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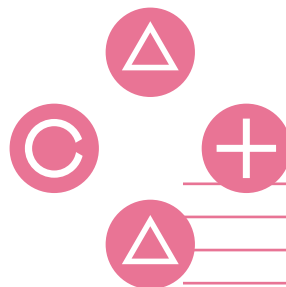
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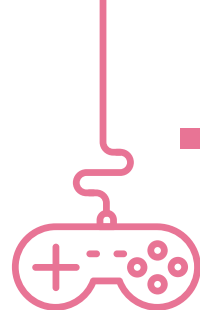
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Journal Orientation



Acta Ludologica is a scientific journal in the field of games and digital games. The journal contains professional scientific reflections on digital games; it also offers academic discourses on games, especially media and digital competencies, creation, design, marketing, research, development, psychology, sociology, history and the future of digital games and game studies.

Acta Ludologica is a double-blind peer reviewed journal published twice a year. It focuses on theoretical studies, theoretical and empirical studies, research results and their implementation into practice, as well as professional publication and scientific reviews of digital games.

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“Great stories happen to those who can tell them.” – Ira Glass, American radio journalist

As years and even decades of the new millennium pass by, the claim that our lives are driven by stories does not lose even a fragment of its timeless relevance. Our general fascination with different kinds of narratives is one of the very few ways of holding people's attention in an era when no one has enough patience to wait for anything or free time to spare. A good story is what most media industries and their products are built upon; it engages our attention, entertains, overwhelms human senses, and... helps us sell all kinds of products. It could be said that media culture of the 21st century is saturated with secular myths, mythological beings and fantastic environments with escapist qualities. Digital games are, certainly enough, complex media products with distinct features and elements of self-expression. Not a single player ever says that their favourite digital game has legendary visuals or legendary combat modes. However, our personal experiences related to digital gaming often include legendary heroines and heroes and the stories they appear in. Truly, many highly popular and commercially successful casual, social media or mobile games possess little to no narrative qualities. Nevertheless, we believe an impressive storyline is what makes a (not only digital) game really memorable. It makes us actually care about what happens in the end and fully embrace the role of a heroic figure. Just let us look at digital role-playing games (hereinafter RPGs). The last massively successful Western RPG was CD Projekt Red's *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015), the (so far) final instalment of the company's acclaimed fantasy series. It is thus beyond anyone's understanding why CD Projekt Red decided to produce *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020), which was supposed to become the company's new 'flagship', as a first-person game. The game did not and could not fulfil its true purpose, which was to merge the player with the hero and let the player experience what it is like to see this visually rich dystopic world from a god-like perspective, the perspective of a creator. In contrast, role-playing elements are, to a lesser or greater extent, present in many other genres. Quite paradoxically, this overuse of role-playing aspects is weakening the original genre, robbing it of its distinct strengths. It is not rare to encounter players who mistake, for example, *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* (Ubisoft, 2020) for an RPG. On the other hand, those thinking that the *Assassin's Creed* series can be defined as a set of RPGs may not be too far from the truth anymore. Anyways, digital role-playing is not special and universally applicable because it truly lets the player decide

what will happen next; it is so outstanding because the player feels that their in-game choices really matter. This process of shaping one's own heroic figure is, in a way, an act of creation. Let us remember that no one has ever played an RPG to consume someone else's product. However, all interested players have done so to create their own stories and explore fictional worlds, which are so fascinating that their only weakness lies in not being real.

However, the question of what makes a (game-related) story exceptional implies a plethora of different problems which we may encounter while trying to interpret or simply identify one. Of course, this set of issues reaches far beyond the boundaries of the digital games industry and much deeper into our everyday lives. The latest issue of *Acta Ludologica* acknowledges this fact quite clearly. Reacting to what we already know about game design and its elements, B. Dupont and S. Malliet discuss 'dark patterns', many of which tend to lure players into transactions involving real money or into the vortex of non-substance addiction. The authors contextualise this concept with the semiotic model of the 'ludeme'. Such a problem is necessarily associated with the frameworks of digital literacies, which walk hand-in-hand with education. As outlined in J. Miškov's research study, today's education is largely driven by digital technologies. Thus, we need to explore which kinds of game elements can be used in terms of e-learning and ensure that students will see these efforts as welcome diversification of their curriculum. Focusing on a different topic, yet still underlining how important it is to share one's knowledge, A. Burlamaqui Ferreira and R. Marques de Albuquerque reflect on 'indie' game developers, who inspire others to follow in their footsteps through uploading 'how to' videos and sharing their practical experience. H. Akmal and P. Coulton's study offers both a complex philosophical perspective related to our current understanding of Human Centred Design and a wider discussion on the Internet of Things and its ontological frameworks. Seeing digital games' difficulty as a welcome and rather necessary part of playing them, M. Terrasa-Torres presents difficulty as a form of aesthetic expression driving the player's experience. M. Engler and A. Trnka emphasise the fact that concept art is an autonomous artistic phenomenon with a bright future, also outlining practical aspects of creating concept art and exploring its promotional features.

Dear readers, thank you for being interested in *Acta Ludologica* and the journal's ever-evolving story. Let us hope it will become even more successful and worthy of academic attention.

assoc. prof. PhDr. Jana Radošinská, PhD.

Communication Today's Deputy Managing Editor

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