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# Introduction

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## Editors' Introduction to the Special Issue

One of the aims of the Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association (ToDiGRA) is to collect the best received work presented at the DiGRA conferences. This special issue collects some of the highlights from the 2015 edition of the DiGRA conference held in Lüneburg, Germany (May 14-17). The conference theme of “Diversity of play: Games – Cultures – Identities” invited submissions that reflected upon the diversity of games and gaming and this compilation features some of the best work on that. As usual, the invited keynote speeches are not an integral part of the Transactions. We did however publish the keynotes in a separate open access publication that you might want to read in parallel with the peer-reviewed articles in this issue. You can find the booklet with the title “Diversity of Play” (ed Mathias Fuchs) published by meson press

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in Lüneburg available for free download at: <http://meson.press/books/diversity-of-play/>

The papers presented here are reworked versions of the highest rated submissions to the conference according to the double-blind review process. In the spirit of transparency, we feel it is important to disclose how we selected the entries for this issue. As is customary at DiGRA conferences, all submitted full-papers were double-blind peer-reviewed and the resulting selection reflects the breath of research presented at the conference. The issue's editors invited the ten papers that were ranked highest by the anonymous reviewers to submit to the journal issue, and added a paper that was an "audience favourite". All of the papers that you can find in this issue contribute in a substantial way to the conference topic of "Diversity of Play" and to various aspects of what we call game cultures.

Video game culture has had a self-image of being a distinct cultural form united by participants identifying themselves as "gamers" for many years. Variations in this identity have been perceived either in relation to preferred platform or level of commitment and skill (newbie, casual, core, pro, etc.). Today the popularity of games has increased dramatically, games have become more specialized and gaming is taking place in a number of divergent practices, from e-sports to gamification. In addition, the gamer position includes a number of roles, attitudes and identities such as: players, learners, users, fans, roleplayers, theory crafters, speed runners, etc. Furthermore, gamification and game-based learning, as well as the playful use of computer simulation for training purposes, is making it difficult to distinguish games from non-games.

Many of the papers provide new ways of looking at games thus supporting a plurality of approaches for researching games. **Pablo Abend** and **Benjamin Beil** analyze *Minecraft* and *LittleBigPlanet* using a praxeological approach to explore the concept of editor games in which players are co-creators of game worlds. **Fraser Allison** shows how the concept of focalization offers possibilities for analyzing subjective experiences

gained while playing digital games. **Darshana Jayemanne**, **Thomas Apperley** and **Bjorn Nansen** argue for using an “aesthetic of recruitment” in order to understand how hybrid play products function. Others look at specific games and analyze them from different perspectives. **Joe Baxter-Webb** presents a study of ICT students that highlights the complexity of relationships between gaming and their interest toward future computing careers. **Erik Champion** looks at computer role-playing games and argues that the meaning behind worlds, rituals and roles could be explored more to support digitally simulated social and cultural worlds. **Geoff Kaufman**, **Mary Flanagan** and **Max Seidman** investigate persuasive games and demonstrate how an “embedded design model” can be instrumental in developing strategies that open up a space of possibilities or even a potentially open mindset. **Brendan Keogh** looks at the game *Binary Domain* as a focal point for tracing how depictions of technology as dangerous have influenced video games. **Meg Barton** and colleagues present the serious game *Missing: The Final Secret* developed for mitigating cognitive biases. Rather than looking at specific games, **Raphaël Marczak**, **Gareth Schott** and **Pierre Hanna** present an extension to the feedback-based gameplay metrics method which exploits audio and visual output of games to produce accounts of player performance. And last, but not least, **Souvik Mukherjee** compares the depiction of slavery in video games and earlier media and contrasts this to the notion of freedom and agency in video games per se.

It brings us pride to show the variety of high quality creative research and scholarship that is published within game research and at DiGRA specifically.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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