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On Your Mark, Get Set, Go! Learn More About Using Games in Library Instruction

By Rebecca Engsberg

In October 2016, the Georgia Library Association's (GLA) Reference and Instructional Services Interest Group (RISIG) sponsored a panel presentation at GaCOMO 2016 about using games in library instruction. The conference program description of "Let's Play: Library Instruction" stated that "[b]y tapping into curiosity, creativity, and a sprinkling of competitiveness, instruction through games can be engaging, exciting, and energizing."

As the first presenter (from Mercer University, a mid-sized private school with about 8,600 students), I offered the audience a brief explanation of the potentially confusing buzzwords of 'gamification' and 'game-based instruction' (see my presentation slides at <http://www.slideshare.net/gacomo/lets-play-library-instruction>). The next presenter, Jean Cook (from the somewhat larger, public University of West Georgia with about 10,700 students) explained and demonstrated some non-digital games that she had used effectively in a classroom setting. The final presenters, Karen Doster-Greenleaf and Amy Stalker (both from Georgia State University, a much larger public institution with about 32,000 students) discussed their experiences using digital games in library instruction.

Although the panel consisted of four presenters from academic libraries in Georgia, the presentation topic is not limited to just one kind of library. In fact, every kind of library—including public and school libraries—may benefit from librarians using games in library instruction. You don't need to reinvent the wheel, either. You can draw inspiration from what other librarians have done.

Building on the GaCOMO presentation, this brief article offers some additional resources

related to using games in library instruction. Whether you're just getting started, or you want to enhance how you already use games to instruct, the selective annotated bibliography of online resources as well as the selective bibliography of additional print resources could be helpful tools for you.

My rationale for the selective annotated bibliography of online resources was to identify a number of online resources that were easy to access from an individual's office computer. I provided annotations of these ten resources so that individuals could more easily choose to explore resources of interest. My rationale for the selective bibliography was to identify additional resources (in this case, fourteen) that were not necessarily online, should individuals choose to further explore the topic.

Selective Annotated Bibliography of Online Resources

Angell, Katelyn, and Eamon Tewell. 2015. "Measuring Our Information Literacy Footprint: Assessing Game-Based Learning in Library Instruction." In *Creating Sustainable Community, ACRL 2015, March 25–28, 2015, Portland, Oregon, Conference Proceedings*, edited by Dawn M. Mueller, 516–521. Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries—a division of the American Library Association. http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/conferences/confsandpreconfs/2015/Angell_Tewell.pdf.

In this online resource, the authors explore the assessment of games in information literacy library instruction. Following a standard research paper format, they first introduce their topic and offer an overview of the relevant literature. Then they describe their own study,

including methods and data collection, followed by a results and discussion section. The authors conclude with their hope that their study will encourage additional research on game-based learning.

Burkhardt, Andy. 2014. "Taking Games in Libraries Seriously." *The Academic Commons*. <http://www.academiccommons.org/2014/07/24/taking-games-in-libraries-seriously/>

Although the author begins by addressing the collecting of games by libraries, a later section titled "Games in Library Instruction" is useful for librarians who instruct. In addition to describing orientation games, the author also discusses games developed by librarians that focus on information literacy competencies as well as more in-depth research skills.

Hofer, Amy. 2013. "Giving Games the Old College Try." *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*. <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2013/giving-games-the-old-college-try/>

In this article from an open access, open peer reviewed journal, the author describes her experience using two different games in a for-credit online information literacy course. She defines games as "activities that are designed as games from the beginning (not retrofitted with "gamification" components), are played online, and create interactive user experiences."

"Incorporating Games in Instruction." 2016. *The Game Making Interest Group of the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) division of the American Library Association (ALA)*. <https://gagemakinginterestgroup.wikispaces.com/incorporating+games+in+instruction>

This Wikispaces Classroom website offers a useful starting point for librarians who are interested in learning more about (and using) games in library instruction. The website provides links to actual game elements to incorporate, and at different levels—from

simple to moderate to advanced difficulty. The website also includes sections titled Best Practices, Library Game Examples, and Suggested Readings (links to these sections are on the right side of the screen).

Isaacs, Steven. 2015. "The Difference between Gamification and Game-Based Learning." *ACSD Inservice* (blog), January 15. <http://inservice.ascd.org/the-difference-between-gamification-and-game-based-learning/>

This blog post attempts to clear up misconceptions regarding the frequently used buzzwords of 'gamification' and 'game-based learning.' The author's perspective is based on his experience as a middle school teacher, so he understandably often refers to the traditional school classroom. Nevertheless, this site is very helpful—regardless of instruction context—in understanding the differences between the two concepts. Isaacs ends his post with an effective, easy-to-understand infographic that visually portrays the differences between 'gamification' and 'game-based learning.'

McDevitt, Theresa. 2016. "Games and Activities for Energizing Library Instruction." *Indiana University of Pennsylvania Library / LibGuides*. <http://libraryguides.lib.iup.edu/c.php?g=60507>

This guide contains links and bibliographic information for resources to help instructors energize library and information literacy instruction with games and activities. All of the guide's content is accessible from the first and only page of the guide, so it is easy to use. That page contains seven boxes, including boxes with links to and descriptions of online games, a selective bibliography of resources, citation information and activities links, links to blogs and other web resources, and links to online searching instruction activities.

Miller, Willie. 2013. "Gaming the Library: Using Game-Based Learning in Libraries." *Information Today Europe*, November 15.

<http://www.infotoday.eu/Articles/Editorial/Featured-Articles/Gaming-the-library-using-game-based-learning-in-libraries-93307.aspx>

The author shares his experience with digital game-based learning in this online article. He describes his collaboration with diverse colleagues to develop a new game directed at informing users about the resources, services, and processes of the library. The resulting game is quite complex and took over a year to plan. In the article's concluding section, entitled "Lessons Learned," Miller addresses what could be improved for future iterations of the game.

Smale, Maura. 2015. "Play a Game, Make a Game: Getting Creative with Professional Development for Library Instruction." *The Journal of Creative Library Practice*, May 18. <http://creativelibrarypractice.org/2015/05/18/play-a-game-make-a-game/>

The author of this peer-reviewed journal article shares her experiences with developing a brainstorming card game to help librarians create games for information literacy and library instruction, as well as a game about evaluating sources designed to be played in a library instruction session. Smale also expands upon a major benefit of using games in academic libraries—increasing student engagement through active learning. Readers of this article could gain information helpful in creating their own game, or adapting an existing game for their own use, regardless of audience or educational setting.

Smale, Maura. 2011. "Learning Through Quests and Contests: Games in Information Literacy Instruction." *Journal of Library Innovation*, Vol 2 (2): 36–55. <http://www.libraryinnovation.org/article/view/148>

This earlier article by the same author as the preceding one provides an overview of using games in library instruction. The author first discusses research in game-based learning

before addressing information literacy games. After Smale briefly discusses commercially-produced digital games, she writes in greater detail about digital information literacy games used in eight academic libraries. In addition, the author addresses non-digital information literacy games used in seven academic institutions. Then Smale enumerates game principles for information literacy instruction and identifies potential barriers to games-based learning.

Sugarman, Tammy, and Guy Leach. 2005. "Play to Win! Using Games in Library Instruction to Enhance Student Learning" *University Library Faculty Publications*. Paper 38. http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/univ_lib_facpub/38

This article explains the positive impact on students of using games, as well as the benefit to librarians of incorporating games into instruction. The authors identify a gap in the literature (at least in the decade preceding the article) of any articles that describe the use of games in single occasion library instruction sessions. However, the authors offer a thorough review of the studies through 2004 that have been reported.

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Giles, Kelly. 2015. "No Budget, No Experience, No Problem: Creating a Library Orientation Game for Freshman Engineering Majors." *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 41 (2): 170–177.

Haruko, Kobayashi, Shinkawa Mikiko, and Yamamori Takahiko. 2013. "Librarian-Faculty Collaboration in Using a Game-Based Method to Teach Information Literacy." *Journal of the Japan Medical Library*

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