 100 writers, including famous developers like Chris Avellone and Tim Cain. Even if I wrote it all by myself (a massive decline in quality) and sold 1 000 physical copies (a decent number for this kind of book) at a 10 USD profit, I would only be paid about 200 dollars per month of work. Now, meeting hundreds of people from all over the world,

spreading my hobby, getting over 100 000 downloads in the first week and even helping charity – that's a much more valuable and interesting reward."[3]

Indeed, it sounds reasonable to produce a collaborative work this way but there is more to it. The book was first released as a 1.0 version. Texts were edited, but not properly proofread and contained many small imprecisions and errors due to various sources and the volume of information gathered. Thanks to the enormous number of people who downloaded the file, it was collaboratively checked and corrected to a 1.0.4 version. During the process, Peppe was bombarded with requests to make a printed version (with some people already printing their own copy). To address this demand, he considered various crowdfunding platforms, but then signed a contract for a limited number of hardcover copies with Bitmap Books, a renowned publisher of retro gaming books. Part of the deal was the temporary removal of the PDF from the website (although direct links shared by many websites were kept functional) until the book goes through professional proofreading and gets printed. After that, the final version will be available for free download again. As he puts it, this is a fair deal.[4] The book (with cover art from Jan Pospíšil) will be available for pre-order in January 2019. According to Peppe, all profits from its sale will be donated to Vocação, an award-winning NGO in Brazil that helps kids and teenagers from poor communities to advance their education and find a job.[5]

If you are interested in books about videogames and you like how the community is coming together to help authors, you should also take a look at another project by Richard Moss who is preparing a comprehensive book to be released via Unbounders – a crowd funding publishing platform. It will bring together information on the era of shareware games in early days of the Internet. The full title of the book will be *Shareware Heroes: Independent Games at the Dawn of Internet* and it will explore resources. To get more information, go to and pledge at *unbound.com.* While you are there be sure to also check the hilarious *Things I Learned from Mario's Butt* by Laura Kate Dale.

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1   *About the Project.* [online]. [2018-11-15]. Available at: <https://crpgbook.wordpress.com/about-the-project/>.

2   For more information, see: BARTON, M.: *Dungeons and Desktops: The History of Computer Role-Playing Games*. Wellesley : A K Peters, Ltd., 2008.

3   MURNANE, K.: *The 'CRPG Book Project' Is A Magnificent Love Letter To Computer RPG*s. Released on 13th February 2018. [online]. [2018-11-15]. Available at: <www.forbes.com/sites/kevinmurnane/2018/02/12/the-crpg-book-project-is-a-magnificent-love-letter-to-computer-rpgs/>.

4   *Update 21 – The Hardcover Book*. Released on 1st March 2018. [online]. [2018-11-15]. Available at: <https://crpgbook.wordpress.com/2018/03/01/update-21-the-hardcover-book/>.

5   *Update 23 – Physical Edition, Revealed!*. Released on 5th November 2018. [online]. [2018-11-15]. Available at: <https://crpgbook.wordpress.com/2018/11/05/update-23-physical-edition-revealed/>.