University of Glasgow Games and Gaming Lab (GGLab)
End of year Report 2020

GGLab co-directors: Tim Peacock, Dimitra Fimi, Jane Draycott, Matt Barr, and GGLab Flyer

We owe a special thank you to Professors Dauvit Broun and Faye Hammill, whose support and encouragement as the Directors of ArtsLab has been much appreciated throughout the year.

The Games and Gaming Lab (GGLab) has had a mixture of in-person meetings and online activity in its early months, as well as exploring new ways of working online since lockdown.

A brief summary of the Lab's activity in five numbers from 2019-20:

16 - Some of the publications in games/gaming by Lab members based at Glasgow University

20 - Meetings exploring External Collaborations or advising on potential projects

63 - GGLab Members, representing 15 Glasgow University Subjects, and affiliated members from 12 universities in the UK and internationally.

133 - staff, students and industry representatives attending two in-person events (102 & 31 – of the feedback forms from the events, over 70% indicated these had changed their perceptions of games research at Glasgow and 100% indicated that they wanted further events).

1,100 - approximate number of times our social media posts have been liked or retweeted.

The above social media engagement includes the GGLab Twitter account and posts by Glasgow University-related accounts, as well as engagement with our GGLab Blog posts.)

The Lab's work is outlined in more detail in the pages below, under the following headings:

- Events and Engagement Activities

- Funded Projects, Experimental Projects, and Applications

- External Collaboration

- Publications and Scholarly Activities

- Postgraduate Recruitment Potential

- Distinctiveness of Gaming at Glasgow

- Future Plans

Events and Engagement Activities

Space in Gaming – This launch event, on the 50th Anniversary of Apollo 12, attracted more than 100 participants, including staff, students and members of the gaming industry. It was held in November 2019 in the Wolfson Medical Building, and included talks by Glasgow-based BAFTA-winning games designers NoCode and by Glasgow alumni Scott Manley, who does gaming and science educational outreach from San Francisco through a 1 million subscriber YouTube Channel he has built up. There was also a showcase of the University's gaming research and games-related archival holdings.

Book Launch – *Graduate Skills and Game-based Learning* (Palgrave Macmillan monograph), written by Matt Barr, was launched in February, including a talk and curated games session.

UniRIG Challenge (Universities Re-imagined Inside Games) – An online design challenge, launching the GGLab YouTube Channel, June 2020 (*video icon left*). Open to staff, students, alumni and family members, to create what they imagined a university may look like inside a game, receiving a free digital certificate. The aim is to promote wellbeing/public outreach, but also stimulate creative thinking on the future of universities – it is being promoted by the World Changing Glasgow Transformation Team and in the College of Arts Newsletter.

***Digital Heroisms* (laying the foundations for an upcoming online conference) –** Following revisions as a result of lockdown, the CfP for the Glasgow student-led *Digital Heroisms* conference in August was launched. It is supported by GGLab, Games Studies at Glasgow, and the School for Critical Studies, and will be held in the free virtual gaming world of Runescape in August.

Funded Projects, Experimental Projects, and Applications

Funded Projects

Glasgow Wargaming Initiative (LTDF Award) – GGLab has been working with the Scottish Centre for War Studies (*left icon*) in this project, which secured LTDF funding (£3,000) to explore innovative new teaching methods. Two Lab co-directors are co-investigators. The project is using external expertise, a PhD student who previously advised NATO, to create a custom wargaming simulation platform for use in postgraduate teaching at Glasgow. While lockdown compelled postponement of the demonstration wargame, Tim Peacock will become PI for this project in Autumn 2020 – the wargame will be run next year, either online or in-person, conditions permitting. The possibility for a larger bid to support upscaling the prototype will also be explored as part of the work.

Gaming: New Horizons (part of Being Human Hub Award) – A proposal for a GGLab event formed part of the University's successful funding application for a *Being Human* Hub Award – a public engagement virtual field trip, using a game to show members of the public new ways of reinterpreting the world by exploring a 'new' gaming world. The work is contained under Project Looking Glass, examining new ways in which practice-based research through academic gameplay may aid in future use of games in academic settings.

Physiological Society Game – Lab member, Craig Daly, Senior Lecturer in Life Sciences, has been awarded £10,000 by the Physiological Society to develop a game. GGLab is currently supporting this work, including through advice and meetings with Matt Barr.

Experimental and Technical Projects (ET Projects – 'Flying Bicycles')

We have been advising and supporting members of staff on potential ET Projects and funding applications for these, including the prospect of turning their research into games. These are (apart from the above) mostly in the planning stages, with work ongoing this next year. One planned workshop needed to be postponed because of lockdown.

Applications and Plans for Next Year

Apart from some pending applications by co-directors and members, the Lab is exploring different grant capture projects for next year, including a possible RSE Network Grant Bid, and a Marie Curie Fellowship bid. The founder of Archaeogaming is exploring this latter project with Jane Draycott, who would like to work with GGLab at Glasgow to develop new pedagogical tools through gaming research.

External Collaboration

Lab members are significantly involved in external collaboration, as well as on professional bodies relating to games research and networks. Matt Barr's roles, for example, include Vice Chair of British DiGRA, a Director of SGDA, and on the Gaming BAFTAs Board of Judges.

Academics from other universities, in the UK and elsewhere, and industry representatives, have similarly expressed interest in possible future links. In at least one case, Lab membership served as the basis to begin discussing possible future collaboration. Other examples include:

- Professor Sebastian Bae, from Georgetown University, Washington D.C., working in Wargaming, has approached us to explore possibilities for formal collaboration with GGLab. Our conversations are ongoing, including with colleagues from War Studies.
- A gaming company based in Glasgow (GameDoctor) also approached the Lab, having seen the publicity about the launch and wanting to explore possible future collaborations. This has led to a meeting and ongoing conversations.

Publications and Scholarly Activities

GGLab issued a CfP for a scholarly edition on *Women in Historical & Archaeological Video Games*, in response to Bloomsbury's invitation to Jane Draycott to submit an edited volume in this field. The CfP response was so positive, receiving submissions from academics, games developers and other organisations, that the co-editors felt able to pursue 2 edited volumes (*Women in Classical Video Games* and *Women in Historical and Archaeological Video Games*). Bloomsbury has expressed an interest in both, as has Manchester University Press (*icon – Kassandra from Assassin's Creed – used in CfP*).

In 2019-20, Lab members from Glasgow have also published, or submitted for publication, works ranging from articles and monographs to blog posts and videos that may lead to future research, while also working to encourage student research/publications. A sample includes:

- Matthew Barr, *Graduate Skills and Game-Based Learning: Using Video Games for Employability in Higher Education* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).
- [M. A. Hutton] and Matthew Barr (2019), 'Introduction: A Literary Studies/Games Studies Conversation', *Games and Culture*, (doi: 10.1177/1555412019884461) (Early Online Publication) [Special Issue of *Games & Culture* on games and literature, co-edited by Matthew Barr.]
- Timothy Peacock, 'Online Memorialising Real-world Disasters and Crises through Gaming: The Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster and Kerbal Space Program', pp. 1-14 (*under review*).
- Katharine Forsyth [and M. A. Hall], 'Rhetoric and Reality in the Visual Culture of Medieval Celtic Board Games: Literary and Archaeological Evidence Combined', in E. Lapina and V. Kopp (eds), *Games and Visual Culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Series: Studies in the History of Daily Life (800-1600)* (Brepols: Turnhout, Belgium, 2020).
- Tim Barker, 'Cultural Techniques of Play: A Media Philosophical Approach to the Study of Time, History and Memory in Games', *Configurations*, 27:1 (2019), pp. 87-110.
- Gabe Arcana, 'Animal Crossing: New Horizons, COVID-19 and the Fantasy of a 'Normal' Life' (GGLab Blog Post, 2020 – possible development into a piece for *The Conversation*).
- Euan Loarridge, 'War through the Eyes of the Toy Soldier: A Material Study of the Legacy and Impact of Conflict 1880 – 1945', *Critical Military Studies* (2019).
- Lauren Bergin, '"I will not die dishonoured": Popular Conceptions of Samurai Warfare in the Online Video Game League of Legends', *Student Strategy and Security Journal*, 1:1 (2020), pp. 76-8 [Lauren has also researched and created several blog posts as part of an Internship with Esports Company Espo].

Postgraduate Recruitment Potential

GGLab activities have resulted in several prospective students exploring options to conduct research on games at Glasgow. These include both the recruitment of new students (2 PhD students and 1 MRes), and existing postgraduate students at other institutions who have indicated a desire to spend a term/year at Glasgow as visiting researchers working with GGLab.

Distinctiveness of Gaming at Glasgow

In the set-up of the Lab, we took onboard the question posed by the Senior Management Group, as to what the distinctive nature of the study of gaming at Glasgow University entailed. This will undoubtedly remain an ongoing conversation, but, following discussion and consultation, as well as experiences gained through our activities this year, detailed above, we believe that gaming at Glasgow is defined by two core values:

- **Creativity that is World-Changing** – Glasgow fosters an environment in which staff and students are encouraged to pursue gaming research which is audacious in its scope, and which has global impacts. No more is this evident than in such initiatives as *The Great Game: Waterloo Replayed* in 2019, the largest wargame in the world (participants from which are now contributing to the work of GGLab). The outputs from this project are continuing to shape both engagement with groups from schools to veterans, and research into such areas as mental health and wargaming in lockdown.

- **Collaborative Breadth that is exceptional** – Glasgow is perhaps unique in the sheer breadth of interdisciplinarity and Knowledge Exchange enabled in its gaming research, bringing together academics in disciplines from Arts to Science/Engineering with external partners, whether from other universities to leading companies and charities.

Future Plans

In addition to the continued output of material through GGLab's online presence, our plans and priorities for next year which are currently established, some highlighted above, include the following (one or more co-directors will be taking the lead on each area, others supporting):

- The *Digital Heroisms* conference (August)

- Glasgow Wargaming Initiative (managing the project, likely delivering the demonstration wargame in May/June 2021)

- Delivery of the 'Gaming: New Horizons' event for *Being Human* Festival (November)

- Delivery of an online event on 'Fantasy in Gaming' by Dimitra Fimi

- *Women in Historical & Archaeological Video Games* (editing/submitting the volumes)

- Exploring grant bids, including a possible RSE Network Grant

- Supporting ET Projects, including helping colleagues to explore possibilities for turning their research into games

We also look forward to continuing to work with and to promote the activities of ArtsLab, as well as those of other games-related projects across the University. **#GGatUofG**