

# Open Literacy Research Symposium



## Perth, Western Australia



CENTRE FOR CULTURE  
AND TECHNOLOGY

# Introduction

The **Open Literacy Research Symposium** brings international and local experts together to report on cutting-edge research, linking games, social innovation and social responsibility. The event will consider a counter-narrative to the rhetoric of behavioural harm and social danger, looking at digital media and games as affordances for community-building and the emancipation of knowledge.

The presenters examine contemporary digital literacy across many different platforms and cultures, as well as ‘offline’ forms of play and the spaces in which fans and cyborgs, cities and nations, pursue adventures of identity and hazards of chance. Inevitably, views will differ on the extent to which playing games, formal and informal, online and off, can be thought of as a form of literacy.

Even if it does enhance popular interpretive skills and agility, the question of balance between ‘social responsibility’ (accepting regulation) and ‘social innovation’ (transgressing limits) is often unresolved in practice. This symposium compares the experience of ‘open literacy’ in different countries, and contrasting trends of scholarship across the continents, in the expectation that cross-disciplinary and cross-border communication will offer new insights to both sides.

The event is generously supported by **Tencent Research** (China), and hosted by the **Centre for Culture and Technology** (CCAT, Curtin). In addition to supporting the event itself, Tencent has provided bursaries and scholarships to assist PhD candidates, early-career and CCAT researchers to attend the symposium, and to present and publish their projects.

The symposium convener is John Curtin Distinguished Professor **John Hartley**, AM. He will edit a report for Tencent (to be published in China) as well as a special issue of the Open Access *Cultural Science Journal* (<https://culturalscience.org/>), where a selection of papers from the symposium, from both international scholars and Curtin PhDs, will be published on the theme of ‘Open Literacy’.

We invite scholars, researchers, gamers, players and members of the community to join us over two exciting days of presentations, discussion and mutual exchange.

# Tencent – Centre for Culture and Technology (CCAT)

## Open Literacy Research Symposium

Day One - 30 September 2019

Esplanade Hotel, Corner Marine Terrace and Essex Street, Fremantle

8.30-8.45am	<b>Registration</b> Tea and coffee	Abrolhos Room
8.45-9.00am	<b>Welcome to Country</b> Sandra Harben	Rottnest/Garden Rooms
9.00-10.30am	<b>Keynote session: Open Literacy</b> <b>John Hartley:</b> <i>Open Literacy: Digital Games, Social Responsibility and Social Innovation</i> <b>Henry Jenkins:</b> <i>'Art Happens not in Isolation, But in Community': The Collective Literacies of Media Fandom</i> <b>Chair: Katie Ellis</b>	Rottnest/Garden Rooms
10.30-11.00am	Morning tea	Abrolhos Room
11.00-12.20pm	<b>Katie Ellis:</b> <i>Who gets to Play? Dis/ability, Innovation, Gaming</i> <b>Samantha Owen:</b> <i>Navigating the Civic and Weaving the Civil: Community Literacies and Playing Across Spaces</i> <b>Tama Leaver:</b> <i>Closed Literacies and the Gamification of Infancy</i> <b>Crystal Abidin:</b> <i>Knowledges on Douyin vs TikTok: Platforms, Populism, and Performance</i> <b>Chair: Lucy Montgomery</b>	Rottnest/Garden Rooms
12.20-1.00pm	Lunch	Abrolhos Room
1.00-2.00pm	<b>Keynote session: Open Literacy and Games in China</b> <b>Henry Li:</b> <i>Introduction</i> <b>Bu Wei:</b> <i>Policy Design: From Paternalism to Empowerment – Children's Rights, Culture on Games, and Social Responsibility in China</i> <b>Chair: Henry Li</b>	Rottnest/Garden Rooms
2.00-3.30pm	Presentations – Break into two rooms	
	<b>Stream one – Rottnest Room</b> <b>Eleanor Sandry, Gwyneth Peaty:</b> <i>Learning to Play Well with Others: Robots, Bots, Cyborgs and Humans.</i> <b>Christopher Cayari:</b> <i>Developing Online and Music Literacies through Video Game Music Covers on YouTube</i> <b>Michele Willson and Madison Magladry:</b> <i>Playing the Game, or Not: Reframing Understandings of Children's Digital Play</i> <b>Chair: Sky Croeser</b>	<b>Stream two – Garden Room</b> <b>Yu Shan:</b> <i>Is There a Sustainable Business Model for the Virtual Reality Game Creators in China? A Case Study of the SoReal VR Theme Park</i> <b>Liam Miller:</b> <i>Minecraft and Dewey: A Model Open Source Community</i> <b>Rui Zhang:</b> <i>Risk-taking Performances in Chinese Video Streaming: A Study on Streamer-Viewer Interactions</i> <b>Chair: Michael Keane</b>

# Tencent – Centre for Culture and Technology CCAT

## Open Literacy Research Symposium

### Day one continued

3.30-4.00pm	Afternoon tea	
4.00-5.30pm	<b>Huan Wu:</b> <i>Video Games and Applications: A Disruption, or Disruptive Innovation?</i> <b>Jatinder Singh:</b> <i>Responsibility in Online Gaming – A Complex Chain</i> <b>Luke Webster:</b> <i>Marvel, Star Wars and the Cosmic Quest for Peace: Commercial Transmedia Storytelling and Emerging Social Responsibilities</i> <b>Lucy Montgomery and Cameron Neylon:</b> <i>Who Puts the 'Open' in Open Knowledge?</i> <b>Chair: Michele Willson</b>	Rottnest/Garden Rooms
5.30pm	Close of day one	

### Day two - 1 October 2019 Curtin University, Kent Street, Bentley

8.30-8.50am	<b>Registration</b> Tea and coffee	
8.50-10.40am	<b>Brendan Keogh:</b> <i>Who Else Makes Videogames? Considering Game-making Literacies Beyond the Games Industry</i> <b>Antranig Sarian:</b> <i>Ethical Self-Reflection in Papers, Please</i> <b>Kathryn Locke:</b> <i>Understanding Accessibility Through Gaming in Urban Space: Learning from Pokémon Go</i> <b>Chen Guo:</b> <i>A life course analysis of Third age digital game players in China</i> <b>Sky Croeser:</b> <i>Teaching Open Literacies</i> <b>Chair: John Hartley</b>	Bankwest Lecture Theatre, Curtin University
10.40-11.00am	Morning tea	
11.00-12.30pm	<b>Keynote: 20 years of Internet Studies</b> <b>Matthew Allen</b> (Deakin University): <i>Internet Studies as institutional gaming: a partial history of epistemological innovation</i> Respondent: <b>Henry Jenkins</b> <b>Michele Willson and Tama Leaver</b> (launch) <b>Chair: Tama Leaver</b>	Bankwest Lecture Theatre, Curtin University
12.30pm	Lunch	

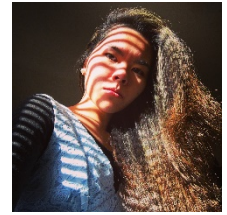
# Abstracts

1. Crystal Abidin: *Knowledges on Douyin vs. TikTok: Platforms, Populism, and Performance*
2. Matt Allen (Deakin University): *Internet Studies as institutional gaming: a partial history of epistemological innovation*
3. Bu Wei (CASS): *Policy Design: From Paternalism to Empowerment – Children’s Rights, Culture on Games, and Social Responsibility in China*
4. Christopher Cayari (Purdue): *Developing Online and Music Literacies through Video Game Music Covers on YouTube*
5. Sky Croeser: *Teaching Open Literacies*
6. Katie Ellis: *Who gets to Play? Dis/ability, innovation, gaming*
7. Chen Guo: *A life course analysis of Third Age digital game players in China*
8. John Hartley (convenor): *Open Literacy*
9. Henry Jenkins (USC): *‘Art Happens not in Isolation, But in Community’: The Collective Literacies of Media Fandom*
10. Brendan Keogh (QUT): *Who else makes videogames? Considering gamemaking literacies beyond the games industry*
11. Tama Leaver: *Closed Literacies and the Gamification of Infancy*
12. Sonia Livingstone and Alicia Blum-Ross (LSE): *Parents’ Role in Supporting, Brokering, or Impeding their Children’s Connected Learning. Paper for publication only*
13. Kathryn Locke: *Understanding accessibility through gaming in urban space: Learning from Pokémon Go*
14. Liam Miller (Queensland): *Minecraft and Dewey: A model Open Source community*
15. Lucy Montgomery and Cameron Neylon: *Who Puts the ‘Open’ in Open Knowledge?*
16. Samantha Owen: *Navigating the Civic and Weaving the Civil: Community Literacies and Playing Across Spaces*
17. Eleanor Sandry and Gwyneth Peaty: *Learning to play well with others: robots, bots, cyborgs and humans*
18. Antranig Sarian (Swinburne): *Ethical Self-Reflection in Papers, Please*
19. Yu Shan (QUT): *Is There a Sustainable Business Model for the Virtual Reality Game Creators in China? A Case Study of the SoReal VR Theme Park*
20. Jatinder Singh (Cambridge): *Responsibility in online gaming – a complex chain*
21. Luke Webster: *Marvel, Star Wars and the cosmic quest for peace: Commercial transmedia storytelling and emerging social responsibilities*
22. Michele Willson and Madison Magladry: *Playing the game, or not: Reframing understandings of children’s digital play*
23. Huan Wu: *Video Games and Applications: A Disruption, or Disruptive Innovation?*
24. Rui Zhang (Western Sydney): *Risk-taking performances in Chinese video streaming: A study on streamer-viewer interaction.*

# Abstracts

## 1. Crystal Abidin, Curtin University, Australia

### *Knowledges on Douyin vs. TikTok: Platforms, Populism, and Performance*



Since launching the short video app (短视频) Douyin (抖音) in the Chinese domestic market in September 2016, internet technology company ByteDance (字节跳动) subsequently launched an international version TikTok in September 2017. In November 2017, ByteDance bought over and integrated a predecessor competing short video app Musical.ly, which was first launched in April 2014, and continued to operate Douyin and TikTok as two different platforms for the domestic and international market respectively. Subsequently, Google Trends and international media coverage on Douyin and TikTok soared, as compilations of Douyin posts went viral on YouTube and Facebook, and the international userbase on TikTok grew. In response to public misrecognition and misconception around both apps, this pilot study is focused on reviewing the current pool of knowledge on Douyin and TikTok.

- Focused on the platforms, the study will employ the walkthrough method to understand the distinctions in features, functions, and user experience of both apps.
- Focused on populism, the study will conduct a content analysis of mainstream press and popular media articles providing reportage on both apps to understand the discourses pedalled about internet popular culture and ideogeographical politics.
- Focused on performance, the study will draw from digital ethnography and personal interviews to understand how users of both apps make decisions about the types of content they follow and consume.

It is hoped that this pilot study will serve as the foundation for a more extensive survey of the short video app ecology (短视频经济) in East Asia.

## 2. Matthew Allen, Deakin University, Australia

### *Internet Studies as institutional gaming: a partial history of epistemological innovation*



In this free-ranging reflection on the history of Internet Studies at Curtin University, Matthew will tell the story of how he and others established one of the world's first academic programs specifically focused on the Internet. Internet Studies was, variously, a dot.edu start-up, a recuperation of traditions of the academy at risk from the corporate university, a bureaucratic political insurgency, and an essential intervention to make sense of the net's profound disruption of the media and its academic study. Unlike some other leading programs, Internet Studies was always grounded in the needs of students and the possibilities afforded by the income produced by innovative courses. However, as evident from the success of the outstanding scholars who joined Matthew at Curtin, Internet Studies has always held at its core the research question of how might we understand what is to come, and to base this inquiry in the recognition that "The future is already here — it's just not very evenly distributed" (Gibson). Matthew concludes that, while we must pursue ideas and discover new truths, we should remain conscious of the contingent fragility of knowledge work and its dependence, not just on powerful minds, but the historical and economic circumstances in which it is based and the rules of the serious games at play within the postmodern university.

#### **Bio**

Matthew Allen is currently Professor of Internet Studies, Deakin University. Matthew was most recently before then Professor of Internet Studies at Curtin University and foundation head of the

Department of Internet Studies, having commenced working at Curtin as a lecturer in history in 1993. Matthew moved to Deakin in 2013, to become Head of the School of the School of Communication and Creative Arts, in which role he served until mid-2019. Matthew is a Fellow of the Australian Teaching and Learning Committee, winner of an Australian Award for University Teaching, a former president of the international Association of Internet Research and a leading analyst of the rise and fall of Web 2.0, among other topics of interest in Internet Studies. He has published more than 50 academic papers. His current research includes a resumption of his long-term interest in the history of Internet regulation in Australia, a new field of engagement with the Chinese Internet, and assessing the impact of the National Broadband Network in Tasmania a decade on from its first deployment. He has been known to play games and overthink epistemology

**3. Bu Wei, Institute of Journalism and Communication, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China**  
***Policy Design: From Paternalism to Empowerment. Children's Rights, Culture on Games, and Social Responsibility in China***



In July of this year, a Chinese TV drama "My Dear, My Loved" hit the air. Although video game competition (E-sport) has been replaced by CTF (Capture The Flag), we still see a lot of traces of CS (Counter-Strike) and deeply feel the cultural resistance from the younger generation to "video game is sapping one's spirit by seeking pleasures" (玩物丧志). This paper will review and analyse policy changes and cultural perspectives on video games within the framework of children's rights. On this basis, this paper will discuss the social responsibility of public media and platform enterprises in the digital era, and provide practical cases on policy design, including "2021-2030 National Program of Action for Children's Development in China".

**4. Christopher Cayari, Purdue University, USA**  
***Developing Online and Music Literacies through Video Game Music Covers on YouTube***



Video games have become a popular leisure activity for people of all ages, and video game music (VGM) has prevailed as a musical genre that inspires audiences and musicians alike. Orchestras dedicate portions of their programming to arrangements of popular games like *Final Fantasy*, *Kingdom Hearts*, and *Pokémon*. VGM festivals allow musicians, gamers, and fans to watch performances, make music, and meet idols. On the internet, commercial and amateur gaming musicians have converged (Jenkins, 2006) on social media, and musicians share arrangements and performances of VGM with their affinity groups (Gee, 2005) and musical fandoms have evolved (Duffett, 2014). Savvy media creators have even fashioned careers as video game music cover artists on the Internet.

A case study (Stake, 1995) on the *insaneintherainmusic* YouTube channel created by Carlos Eiene will be presented, focusing on videos inspired by *Undertale*, a role-playing game created by Toby Fox who developed all aspects of the game including the music. Eiene began creating VGM covers on YouTube when he was 14 years old. Now, as a 20-year-old, he has over 200,000 subscribers. This multimedia presentation is part of a larger multiple case study that examined VGM cover videos on YouTube and learning strategies of the musicians who create them. Research questions addressed (a) the inspirational potential of VGM, (b) how musicians created VGM videos, (c) how they developed/learned the skills needed to produce such covers, (d) and how social connections were fostered using the internet. Analytics (video lengths, views, likes, dislikes, and comments) for Eiene's videos were collected. Online observations using dual entry fieldnotes (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2007) were made for over 100 of his music videos, a live stream of a full-length album, two vlogs, and over 17,000 comments. The musician and I conducted three hours of interviews,

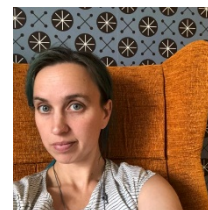


and all data were analysed using a three step process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) of initial coding, grouping into themes, and final coding to guide the development of a case report. Salient case findings included the following: VGM encouraged a highly involved musical community that included individual, collaborative, and collective music making through the Internet; informal (or self-directed) music learning of VGM supplemented and guided his study at formal institutions, thus showing how learning institutions and the internet were used in tandem to facilitate learning and creation; producing VGM online required a variety of musical and technological literacies that inspired the development of skills related to composing, arranging, playing instruments, and music production (recording, mastering, and publishing); and the creator used not only YouTube as a platform for community building, but other social media like Discord, Twitch, Facebook, and Twitter to encourage the growth of affinity groups and fandoms. This case illuminates how VGM and YouTube have inspired learning, creating, and performing of music both in the physical world and online. Eiene's story also sheds light on how an individual, no matter how young, can develop a space to create content online, inspired by popular culture, mass media, and commercially produced content.

### **References**

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- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sunstein, B. S., & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2007). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

### **5. Sky Croeser, Curtin University, Australia Teaching Open Literacies**



University teaching, particularly teaching with and about digital technologies, is an important part of developing and expanding open literacies. Digital technologies open up new possibilities for sharing knowledge within and beyond academia, including through Massive Open Online Courses and open access journals. At the same time, we face a range of challenges as teachers. The managerial focus on measuring and quantifying teaching and learning outcomes within academia often works against the evidence on pedagogical best practice. Despite claims made about 'digital natives', we find that students of all ages frequently have difficulty sorting through the mass of information available online. It is not enough, as teachers, to simply provide content to students, or even to 'engage' students through gamified learning and other digitally-supported teaching methods. I argue that the key to effectively supporting open literacies within university education is a willingness to question institutionalised practices, including commitment to discipline canon and to a depoliticised, depersonalised approach to teaching.

This paper draws a decade of work teaching Internet studies; student and peer feedback; and pedagogical theory from Paulo Freire; bell hooks; Clelia Rodríguez; Sara Ahmed and Aileen Moreton-Robinson. In order to be effective, I argue that our pedagogies must be diverse, context-dependent, and reflexive. The pathways which have seemed most useful to me may not be available to others, or may produce very different results. The institutional and imaginative constraints that have led to gaps between my intentions and my practices may be more or less



applicable to others. With this in mind, I make several suggestions for teaching practices that might encourage the development of open literacies. The most obvious way to do this is through the readings we set in the syllabus. At the least, this should include assigning texts that are open access where possible. However, at a deeper level it should involve reconceptualising how we think about core concepts in order to support more diverse approaches to knowledge, including considering crowd-sourced or oral knowledge.

There are several other interventions we might make, including redesigning assessment and challenging the use of centralised and proprietary systems such as Turnitin. We must also be willing to be more open about our own political and personal standpoints. These approaches to teaching frequently present difficulties, but they can also support students who are more capable of navigating – and making positive contributions to – the complex and rapidly-changing knowledge systems that flow through our societies.

**6. Katie Ellis, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Who gets to Play? Disability, Innovation, Gaming***

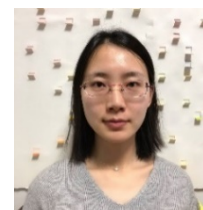


Video games are an expanding area of popular culture spanning traditional age, gender and socioeconomic divides and appealing to a diverse market. People with disability represent a significant but under researched gaming demographic (Beeston et al., 2018). While this group represent a large portion of the gaming population, inaccessible interfaces and consoles may prevent people with disability from playing games. Despite this, research dating back to 2008 suggests 92% of gamers with disability continue to play games despite these obstacles. This paper aims to put the topic of gamers with disabilities on the agenda for Open Literacies.

The paper brings into dialogue research and conceptions of disability and digital media (especially the work of Gerard Goggin, Meryl Alper, Katie Ellis and Elizabeth Ellcessor) with accounts of gamers with disability, and how we might understand digital access as a cultural practice (for instance, the work of Foley & Ferri). This theoretical synthesis leads us to draw attention to the alternative ways in which games can be played and the impacts this has for the disability community.

A secondary aim of the paper is to consider the contexts in which disability appears in gaming in popular culture and everyday life. For example, therapeutic and educational contexts dominate while recreation is considered less important. The paper concludes with reflections about the intersections between play, therapy and education and the limited roles made available to people with disability.

**7. Chen Guo, Curtin University, Australia**  
***A life course analysis of Third age digital game players in China***



This paper draws on the perspectives of people in China nearing retirement in their so called third age who play digital games. Third age is a concept to describe people who are around their retired age and is characterised by increased longevity, better health, increased levels of financial well-being...and the pursuit of new or long-latent interests, together with desired levels of sociability” (Weiss & Bass, 2002). The chapter aims to bring accessibility in conversation with critical ageing studies and life course theories in particular. Life course theory is a dynamic theory which provides a way of examining individual, as well as collective development under changing historical condition (Hareven & Adams, 1982). In China, the emergence of the third age population is challenging stereotypes of decline associated with the aging population instead recognising more diverse individual differences amongst this cohort. Third agers’ individual differences require varying levels of accessibility. While it has been established in critical disability studies that access to the digital world is not available to everyone

(Ellcessor, 2016; Ellis & Kent, 2011; Goggin & Newell, 2003), despite many intersections between critical ageing studies and critical disability studies, these two disciplines do not often enter productive conversation. This chapter argues that digital game use amongst the third age population in China is a useful point in which these disciplines can come together. Drawing on interviews with digital game users amongst people in their third age living in second tier cities in China the chapter finds that in addition to the accessibility, connectivity and digital literacy, socio-cultural stigma related to digital games use in China creates another level of inaccessibility for people in their third age.

**Reference:**

Hareven, T. K., & Adams, K. J. (1982). *Ageing and life course transitions: An interdisciplinary perspective*: Routledge.

**8. John Hartley, Curtin University, Australia**

**'OPEN LITERACY': *Digital Games, Social Responsibility and Social Innovation***



Social media and videogames are often blamed for individual behavioural delinquency, but rarely praised for cultural creativity, social innovation or helping us to form new social groups or work through new ideas. Videogames are now a political football, both in the US (where they're blamed for gun crime) and in China (where they're blamed for childhood myopia). Every new media form has grown up surrounded by those wanting to control it. Popular literacy has never been free

and open. Popular novels and the press; cinema and TV; and more recently digital and social media, have all attracted the wrath of incumbent commercial, government or social interests. But in the era of open access, open science, open knowledge, what about open literacy? Can it be extended to whole populations, across demographic borders, at global scale, for purposeless but nevertheless pedagogic play, and for social innovation, instead of being a mere instrument for profit, power and mass persuasion?

Open Literacy refers to the cultural uses of digital and media literacy:

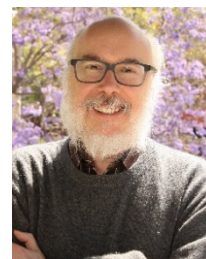
- to create new groups and meanings, extending knowledge by means of informal entertainment and narrative, dramatic or game formats;
- to experiment with new technologies, extending both play (informal, anthropological, purposeless) and games (elaborate, competitive, high-skill) as part of the innovation system for digital culture;
- to advance knowledge and communication by digital means, and to link future-facing digital culture with traditional archives and forms;
- to encourage user-led social innovation in times of uncertainty and change, across demographic borders, at global scale.

Open literacy is user-centred and system-wide, 'bottom-up' rather than 'top down', producing unforeseen network effects that in turn change the rules of the game.

Navigating 'newness' (not just novelty but transformational change) raises new questions:

- How does Open Literacy intersect with other 'open' initiatives: open source; open access; open science; open campus?
- Given that Open Literacy is cultural and informal, not institutional and disciplinary, what should policymakers, educators, arts/literature agencies, sport/exercise bodies and commercial entertainment/ leisure providers do to nurture it?

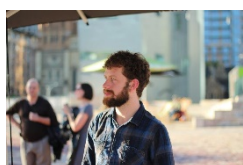
9. **Henry Jenkins, Annenberg School, University of Southern California, USA**  
***'Art Happens not in Isolation, But in Community': The Collective Literacies of Media Fandom***



*'All fanwork, from fanfic to vids to fanart to poetic, centers the idea that art happens not in isolation, but in community....All of our hard work and contributions would mean nothing without the work of the fan creators who share their work freely with other fans, and the fans who read their stories and view their art and comment and share bookmarks and give kudos to encourage them and nourish the community in their turn.'* – Naomi Novik on behalf of the Archive of Our Own at the Hugo Awards, Aug. 18, 2019

When the Archive of Our Own received a prestigious Hugo Award this summer, it represents a recognition by the literary science fiction community of an alternative model of authorship -- one which operates outside the publishing world or academia, one where authorship is collective rather than individual, and one where artworks are appropriative and transformative rather than "original." Using this occasion as my starting point, I will discuss the ways that the literacies associated with fandom may be understood as illustrative of the new forms of expression that have taken shape in a networked era. What does it mean to think of literacy as a social skill and cultural competency rather than as an individualized accomplishment? How has fandom developed alternative models of mentorship which have supported diverse forms of learning – from technical skills to critical reading, from the writing craft to programming chops, from subcultural capital to the civic imagination? How has the MacArthur Foundation drawn on insights from fandom and other sites of participatory culture to inform the redesign of schools, libraries, after school programs, and other institutions in order to support connected learning and open literacy?

10. **Brendan Keogh, QUT, Australia**  
***Who else makes videogames? Considering Game-making Literacies Beyond the Games Industry***



Anyone can make and distribute a videogame. Whereas in previous decades the medium of the videogame was defined by a strict power hierarchy that ensured a few large corporations such as Nintendo and Sony had the final say as to what videogames saw the light of day, a number of technological and cultural shifts over the past decade has seen the skills and resources to make videogames become available to a much wider range of people. Just as one might play a song or write a story or paint a picture regardless of whether or not they are a 'professional' musician, novelist, or artist, one may now also create and share a videogame without needing to be employed in what we commonly understand to be 'the videogame industry'.

However major inequalities still exist in terms of who has access to gamemaking skills, and just which skills are considered to be 'gamemaking skills' in the first place. By and large, the field of videogame production

is still largely perceived as a male- and computer science-orientated field. Such perceptions have been historically cultivated and normalised by a hegemonic videogame industry. If videogame making literacies are to become as accessible as other cultural skills, we need to critically re-evaluate just what it means to make videogames in different contexts, with different resources and skills, for different reasons.

This paper outlines both the opportunities and challenges in understanding videogames not merely as an 'industry' but as a field of cultural production of which the 'industry' is but one part. It will draw from extensive interviews with Australian, Canadian, German, and Dutch gamemakers to consider both the ways in which gamemaking has become more open and 'democratised' in

recent years, and the ways in which it has remained exclusionary and hegemonic. In turn, it looks at the history of the formation of the game industry, how gamemaking is taught in tertiary and secondary institutions, and how gamemaking's prioritised skillsets are presented in popular discourses in order to reconsider, in a more open light, just what videogame making literacies are and who they are available to.

### **Bio**

Dr Brendan Keogh is an ARC DECRA Fellow in the Digital Media Research Centre, QUT, where he researches videogame development skill transferability across informal, formal, and embedded sectors. His previous research has focused on the phenomenological and textual aspects of videogame play and culture. He is the co-author of *The Unity Game Engine and the Circuits of Cultural Software* (Palgrave, 2019), and the author of *A Play of Bodies: How We Perceive Videogames* (MIT Press, 2018) and *Killing is Harmless: A Critical Reading of Spec Ops The Line* (Stolen Projects, 2012), and has written extensively about the cultures and development practices of videogames for outlets such as *Overland*, *The Conversation*, *Polygon*, *Edge*, and *Vice*.

### **11. Tama Leaver, Curtin University, Australia** ***Closed Literacies and the Gamification of Infancy***



New parents, in both the months before the birth of a child and the early years of life, routinely invest huge amounts of time, energy and money in sourcing as much information as they can about good parenting practices. Increasingly, this investment includes a range of apps, from pregnancy apps which provide details, normalized information about what to expect on a day to day basis during pregnancy, through to various apps links to monitoring devices, both manual and digital, during pregnancy and infancy. Far from just providing information, many of these apps now encourage parents to undertake specific monitoring and surveillance practices to capture large amount of data about their child. This data is often then aggregated by the corporations behind these reassuring apps – corporations which are driven by profit, and often see the aggregated data about the unborn or infants as a resource which can be aggregated, analysed and the outcomes eventually monetized. The commercial imperatives are often masked or overlooked by parents, who undertake this intimate surveillance with the very best intentions. Additionally, these apps tend to frame pregnancy, infancy and early childhood in terms of specific norms and conditions which are represented on mobile phone screens as green lights, glowing bars, and yellow stars, effectively gamifying the way parents and carers experience these early childhood moments. The presentation of data about infants in this manner, I argue, closes specific forms of literacy that parents and carers traditionally form in relation to children. Gamification, then, can close specific forms of literacy. The argument here is not against the value of data and observation in specific circumstances, as part of considered practice to combat a specific illness or issue. Rather, this article argues against the widespread and indiscriminate push to track, survey, encode, aggregate and analyse a wide range of activities from conception to the early years of childhood. The gamification of infancy reframes and displaces other ways of knowing, other forms of literacy, and re-shapes infancy as something to be 'solved' by digital affordances.

### **12. Kathryn Locke, Curtin University, Australia** ***Understanding accessibility through gaming in urban space: Learning from Pokémon Go***



As the popularity of Pokémon Go swept across countries, the capabilities and limitations of location-based, augmented reality technology, particularly in gaming, were illuminated. Located at the juncture of mobile gaming and 'real



space', Pokémon Go highlights both the potentials of mobile technology for people with disabilities and how access is conceptualised.

This game was not played simply via a screen – it required players to be physically present at specific locations, to move through and gain access to urban space. For many players with disabilities, this excluded them from participating. Yet the actual site of exclusion was problematic – it was often not a technological exclusion, but rather the inaccessibility of the real locations themselves. Hence the software developer (Ninantic) distanced itself from the critiques and complaints being raised in public forums and blogs, even banning disabled players for cheating when they developed a 'work around' for accessibility issues.

Mobile technology, and mobile gaming have often been studied and utilised for their capacity to increase accessibility for people with disabilities. Smart phones in particular are often engaged as an accessibility tool, and can facilitate access to inaccessible urban spaces. Mobile technology also allows for feedback on urban space, and thus renews attentiveness to the subjective physical, psychological and social experiences of people with disability.

Pokémon Go thus provides an opportunity to consider how games like it can both redefine and increase accessibility for both augmented reality and urban space. Through environmental feedback and the garnering of geospatial data, popular augmented reality games like Pokémon Go have the potential to capture players feedback on and experiences of spaces in ways in which specific accessibility apps (limited by critical mass engagement) have not. They also are valuable texts through which we might re-examine the relationship between bodies, technology and the built environment.

**13. Liam Miller, University of Queensland, Australia**  
***Minecraft and Dewey: A model Open Source community***



Minecraft was first released in 2009 by a small developer who called himself Mojang. Interestingly, Mojang released the game without the usual tutorial level or how-to-play guide. In very little time, however, a dedicated community of gamers formed around the game. To initiate new players, several 'How to survive the first night in Minecraft' videos emerged online. Other tutorials detailing more advanced play came soon after, and in only a short space of time an organic knowledge community had been created. It existed over multiple sites online, with only the game as a connection between the different community groups.

The community groups that naturally arose around Minecraft in the months and years after its release is a great model of John Dewey's concept of a Community of Inquiry. However, what Dewey did not anticipate was the effect the internet would have on the scope and possibility of knowledge communities. In the following paper I will explore the various Minecraft communities and their connections as an example of an open source knowledge community modelled on Dewey's concept of a Community of Inquiry.

**14. Lucy Montgomery and Cameron Neylon, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Who Puts the 'Open' in Open Knowledge?***



This paper explores the concept of 'Open' knowledge - and the growing importance of digital literacies in supporting a transformation of universities into Open Knowledge Institutions. In order to operate as successful Open Knowledge Institutions universities must do more than support the transmission of research outcomes *from* experts located within the university *to* external communities. They must also engage with questions of diversity - who gets to make knowledge; as well the role of productive interactions across boundaries (disciplines/university/wider community) in its growth and spread. There is a genuine desire

among many universities, research funders, and researchers themselves, to address the challenges of diversity, equity and impact implicit in the open knowledge agenda. But open knowledge aspirations are being stymied by comparative rankings that are built on data that excludes the work of entire disciplines, continents and languages; and which are not capable of capturing important aspects of the value that universities create. Most of the communities using these rankings to inform decision making are unaware of the prejudices and blind-spots that current measurement tools create and perpetuate. They are also unaware that it is possible to interact critically with the tools used to measure and narrate their performance; to demand that new questions are asked of the digital traces that universities and research communities create; and to build better tools for understanding the role of universities in processes of knowledge-making and sharing. As this paper discusses, the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative, a major research project supported by Curtin University, is a deliberate effort to support the new forms of digital literacy needed to enable this shift.

**15. Samantha Owen, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Navigating the Civic and Weaving the Civil: Community Literacies and Playing Across Spaces***



In this paper I explore the relationships between play/space/city and literacy/civic/citizenship by drawing together two case studies: Notting Dale, London, 1964 and River Montessori School, Perth, Australia, 2018. In both case studies the institutional concern is over how the target groups are educated to become literate as citizens, with a focus on exhibited values and virtues. Working from a historical perspective, I use the approaches and questions raised to tease out how the digital alters the limits of civic space and the boundaries of civil society, recasts the role of community education and reshapes the citizens as well as the institutions to which they respond.

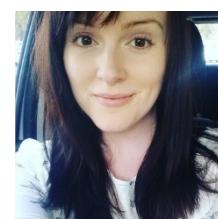
**16. Eleanor Sandry and Gwyneth Peaty, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Learning to Play Well with Others: Robots, Cyborgs and Humans***



By working through various meanings of the word “play”, this paper suggests ways to position playing as a means to learn about the self, environment and others, breaking down the boundary of the self in the process. The paper develops its argument by analysing first-person videogame play and human-robot interactions as entertaining, assistive and collaborative.

Moving away from an idea of play as purely enjoyable, recreational and without practical purpose, to the idea of bringing into and keeping someone in play, and therefore gaining and holding attention, the paper positions play as productive even while potentially retaining a frivolous edge. Play in relation to moving freely as required or wanted then suggests a level of flexibility around where the self ends and the environment, objects or others begin. Finally, the idea of taking time to play within a dynamic environment, often with disparate others, drives an exploration of playing as rehearsed, coordinated, performative actions of the self.

Integrated with their surroundings, alongside robots and/or non-human others in a dynamic interaction, human players create a collaborative space within which the boundary between self and environment, as well as between self and others, blurs. Such play may emphasise the cyborg nature of the human, but it also draws attention to new understandings about, and relationships with, machines, robots, and non-human others which develop even as their specificities support continued playing of the game.





**17. Antranig Sarian, Swinburne University, Australia**  
***Ethical Self-Reflection in Papers, Please***



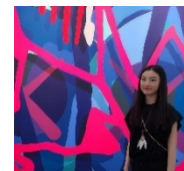
This paper is an analysis of Lucas Pope's independent border control simulator *Papers, Please* (2013) and discusses its ability to encourage moral self-reflection. More specifically, this paper will look at how the game utilises what Marie-Laure Ryan calls 'narrative memory' in order to create what I label an 'expressed self' of the player. The game then mounts a moral response to the player's expressed self

through its various endings, and in doing so elicits ethical self-reflection. Through this process *Papers, Please* complicates mainstream discourses surrounding border control and immigration by directly implicating the player in the process of allowing and denying entry to others.

*Papers, Please* places the player in the shoes of a border control agent who works for a fictional authoritarian regime named "Aristotzka". The gameplay focuses on processing a large number of entrants, many of whom are refugees with improper paperwork. Three primary 'good' endings exist, each one requiring the player to make a specific set of choices, or to undertake a general pattern of behaviour. Through these patterns of behaviour, the game constructs an 'expressed self' of the player, which it uses as a proxy by which it can present a moral response the player. This paper will specifically examine the 'Antegrian Husband and Wife' choice, and cross compare it with the "Snowier Pastures" ending in order to illustrate this process.

*Papers, Please* was created at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis and its ability to complicate its player's unconscious narratives surrounding border control has implications for the role that open literacy plays in the realm of videogame narrative. Notably, although *Papers, Please* largely creates a sense of social awareness within players towards refugees, it also highlights the potential benefits of border control through events that involve catching fugitive criminals. While the United States currently finds itself in the midst of a border control crisis on the Mexico-US border, the need to understand how games such as *Papers, Please* can interface with larger socio-political issues remains important.

**18. Shan Yu, QUT, Australia**  
***Is There a Sustainable Business Model for the Virtual Reality Game Creators in China: A Case Study of the SoReal VR Theme Park***



This research project aims to investigate a sustainable business model for Virtual Reality (VR) game production by VR enterprises in China to help VR break into mainstream audiences. In order to explore and analyze the dynamics between content creators, users, and business models in the context of China's VR industry, this research has three objectives. The first will explore regular business models of creative VR content enterprises in China from the perspective of the enterprises. This research will employ a qualitative approach and will undertake a case study of the representative VR creative content enterprise in China, SoReal VR, to explore the eco-system of creative VR game production. SoReal is a leading VR game enterprise in China with the ability to produce and sell VR content and experiences to consumers in Beijing. This enterprise is a subsidiary of Sky Limit Entertainment which was founded by ZHANG Yimou, one of the Fifth Generation Chinese filmmakers with representative works such as *Hero*, and *House of Flying Daggers*. Small-sized VR content enterprises in China deserve the attention from industry and academia. Since the release of Oculus Story Studio in 2017, global VR content enterprises have undergone structural changes (Roettgers, 2017). VR giants Oculus and HTC VIVE have shifted their focus to encourage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to create VR content instead of creating content by themselves (Huang, 2018; Roettgers, 2017). Based on these changes, an updated understanding of business models for VR creative content SMEs in China will be a major contribution to the research field of creative industries.

Secondly, this study will focus on the dynamic relationships between users, VR content creators, and creative VR content in China to investigate the value of users for innovative business models to be used by creative VR game enterprises in China. When discussing business model innovation in the context of rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs), existing knowledge mainly emphasizes the value of consumers in the process of establishing new business models with ICTs (Chapman, Soosay, & Kandampully, 2003; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000; Teece, 2010). It should be noted that the new digital technologies, with their digital content, are redefining user's interaction and consumption behavior. Weill and Woerner (2013), Mitchell and Coles (2003), and Wrigley and Straker (2016) imply that better user experience results in higher revenue growth for industries. In contrast to traditional digital media, VR is functioning not only as an information channel but also as an extension and supplement for people who desire to improve their quality of life by experiencing high quality VR content. From the perspective of users, this study will explore the role and meaning of users in VR game production and VR business model innovation in China.

Finally, this study will summarise the findings from the aforementioned case study in China. These results, and the following interviews from both users and staff from the creative VR game enterprise and a third-party VR organization, will be synthesized into conclusions that will assist VR content creators to design business models that are both adaptable and sustainable; specifically, in the context of China. Does their current business model promote or hinder the mass adoption of VR? What's the role of users for business model establishment to be employed by creative VR content enterprises? How do they earn enough profit to keep running and producing content? These are the questions that await their answers.

This study will conduct semi-structured interviews with the staff from the creative VR content enterprise, a third-party VR organization, and VR users to map an eco-system of creative VR content production in China with innovative business models as its focus. Furthermore, this study will develop an in-depth understanding of the progression of business models and the dynamics between users, content creators, and business models in the VR content enterprises located in China's creative industries. The generated findings from the current ecosystem of VR content production in China will help to understand the strategies on how they sustain their business in the context of VR enterprises struggling to survive today. Meanwhile, the outcomes from this research will also contribute to offering useful insights for future research on digital technology in China's CIs and the dynamic relationship between content production, users, and business models in the application of other human-computer interaction technologies.

**Keywords:** virtual reality; content production; business model; creative industries

## **19. Jatinder Singh, University of Cambridge, UK**

### ***Responsibility in online gaming – a complex chain***

Despite the popularity of online games, the legal aspects are little discussed. The nature of the infrastructure supporting online games is complex, which impacts questions of responsibility surrounding issues such as data protection, system failure, audit/compliance, and user rights. Such considerations will grow importance, not least as virtual/augmented/mixed reality technology becomes increasingly mainstream. This short talk will highlight the complexities of the technical supply chains supporting online gaming (including AR/VR), and indicate some technical and legal areas for consideration.

20. Luke Webster, Curtin University, Australia

***Marvel, Star Wars and the cosmic quest for peace: Commercial transmedia storytelling and emerging social responsibilities***



Understanding storytelling in the digital age is critical to the development of 'open literacy'. Sharing stories allows us to interpret life, and to make sense of our culture and identity. Joseph Campbell's concept of The Hero's Journey provided a means to understand how our popular stories have historically been shaped, as well as a template that would eventually be co-opted and reverse engineered ad nauseam in commercial entertainment. However Campbell did not suggest this model would remain fixed, and he foresaw a time when a new model would emerge in response to our ever-evolving world (Campbell, 1949). In our modern networked culture, commercial transmedia entertainment experiences, such as Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, are moving towards a Collective Journey model, with the capacity to celebrate diversity and acceptance, to explore our networked existence, to demonstrate how collective action can lead to systemic change, and to promote aspirational thematic concepts (Gomez, 2017).

As these transmedia entertainment experiences become increasingly immersive and pervasive, so too do they offer more sites for play – whether it be the sanctioned interactive spaces within core texts such as video games and placed-based immersive experiences, or the constantly negotiated and often unsanctioned spaces that exist in the interstitial gaps between core texts, such as social media dialogues, engagement with paratexts and fan fiction. Across these different sites of play, power dynamics between storytellers and audiences are negotiated and continue to evolve. Notions of participation and control are shaded by the financial motivations that underpin Western commercial entertainment practices, and the vested interests corporations have in retaining control over their intellectual property and brand.

James Gunn and Chuck Wendig are two examples of modern storytellers who have run afoul of the new responsibilities placed on corporate storytellers, each having experienced career and financial setbacks as a result of audience interactions that strayed too far from the aspirational themes, and brand essence, of their respective Marvel and Star Wars texts. Both failed to utilise active listening strategies, and subsequently were unsuccessful in uniting their audience into taking positive collective action. Conversely the Carol Corps fan group actively hold storytellers to account to better reflect gender diversity, and the complexity of the modern world, within Marvel properties, by enacting the aspirational themes found in Captain Marvel texts. Whilst similar groups exist in Star Wars fandom, the arguably divisive state of modern Star Wars fandom indicates a lack of leadership from both storytellers and individuals, and an opportunity to learn from the more successful strategies employed by Marvel, to create more progressive and aspirational interactions.

This paper will map the shifting responsibilities placed on storytellers and audience members in Star Wars and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, in light of our networked culture and shifting pop culture story structures. I will argue that as we work to understand who does, and should, control our pop culture stories, storytellers and individuals have opportunities to draw from the model of the Collective Journey to strengthen communities and drive collective, progressive action.

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**21. Michele Willson and Madison Magladry, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Playing the game, or not: Reframing understandings of children's digital play***

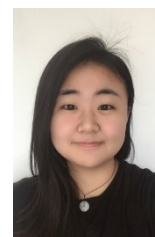
Everybody seems to have an opinion about the value, risks and opportunities of children playing digital games. Popular media conveys messages to parents and the public alike of addicted, violent, desensitised, and anti-social children and of the privacy risk of back end data collection. Educationalists waver between seeing digital games as hindering more positive educational, social and physical activity, and being a new way to engage students and improve outcomes. Parents are in fear of the 'dangers' of gaming and screen time yet enticed by the educational promise and the entertainment value of keeping their children occupied. Game developers see opportunities for data collection, surveillance and nudging children's behaviour and purchases and children as a potential resource. Many of these fears, hopes, and hype are replaying older tropes that circulate around any new technology, media forms and associated changes in practices, but are amplified further by having children as their central focus. Indeed, all of these stakeholders in children's futures have particular understandings of what is good for children and what an ideal child (Willson, 2018) should be. These understandings underpin a raft of academic studies also. Yet children are not docile bodies who have things happen to them: they subvert, appropriate and innovate. This paper is a call for an exploration of what and how children's digital gaming looks like from a child/s perspective and for a reframing of understanding children's digital play as a result.

**22. Huan Wu, Curtin University, Australia**  
***Video Games and Applications: A Disruption, or Disruptive Innovation?***



In order to draw a comprehensive picture of the uses of video games, this research looks at the history of games, their genres and industrial applications. Based on classic game studies, this paper summarises criticisms of video games as well as noting positive impacts. However, its focus goes beyond a binary evaluation. It explores how video game-playing is immersed in people's daily life, not only for entertainment but also for literacy studies and problem-solving; and how games are created or played among different social groups, especially those disadvantaged by age, gender, nation, economic circumstance or oppression.

**23. Rui Zhang, Western Sydney University**  
***Risk-taking performances in Chinese video streaming: A study on streamer-viewer interactions***



Live streaming is rapidly growing in China, and it has a tremendous cultural, social and political impact. In the past couple of decades, mobile live streaming has become a common use video sharing platform, allowing users to stream anything they want to a massive number of viewers. Viewers on live streaming often share their thoughts while they are watching live streams, and this has turned into a participatory virtual community. In China alone, live streaming market revenues reached up to \$3.3 billion in 2015. However, given the rise in the number of live streaming platforms, only a few studies have been conducted to deeply understand streamers and viewers involved in the emergent cultural practices. This paper focuses on viewer-streamer interactions in the Chinese live streaming industry, more specifically for risk-taking content. An interesting part of this risk-taking performance in live streaming is that it is about content engagement - video performances are traditionally passive, but interactive streaming service brings an element of activity. This paper aims to investigate the users' motivation and engagement relating to risk-taking performances in live streaming.

The key question driving this work is whether streamers do live streaming mainly for their own economic interests (i.e. money-driven) or whether there is a strong sense of community belonging among the risk-taking streamers and viewers. This work employs mixed methods to collect original data, including analysis of recorded live stream sessions and semi-constructed interviews with two viewers and two streamers. In this paper, I present some preliminary findings and discuss how risk taking live streaming influences and reflects Chinese digital/ internet culture.

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## **Notes**



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