

Playing Title: [Click Here to Play](#)



A Master of Arts Project Proposal

Presented to

Emergent Digital Practices

University of Denver



In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Emergent Digital Practices



by

Jinnie Templin

November 14, 2014

Advisor: Rafael Fjardo

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Introduction/description	4
Literature Review	9
Project Scope & Timeline	17
Materials & Methods	18
Dissemination & Potential Outcomes	23
References	30

Abstract

Contemporary, “always-on,” US workforces have expressed frustrations with an increasingly disproportionate work-life balance. While business organizations have attempted to placate overworked employees by adopting gamification strategies and introducing playful distractions into office environments (e.g. pool tables, basketball courts, bowling alleys, slides, etc.), very few business organizations, if any, seem to harness the deep value, power, and appreciation of play.

Building off of the concept of free imaginative play, this project aims to address various “work tasks” in a more playful manner. Equipping the modern worker with a digital toy box may encourage even the most tedious and mundane “work tasks” to become playful experiences in creative problem solving and innovation. By exploring the intersection of workspace and playspace, new methods of productively incorporating playfulness into work tasks can be developed. Introducing a playful toy/tool alternative to tedious or mundane tasks will help workers feel more engaged with their work, ultimately positively influencing workers’ attitudes about work. By focusing on the toys/tools workers use to accomplish tasks, workers are given the freedom to engage with their work in a way that is stimulating and rewarding on an individual level.

Introduction/description

In order to survive in today's U.S. economic system, unless adults have inherited wealth, they are required to seek some sort of employment. Not working means no earned income, which, in turn, means no money for food, shelter, or lifestyle needs. "Always on" culture, where an increasing number of people who are "on" various communication media are nearly always accessible (Baron 2008, 4), has blurred the lines between work and non-work, especially for white-collar knowledge workers. It is not uncommon that, even when a worker is considered "off the clock," they may be expected to be available to respond to work-related communication. One author notes that even workers on vacation who have out-of-office auto response set up still respond to e-mails (Galinsky 2010).

Given that, it may not seem surprising that US workforces have started to express frustrations with an increasingly disproportionate work-life balance. In a study by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United States ranked 29 out of 36 countries when comparing work-life balance. The summary of the study suggests that, in addition to long hours jeopardizing individuals' mental and physical well-being, a country's development may also decline when desired work-life balance is not achieved (OECD 2014).

Some have suggested that improvements to paid vacation policies, particularly for family and health-related reasons, would help to address the overwhelming imbalance (Rikleen 2012; Greenfield 2014). Other organizations have vamped up their office environments to inspire creativity and reduce stress (Lachut 2012). Many have

employed gamification strategies in an attempt to motivate employees (Titlow 2011; Boinodirsi et al. 2014). While these agendas all offer different solutions on the work-life balance continuum, they all share a common focus: play.

In this project, I plan to approach work tasks commonly accomplished across a wide array of work situations through a more playful lens. In the wake of complaints about poor work-life balance in the United States, playful activities are being compromised for longer work days and an “always on” expectancy. By providing users with the toys/tools to accomplish these tasks in a more playful way, a playful attitude may positively impact one’s attitude towards work, as well as spread to other aspects of one’s life more easily. Work and play have often only ever been talked about in opposition. It is my argument that work and play can be intertwined in some way that allows modern sentiments about “work” to shift more towards fun and joy, and less towards obligation and resentment.

The goal of this project is to develop a digital environment designed to help today’s workers find playfulness in their work. This environment will be crafted based on my own philosophy of play and an exploration of what methods individuals are currently using to make their work more playful. My aim here is to design a toy/tool that helps individuals incorporate playful tendencies into their productivity routines, as opposed to offering a playful distraction from work. The digital toy box I hope to create through this project is a way of re-imagining work processes as we know them to include something that has, for most of history, been considered work’s opposite – play.

I feel it is important to make clear the distinction between my use of “work task” and “work environment” for a couple of reasons. Companies who have opted for playful,

diversion-laden work environments have the side effect of encouraging employees to, ultimately, spend more time at work—a solution that may address short-term desires of employees, but which contributes to the work-life imbalance in the long run. Instead, I would like to argue that by incorporating playfulness into existing work tasks, workers may feel enthusiasm and engagement towards the tasks they accomplish, instead of seeking enthusiasm from their physical work environment. Telecommuting is on the rise (Gallinsky 2014), and with an ever-increasing percentage of the workforce working from someplace other than a “headquartered” office, I believe it is necessary to focus on *how* people work, regardless of where they are or what kind of office they work in.

The Digital Toy Box

I refer to the environments I plan to develop through this project as a digital toy box for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, growing up, I was fortunate to know my fair share of toy boxes. I used my toy boxes as a sort of gateway to another world - my play world. Many of the objects in my toy boxes weren't even what most people would have considered toys. One box, my “school” play box, contained things like grade books, transparencies, and white board markers. My dress-up box was full of my parents' old clothes, hats, bags - to my parents, the boxes just contained old stuff, but to me, opening the boxes was a way of unleashing my imagination.

I'm also fond of the idea that a toy box can grow with a person. As a person grows up, the toys in the box might change, and maybe even the box changes, but what's important is that we keep the box around in some capacity or another. We might not open it up every day, or every week, or even every month, like we used to when we

were younger, but your toy box is still waiting to unleash your imagination when you decide to open it up again. I think many grown-ups have been encouraged to discard their toy boxes in adulthood.

The word “toolkit” may also be a somewhat appropriate description, but I have chosen not to use it as the primary descriptor because I don’t think “toolkit” carries enough implication of fun and play- again, the goal is to help reframe thoughts about work activities.

Work tasks

I have identified several types of “digital” tasks that are common throughout a variety of work situations. These tasks will act as the “problems” I seek to develop possible solutions for, a jumping off point for my explorations in making. I expect this list to fluctuate throughout my research and making process, but to start, I plan to explore the following:

1. e-mail
2. meetings
3. task/time management
4. note taking
5. scheduling
6. budgeting
7. complex systems interaction

Each of these tasks has emerged as a topic of discussion among today’s workforce, as observed in my own work experiences, and referenced in people’s formal discussions of

their work (Montenegro 2014; Fox 2013; Titlow 2011; Bowe et al. 2001). There will be further discussion of the tools with which I plan to explore these tasks in the “Methods & Materials” section of this proposal.

Intent of the project

My intent is *not* to develop a tool whose only objective is to cater to the bottom line of corporate business organizations. Instead, my intent is to develop a toy/tool that helps individuals reframe their thoughts about work. I aim to serve the well being of the modern worker by encouraging playful, imaginative behavior in their work. I will not argue to the potential for increasing organizational profitability of the toys/tools I develop through this project, as that is not my primary intention for creating them. I do believe that it is possible that we may discover that successfully integrating playfulness into work tasks may positively affect organizational culture and bottom line metrics, however that will not be the focus of this research project.

Literature Review: Developing a Philosophy of Play

The idea of play is nothing new. It is older than culture itself (Huizinga 1971, 1). Some research suggests that play represents a vital adaptation contributing to the existence of even the most primitive hunter-gatherer societies (Gray 2009). Scholars from many disciplines have offered their different interpretations of play throughout the years. Gray offers five characteristics of play, a summary of classic and modern characterizations: “Play is activity that is (1) self-chosen and self-directed; (2) intrinsically motivated; (3) structured by mental rules; (4) imaginative; and (5) produced in an active, alert, but nonstressed frame of mind” (Gray 2009, 480). Gray’s characteristics of play align best with my own current understanding of play, although my philosophy is still in active development.

In order to understand how these play characteristics can be effectively integrated into work activities, it is first important to understand how play is discussed throughout culture. Play scholar Johan Huizinga claimed that he knew of no other word from a modern language meaning the same thing as the English “fun” (1971, 3). Perhaps it is fun, the essence of play, which Huizinga argues cannot be logically interpreted and analyzed that leads to the ambiguous nature of the concept of play (Huizinga 1971, 3-7). Brian-Sutton Smith, another foundational play scholar, spent a good part of his career pointing to the ambiguity of play concepts. There is no one agreed upon description of play.

Instead, there are many versions of how different cultures talk and have talked about play. In his book, *The Ambiguity of Play*, Brian Sutton-Smith details what he has identified as the seven rhetorics of play into which most play activities and behaviors

can be categorized. He operationalizes his use of the term “rhetoric” by stating, “each is called a rhetoric because its ideological values are something that the holders like to persuade others to believe in and to live by” (12). In his analysis, Sutton-Smith outlines four “ancient” rhetorics and three “modern” rhetorics. The ancient rhetorics include the rhetoric of play as fate, the rhetoric of play as power, the rhetoric of play as identity, and the rhetoric of play as frivolous (although it should be noted that the rhetoric of play as frivolous has modern adaptations.) The rhetorics that have come into existence in the last few hundred years include the rhetoric of play as progress, the rhetoric of play as the imaginary, and the rhetoric the self. Sutton-Smith also notes that although there are seven broad rhetorics of play, each is comprised of several other rhetorics and theoretical interpretations. In their most basic definitions, the seven rhetorics of play are:

1. The rhetoric of play as fate encompasses gambling and other games of chance. Sutton-Smith points out that this rhetoric generally exists within low socio-economic groups. Play as fate contrasts all other rhetorics of play in that there is no free choice involved.

2. The rhetoric of play as power consists of sports, athletics, and other contests. The scholars who promote this rhetoric believe that play is a representation of conflict and tout those who control the play as heroes.

3. The rhetoric of play as identity encompasses traditional and community celebrations and festivals. Play as identity parallels the rhetoric of play as power in that it values play tradition as promoting power and identity within a community of players (as opposed to the individuals granted heroic power in the rhetoric of play as power.)

4. The rhetoric of play as frivolous refers to idle or foolish activities. In rhetorics of play as frivolous, the player often has the traits of a trickster or jester figure, and playfully challenges “the establishment.”

5. The rhetoric of play as progress deals with the play of children (generally speaking adults are not included in this rhetoric) as a form of adaptation and development.

6. The rhetoric of play as the imaginary idealizes the imagination as an integral part of creativity, innovation, and flexibility.

7. The rhetoric of the self identifies solitary play activities. This rhetoric promotes desirable experiences such as fun, relaxation, and escape, as a way of dealing with the stresses of everyday life.

Through the examination of these seven rhetorics, Sutton-Smith seeks to prove that play is ambiguous, in that there is no one “correct” or agreed upon definition of the concept. In an effort to build empirical cases for the study of play, scholars have chosen to avoid the aspects of play that make it such a mysterious and magical idea, and instead focus primarily on logical, quantifiable data. Huizinga’s writings focus on what he identifies as social manifestations of play, as opposed to solitary play, because he claims they are generally much easier to describe than “the irreducible quality of pure playfulness” (1971, 7). Sutton-Smith argues that one of the purest forms of play occurs through meta play— when a player plays with the concept of play itself. Meta play often manifests itself when a player compels the “played upon” to question whether the player is in fact “just playing” (Sutton-Smith 1997, 150). The aforementioned aspects of play make it exceedingly difficult to pin down one definition or description of what play is.

Many play scholars have offered their well-researched accounts of play behavior. However, play is often only ever considered in opposition to work activities. Among Huizinga's primary arguments about play, he asserts that, "It is never a task. It is done at leisure, during "free time"" (1971, 8), and that play can not be connected to material interest and is not profitable (1971, 13). Roger Caillois, another foundational play scholar, also argues that no material gain can come from play and that play is a "pure occasion of waste" (1979, 5). He claims that play is free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-believe (Caillois 1979, 9-10). Of Caillois' characteristics of play, only governance by rules is an acceptable characteristic of a workspace. This research project aims to challenge the implications that work can only be the opposite of play.

At several points throughout *The Ambiguity of Play*, Sutton-Smith reminds readers that, "there can be—and often is—very little relationship between the players' own play definitions and those of the theorists" (16). Is the experience of the players not, perhaps, the most crucial aspect *to* consider? If the players perceive the play differently than what the constructs of the play appear to be to the theorists, the perspective of the player could shed an entirely different light onto play activities and their purposes, motivations and struggles. Through the research in this project, I focus more on the experiences of the player, as I believe that these experiences are a valuable aspect of previously understudied research.

While play behavior (even if not play experience) is relatively well studied in animals and children, particularly in reference to their evolutionary development, adult play behavior is less of a focal point in modern rhetorics of play, and a focus on the

experience of the play is even more rare. In fact, play activities practiced by adults are more often classified as “leisure” or “recreation” and translating between leisure and play can be challenging, given the enigmatic nature of each (Chick and Barnett 1995, 51). This distinction further promotes the idea that play is considered a child’s activity in modern play rhetorics.

Stuart Brown, modern play scholar and founder of the National Institute for Play, affirms the importance of adult playfulness in *Play: How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*: "The beneficial effects of getting just a little true play can spread through our lives, actually making us more productive and happier in everything we do" (Brown and Vaughn 2010, 7). Brown cites that workers who play outside of work and bring those sentiments to work are often able to successfully accomplish tasks that seem unrelated to play (Brown and Vaughn 2010, 9). It naturally seems to follow that play sentiments would go a long way in a work environment as well.

Simply understanding how play influences someone can help them become more engaged with the world, including in their work lives (Brown and Vaughn 2010, 11). In other words, one obstacle for successfully integrating playful behaviors into work is a lack of understanding about how we, as adults and as workers, play. Adults are often discouraged from thinking and talking about play, especially in work environments, but without play, life is just a, “grinding, mechanical existence organized around doing the things necessary for survival" (Brown and Vaughn 2010, 11). This is perhaps one of the reasons that work-life imbalance has had such negative effects on the U.S. workforce.

Brown ultimately argues that, "Play is the vital essence of life. It is what makes life lively" (2010, 12). This assertion begs the question – if play is so vital to life, why can't we figure out a way to incorporate it into the activities we spend a majority of our waking hours doing: work? Rowlands offers that,

What makes something play as opposed to work is not what you do, but why you do it. Even the most mundane work can be transformed into play if you do it just for itself and for no reasons besides — if the financial rewards you accrue are merely incidental bonuses (2013).

The toys/tools I plan to create through this project work towards the goal of helping workers discover the intrinsic rewards in pursuing their work tasks playfully. Providing workers with a playful digital productivity environment allows them the opportunity to explore new possibility spaces within their work. "We are designed to find fulfillment and creative growth through play" (Brown and Vaughn 2010, 13). The ability to play and think playfully stimulates creative thought and innovation (Bateson and Martin 2013). Business organizations, however, haven't seemed to adopt processes that respectfully acknowledge these findings.

Gamification is one strategy organizations have turned towards to bring playfulness into work. Gamification can be defined as the application of game mechanics in traditionally non-game contexts (Boinodirsi et al. 2014, 14). Proponents of gamification argue that utilizing game mechanics in processes contributes to higher levels of engagement, which ultimately result in moments of personal growth (Boinodirsi et al. 2014; McGonigal 2011). One prominent games scholar, Jane McGonigal, explores how gaming can help society solve complex social problems and improve the quality of

daily life. She argues that games can be engineered to help us find happiness through fulfilling work and success, social connections, and by pursuing a mission for the greater good (2011).

Opponents of gamification may agree that the theory behind gamification is intriguing, however, they argue that, in its application, gamification has been bastardized. Prominent games scholar, Ian Bogost, asserts that, "...gamification is marketing bullshit, invented by consultants as a means to capture the wild, coveted beast that is videogames and to domesticate it for use in the grey, hopeless wasteland of big business, where bullshit already reigns anyway" (Bogost 2011). Bogost criticizes that organizations have made gamification the easy approach, a band-aid to cover up the complex problem of engagement. He challenges, however, that, an ardent use of game mechanics would likely mean, "changing the very operation of most businesses" (Bogost 2011). This project will explore how incorporating broader applications of play may help put work play back into the hands and minds of the workers.

Games are a subset of play (Salen and Zimmerman 2004). While it is generally agreed upon amongst game scholars that all games have rules (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 73-9), the idea of rules is approached differently in free play. While the rules in games are designed to limit and challenge the players (Salen and Zimmerman 2004, 79), the rules in free play are created by the player(s) and can be changed at any time to suit the needs and desires of the player(s). I believe it is this distinction, between gamification and free play, that helps explain why gamification has not always been perceived as a successful strategy in business organizations. Free play scenarios offer

a greater degree of freedom to players, a privilege that is not always granted within the confines of business models.

While free play does not require any kind of prop or toy, sometimes toys can be used to encourage interaction and engagement. This research project is particularly interested in exploring the field of digital manipulatives (Resnick et al. 1998) in conjunction with an investigation of how toys, particularly those that are digital in nature, influence and represent culture (Sutton-Smith 1986; Goldstein et al. 2004).

While business organizations themselves may not have nailed down the best strategy to help their employees feel better about the work they do, workers have been attacking the problem in their own way. Business live action role-playing, more commonly called “BLARPing”, is a trend derivative of live action role-playing (LARPing). While BLARPing, players assume the roles of different work personalities and enact various work scenarios with other worker characters in a virtual office setting. These online playspaces allow workers to play with the mundane-ness of low-level, white collar office work in a way that they wouldn't be able to express in the "real work place" (“Synergon”; Sharrock 2014). BLARPing is just one example of an outlet workforces have already employed to express and address their frustrations about stereotypical business practices. While there are existing outlets that give workers the opportunity to play with existing work structures, none actually provide an environment where “real life” work is accomplished. The toy/tool I develop aims to provide a much-needed outlet which workers can use to help reframe their attitudes about work by addressing their tasks in a more play-inspired manner.

Project Scope & Timeline

An interactive project timeline is available at <http://jintemp.com/2014/10/01/project-timeline/>.

Materials & Methods

Preliminary Studies and Previous Works

As I began my formal academic research into play, it didn't take me long to realize that a lot of people have had a lot of very different things to say about play. Some concepts of play were ones I was familiar with, while others I recognized in theory, but had never placed a name on before. One question seemed to linger above all others— how do the people I know think and talk about play? So, like any good millennial would, I took to Facebook for an informal survey. I posted the following status update: “Hey, friends. I'm working on developing ideas for my MA thesis, and I'm curious: as an adult, do you still "play"? And if you do play, how do you play/what activities does your play consist of? There are no wrong answers! I'm just looking for a stroke of inspiration.”

I don't post status updates on Facebook all that often, but when I do, I generally receive a handful of “likes” and a stray comment or two (more likely to be about a friend that misses me than about the actual topic of the post.) This particular update received 35 comments.

The replies I got were diverse and offered new perspective for my research process. Perhaps even more interesting than the types of play people shared was how people talked about their play as adults. Some were sheepish and seemed to “confess” their play habits, while others were eager to share their version(s) of play. A few interesting notes from the comments I got:

- Several comments included questions – primarily seeking to validate whether or not their version(s) of play were “correct.” [I'm not sure if this reaction was

because of the phrasing I used to ask the questions, the fact that I mentioned my MA thesis, the Facebook environment, or some combination of those factors and... ?]

- One commenter shared that she felt as though by being asked the questions, she began to think of her “usual activities” in a new light.
- Another friend shared that he and his grad school colleagues had talked at length about the concept of “play” in the professional world. They were focused primarily on how historians “play” with information, so I plan to follow up with him in a private message to pick his brain and see if he has any resources to share.

Through this informal survey, I realized that just by asking questions and bringing play into the conversation, people were beginning to think about it differently.

Although the focus of this research is different, the foundation of my knowledge on play and games stems from my prior research on digital games as tools for learning. My prior exploration of gamification and digital storytelling in learning environments allowed me to explore different perspectives on “productive” games. Threads of this knowledge will be woven into this research project, with a specific focus on serious games and play.

Through my development of “Snake Brain”, I worked with the idea of manipulating a game environment that many people are already familiar with – *Snake*. Through the use of manipulated game mechanics and narrative elements, I used players’ expectations of the existing game parameters to send a message about alcoholism – pop culture may encourage heavy drinking, but as players get deeper into

the heavy drinking culture, it becomes clear that there are major consequences for adopting these behaviors.

Work tasks

I will attempt to inventory the best-rated existing applications for accomplishing the various work tasks I have identified. Using my own research experiences, as well as those of other reviewers (bloggers, product review ratings, etc.), I will attempt to identify the best and worst features of each application. I will incorporate some new version of the best of features into my own applications, and attempt to address and rectify the criticized features.

Development

Each toy/tool in the environment will have a few common threads. One common thread of each of the “toys” will be their voluntary nature. When play is forced or imposed, it loses some of its qualities of “play-ness.” By creating what I refer to as “environments” with playful elements, users are provided with the opportunity to interact playfully with tools that are also used for productive purposes. This project's toys/tools will also attempt to find a suitable balance between structure and un-structure. Ideally, play has the opportunity to exist relatively unstructured, allowing for organic spontaneity and genuine “outside the box” thinking. However, unstructured activities aren't always perceived to be wise investments by organizational stakeholders, so they can often be excluded from a company's culture. Finding a balance that caters both to the productivity associated with structure and the creative thinking associated with un-

structure may allow this toy box to survive in organizational cultures that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with the idea of play.

A browser-based play environment

Developing a browser-based play environment caters to the flexible nature of today's workforce. Making the toy/tool browser-based allows for easier distribution across multiple types of devices and operating systems, as opposed to a desktop application or phone/tablet application that would have to be downloaded. It is also important to consider that some company issued devices may have restrictions for downloading and installing unapproved applications. A browser-based solution circumvents the need for additional permissions, greatly increasing accessibility.

For the execution of this concept, I plan to explore the programming languages HTML5, JavaScript and the p5.js library. While I've become familiar with coding in Processing, I've had difficulty incorporating code developed in Processing onto a website before. While simple, low-processing power sketches seemed to work without too much trouble, more complicated code (particularly animation) repeatedly crashed my browser. The p5.js library offers similar creative freedoms to Processing, however p5.js was created with the intention of creating interactive, generative environments that translate well to the web. p5.js is a Processing-like library for JavaScript. The syntax and logic are very similar (although not identical by any means) which makes for an easy transition from Processing to a more web-compatible programming language. P5.js allows you to layer a drawing/interactive "canvas" on top of existing html body

elements. P5.js offers me the opportunity to get some introductory experience with html5, as well as build off of my foundational Processing knowledge base.

In addition to acting as a bridge between Processing and HTML, p5.js was only introduced a few months ago, providing me the opportunity to participate in and contribute to an active and emerging development community. If I am able to excel at coding in p5.js, I can position myself at the forefront of a new technological trend.

Potential Outcomes & Dissemination

Project website

First and foremost, I plan to make the toys/tools I create through this project accessible on a website (either a subpage of my personal website, or a new website with the project's title). This website will not only include access to the tools/toys I develop, but also to information about my research. I think it is vital that my digital toy box, as well as the research ideas I develop in its production, be searchable on the Internet. This will be the most passive method for dissemination- archiving the fruits of my labor so that, at the very least, some Googler may stumble upon my thoughts at some point in the future.

Depending on the backend requirements and popularity of the digital toy box, I may have to set up a dedicated web server and upgrade my hosting service. For me, making forward-thinking strategic choices and investments on the backend is crucial to the process. If page load times are too slow, visitors won't stick around. If the digital toy box makes the tasks it is supposed to improve more time consuming and more frustrating, nobody will want to use them.

Social Media

Having a dedicated web space for my project also allows me to easily share my project with networks on social media. On Facebook, several of the preliminary research question commenters already expressed an interest in the outcomes of my research. While not necessarily a productive method of reaching professional or

academic audiences, it's reassuring to know that I may have the opportunity to add playfulness to my friends and family, even those I can't see or talk to on a regular basis.

Twitter, on the other hand, allows me the opportunity to reach out to scholars and organizations who may be interested in my research. By reaching out to individuals on Twitter, I not only have the opportunity to share my research efforts, but I can also build relationships with thought leaders who may be willing to help spread my research to their own networks (whether it be a retweet on Twitter or a link on their blog/website.) I can use niche hashtags to reach audiences I may not be able to through other media. Using hashtags, I have the opportunity to frame my research to be culturally relevant based on trending topics of conversation. I can also develop a hashtag dedicated for tweets associated with my digital toy box (possibly #digitaltoybox, as it doesn't seem to have any already adopted meaning) and hope that the hashtag catches on and gains popularity on Twitter.

Because goal is to reach modern workers, LinkedIn may also serve as a valuable resource for dissemination of my research findings. Emphasizing the work-life balance aspects of my research may help make to make it culturally relevant on that medium. As play is often considered the antithesis to work (the reason most people are on LinkedIn in the first place), I think successful dissemination of my research findings on LinkedIn will rely on appropriate framing and phrasing.

Conferences

Because I will be pursuing the MA Project path, my research may not reap the benefits of the traditional academic institutional dissemination (ProQuest), however, I

hope to share both the written portion and technical components of my research at least one conference, which will increase my research visibility within academia, and may also increase the chances of having my work published somewhere.

I will apply/have applied to participate in the Roundtable presentations at The Association for the Study of Play 41st Annual International Conference in San Antonio, Texas in March, 2015. This year's theme is "Play Across the Lifespan". If my proposal is accepted, I will have the opportunity to present my in-progress research during three informal 20-minute presentations. If I attend this conference, I will be able to share my research progress with fellow play scholars, as well as gain input before the final version of my project is submitted.

Call for Papers: <http://www.tasplay.org/about-us/conference/call-for-papers/>

I also plan to submit an abstract to "Adult Play," the 11th annual spring seminar organized by University of Tampere Game Research Lab in Finland. The seminar will explore all of the various types of play that adults engage in, and one of the suggested topics in the Call for papers is "Play and work in adult life" so I think my research is a good fit. The seminar takes place May 11-12, 2015 in Finland. The deadline to submit an abstract is February 23, 2015. If accepted, my paper would be disseminated to all conference participants, and would have the possibility of being published in a partner journal. I would have 10 minutes to present my research, and 20 minutes to facilitate a discussion about it.

Call for Papers: <http://gamelab.uta.fi/2014/10/16/cfp-adult-play/>

The Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) 2015 Conference theme is "Diversity of play: Games – Cultures – Identities" and will be hosted by the Centre for

Digital Cultures at Leuphana University in Lüneburg, Germany May 14-17, 2015. The Call for papers states that, “DiGRA 2015 seeks to encourage questions about the ‘Diversity of play’, with a focus on the multiple different forms, practices and identities labeled as games and/or game culture.” While I don’t think I would consider my digital toy box a game, per se, there are others who may argue that it is a different type of game than what we would traditionally consider a game. I think this conference would provide an interesting opportunity to present my research on playfulness in work under the topic “Gaming in non-leisure settings” and facilitate a dialogue about how play can be encouraged in work situations in some way other than gamification. The submission deadline is January 22, 2015.

Call for papers: <http://www.digra.org/cfp-digra-2015-diversity-of-play-games-cultures-identities/>

The Games+Learning+Society (GLS) Conference will be held July 8-10, 2014 at the University of Madison-Wisconsin’s Memorial Union in Madison, WI. The GLS Conference is a “forum for games researchers, game designers, and educators from around the world to share results from research and game design efforts.” While this conference focuses specifically on games for learning, my digital toy box may be well received as an alternative to rules-based games. Although my specific research is intended to focus on adult play, it is possible that the tools/toys I create may be adapted for use by other audiences. A Call for papers has not been released yet,

Based on last year’s conference timeline and details, it is likely that I will have the opportunity to submit the final version of my project (as submitted to my committee, with

time to make any necessary revisions) as a Presentation, Working Example or Workshop.

<http://glsconference.org/>

The 2015 CHI Conference is for professionals exploring Human Computer Interaction – how humans interact with digital technologies. The conference is hosted by The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). At the conference, businesses and universities “share ground-breaking research and innovations related to how humans interact with digital technologies.” 2015’s conference theme is “Crossings”. One of influential papers I’ve read on “digital manipulatives” was authored for this conference (Resnick et al, 1998). I am considering submitting my research for the Student Research Competition. The deadline to submit an abstract is January 5, 2015.

<http://chi2015.acm.org/authors/student-research-competition/>

Serious Play Conference is the annual meeting of the Serious Games Association. The dates for the 2015 conference have not been announced yet, but in 2014, the conference was held at the end of July. Assuming a similar timeline, I may be able to attend the conference (either as a presenter or participant) and share my digital toy box with other conference attendees. This conference is appealing because it appears to have a pretty heavy industry following. Sharing information about my digital toy box with industry professionals who are already interested in discovering new methods of incorporating serious play into work could prove to be invaluable for the dissemination of my research and the adoption of my digital toy box by modern workers.

<http://www.seriousplayconference.com/>

The International Academic Conference on Meaningful Play presents research from a combination of both academic and industry professionals. The Meaningful Play Games Exhibition may allow me to disseminate my digital toy box. The Conference has already taken place for this academic year, however, and details have not been released for 2015's conference. <http://meaningfulplay.msu.edu/games.php>

Other conferences I plan to keep an eye out for in the future include the World Congress of Play <http://www.worldcongressofplay.com/> and the US Play Coalition on the Value of Play <http://usplaycoalition.clemson.edu/index.php>

Publication

Depending on my success at disseminating my research through aforementioned routes, I also aim to have my research recognized by websites such as Lifehacker or CreativeBloq that provide resources for creatives. If my project is very successful, I will consider entering The Webby Awards in 2015 for the Best Web Services & Applications.

Future life of the research

Through my preliminary research, I have generated a list of potential future projects to pursue including: in-depth interviews of worker "play histories"; collaborative work with business and economic experts to develop new business models or adapt existing business models to include an emphasis on productive play and worker well-being; development of digital work toys as either DIY kits with Instructables or for sale in "mass-production," most likely through a crowdfunded effort; using my research and any

networking connections I hope to make to act as a launching point for a future career in play consulting for organizations.

References

- Baron, Naomi S. 2008. *Always On: Language in an Online and Mobile World*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bogost, Ian. 2011. "Gamification Is Bullshit." August 8. http://bogost.com/writing/blog/gamification_is_bullshit/.
- Boinodirsi, Phaedra, Peter Fingar, and Tom Grant. 2014. *Serious Games for Business: Using Gamification to Fully Engage Customers, Employees and Partners*. Tampa, FL: Meghan-Kiffer Press.
- Brown, Stuart, and Christopher Vaughan. 2010. *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. Reprint edition. New York: Avery Trade.
- Caillois, Roger. 1979. *Man, Play, and Games*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Chick, Garry, and Lynn A. Barnett. 1995. "Children's Play and Adult Leisure." In *The Future of Play Theory*, 45–69. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- DeKoven, Bernie. 2013. *The Well-Played Game: A Player's Philosophy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. <http://0-site.ebrary.com.bianca.penlib.du.edu/lib/udenver/detail.action?docID=10752786>.
- . 2014a. *A Playful Path*. ETC Press. http://press.etc.cmu.edu/files/A-Playful-Path_DeKoven-web.pdf.
- . 2014b. "DeepFUN." *DeepFUN*. Accessed October 10. <http://www.deepfun.com/>.
- . 2014c. "Swings for an Adult Playground." *A Playful Path*. Accessed October 10. <http://www.aplayfulpath.com/swings-adult-playground/>.
- Galinsky, Ellen. 2010. "We Need Play-Cations, Not Just Vacations." *Families and Work Institute*. September 7. <http://www.familiesandwork.org/blog/we-need-play-cations-not-just-vacations/>.
- Goldstein, Jeffrey H., David Buckingham, and Gilles Brougère, eds. 2004. *Toys, Games, and Media*. Mahwah, N.J: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Gray, Peter. 2009. "Play as a Foundation for Hunter-Gatherer Social Existence." *American Journal of Play* 1 (4): 476–522. <http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/1-4-article-hunter-gatherer-social-existence.pdf>.

- Greenfield, Rebecca. 2014. "Why You Should Pay Employees To Take A Sabbatical." *Fast Company*. October 1. <http://www.fastcompany.com/3036344/my-creative-life/why-you-should-pay-employees-to-take-a-sabbatical>.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1971. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Jones, Orion. 2014. "How Soon Will We All Work from Home?" *Big Think*. August 14. <http://bigthink.com/ideafeed/how-soon-will-we-all-work-from-home>.
- Kedmey, Dan. 2014. "1 in 3 Americans Work on a Freelance Basis." *TIME.com*. September 4. <http://time.com/3268440/americans-freelance/>.
- Lachut, Scott. 2012. "How Playful Workplaces Will Change The Future Of Work." *PSFK*. June 9. <http://www.psfk.com/2012/06/playful-workplaces-future-of-work.html>.
- McCarthy, Lauren. 2014. [p5.js](http://p5.js.org/download). p5js.org/download.
- McGonigal, Jane. 2011. *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. New York: Penguin Press.
- "OECD Better Life Index - Work-Life Balance." 2014. Accessed September 25. <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/work-life-balance/>.
- Reas, Casey, and Ben Fry. 2014. [Processing 2](https://processing.org/download). <https://processing.org/download>.
- Resnick, Mitchel, Fred Martin, Robert Berg, Rick Borovoy, Vanessa Colella, Kwin Kramer, and Brian Silverman. 1998. "Digital Manipulatives: New Toys to Think With." In *Making the Impossible Possible*. Los Angeles, CA: MIT Media Laboratory. <http://ilk.media.mit.edu/papers/dig-manip/>.
- Rikleen, Lauren Stiller. 2012. "A Key to U.S. Competitiveness: Work-Life Balance." *Harvard Business Review*. March 15. <http://blogs.hbr.org/2012/03/a-key-to-us-competitiveness-wo/>.
- Rowlands, Mark. 2013. "Tennis with Plato." *Aeon Magazine*. January 30. <http://aeon.co/magazine/philosophy/mark-rowlands-play-childhood/>.
- Salen, Katie and Eric Zimmerman. 2004. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Sharrock, Justine. 2014. "Office Role-Play? Meet The People Who Pretend To Work At An Office Together." *Fast Company*. Accessed October 13.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3036728/office-roleplay-meet-the-people-who-pretend-to-work-at-an-office-together-for-fun>.

Sutton-Smith, Brian. 1997. *The Ambiguity of Play*. 1 edition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

———. 2008. "Play Theory: A Personal Journey and New Thoughts." *American Journal of Play* 1 (1): 80–123.

<http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/1-1-article-sutton-smith-play-theory.pdf>.

"Synergon | Where Dreams Come to Die." 2014. Accessed October 10.

<http://synergonrpg.com/>.

Titlow, John Paul. 2011. "Salesforce.com's Chief Scientist on Why Gamification Is the Future of Work." *ReadWrite*. June 17.

<http://readwrite.com/2011/06/17/gamification-future-of-work-salesforce-rangswami>.