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Videogames in the Modern Public Library:

The Who, Why, and How of Providing Videogames for Library Patrons

Bill Sannwald

San Jose State University

Abstract

This article examines the adoption of videogames as a resource in modern public libraries. Within the article is a discussion of the popularity of videogames in modern society, the types of individuals who play videogames, the mainstream perception of videogame violence, the benefits videogames provide players, the obstacles libraries have faced in adopting videogames, and solutions for libraries looking to build a videogame collection. The article suggests that videogames not only provide patrons with a resource that is in demand, but they prove to be beneficial to the libraries that circulate them.

Imagine someone describes an item checked out from their local public library as follows: "Its characters need basic virtues (honor, courage, loyalty, energy) and well-planned strategies to execute big tasks and get out of enormously complicated situations" (Howe & Strauss, 2001). While one might assume the item being described is a novel or feature film, it is in fact the basic plot structure in the popular *Pokémon* series of videogames[1]. Historically, libraries have offered services and resources that go far beyond books and research, from the storage of grain and recording of public records during ancient times to access to audiovisual materials and computer resources in the modern era (Rubin, 2004). However, videogames have been notably excluded from many libraries' collections even though home game consoles have demonstrated extensive popularity since the era of the Atari Video Computer System's debut in 1977 (Kent, 2001). Public libraries have offered their users access to most forms of media imaginable, yet videogames have remained largely neglected until fairly recently, and even so the circulation of videogames by public libraries is still very much in its infancy.

Despite the fact that videogame players, or "gamers," represent a surprisingly large portion of the population, access to videogames in libraries has remained extremely limited. Many factors have played a role in preventing public libraries from circulating videogames, and libraries are just now finding ways to solve the problems that come with having videogames as part of a library's collection. This article will examine the popularity and widespread enjoyment of videogames, explore benefits that videogames provide to their users, and provide possible solutions for the problems libraries face with making videogames available to their patrons. Videogames represent a type of resource that not only is in demand by library users, but may aid in attracting reluctant user groups while keeping libraries relevant to the communities they serve.

Videogames as Popular Entertainment—The Numbers

Videogames have the unfortunate stigma of being seen as a pastime solely for children, primarily boys. However, according to the Entertainment Software Association (2008) this is far from the case. The ESA reports that in 2007, the average gamer was 33 years of age, with over 70% of all videogame players being over the age of 18. In addition, the ESA reports that during the same time period, 33% of every household in America owned a videogame console. Though overall more males play videogames, 38% of all gamers in 2006 were women. The surprisingly high number of female gamers, almost two out of every five, coupled with the fact that the bulk of gamers are adults, shows that it's not just young boys who are enjoying videogames. Instead, videogames appeal to individuals across age and gender lines, with the average gamer proving to be clearly in their adulthood.

Another common label videogames are often associated with is that of being filled with violence, sexuality, and other types of mature content. Although videogames containing adult-aimed content are often the most targeted by news media outlets, the ESA's report shows that only 15% of all games sold in 2006 were rated "Mature" by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, a group that rates and evaluates videogames much in the same way that the Motion Picture Association of America does for feature films. Games rated as appropriate for all audiences represented the bulk of sales, with over 45% having an "Everyone" rating and 11% having an "Everyone 10+" rating. The remaining percentage of sales was for games with a "Teen" rating, which denotes games that are appropriate for ages 13 and up, a group akin to what most library systems consider to be the Young Adult patron demographic. Even with the majority of gamers being well into their adulthood, the sales of games do not suggest that adults

are only buying games with mature content. Instead, the most popular types of games are those that have content appropriate for any audience.

Table 1.

2006 Game Sales by Rating Category

Everyone (All ages)	Everyone 10+ (Ages 10 and above)	Teen (Ages 13 and above)	Mature (Ages 17 and above)
45.2%	11%	28.5%	15%

Note. The source of for this data is the Entertainment Software Association's *2007 Essential Facts About the Computer and Video Game Industry.*

The established legitimacy of videogames as a popular form of entertainment is evident when examining its market data in comparison to that of other entertainment industries. In 2007, according to NPD Market Research, "U.S. sales of videogames, which includes portable and console hardware, software and accessories, generated revenues of almost $18 billion, a 43 percent increase over the $12.5 billion generated in 2006" (Riley, 2008). Surprisingly, the annual revenue generated from videogames has surpassed that of the music and box office movie industries. In 2007 the music industry had a combined total in sales from both digital and physical units of $10.37 billion (RIAA, 2008) while domestic box office sales in the United States totaled $9.629 billion (MPAA, 2008), both of which demonstrate a decline from previous years. During the same time frame, DVD sales and rentals brought in more revenue than videogames with a total $23.4 billion in profits, but as with music and box office movie sales, DVD sales also demonstrated a trend of decreasing annual profits (Snider, 2008). Seen in this

light, videogames not only currently hold a significant place in the popular entertainment market, but they are proving to have a rapidly growing role as one of the preeminent forms of entertainment in the United States for years to come.

It can be assessed that since videogames represent a significant portion of the popular entertainment market in the United States, many consumers purchasing and enjoying videogames are likely also users of public libraries. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (2007) reports that "Nationwide, visits to public libraries totaled 1.4 billion, or 4.7 library visits per capita, in FY 2005." It is reasonable to assume that some level of crossover must exist between people who play videogames and people who use public libraries. In that sense, it would be rational to assume that including videogames as a part of a library's collection would provide library patrons with a type of resource that many have no doubt come to utilize and enjoy in their daily lives. Demonstrating this, libraries that have begun circulating games have seen an overwhelmingly positive reception. The New York Public Library system, for example, began circulating games in 2006 with a very limited collection but due to overwhelmingly positive reception and high demand from patrons, the library system now "…owns about 2,500 copies of 92 different games available for circulation in one-week intervals" (Schiesel, 2008). In fact, the videogame initiative at New York Public Library has been so successful that Nintendo has helped in the efforts to meet patron demand by donated 10 Wii systems for use at the library's popular in-house gaming programs (J. Martin[2], personal communication, April 21, 2008). In short, not only are videogames something that seem like a resource that public libraries should have as a part of their collections, but the limited number of libraries that have begun circulating games have seen a very positive response from their patrons. However, public libraries still face

many hurdles before videogames become commonplace parts of the resource base offered to the public.

<div style="text-align:center">Videogame Violence: A Major Source of Opposition</div>

On the surface, it would seem that libraries, which have always provided a wide assortment of materials and events for users, would unquestionably adopt videogames as yet another resource to be used by their patron bases. "Libraries offer storytime programs for young children and their families, and there are circulating collections of movies, music, and books for the entire family. When you add a collection of video-console games for children, teens, and parents, your library's value-added services become priceless" (Oakley, 2008). Yet videogames have remained outside of most libraries' collections for the duration of their existence as a form of popular entertainment. Possibly the largest contributing factor to libraries not adopting videogames as part of their collections is most likely the negative representation of videogames in the mainstream media. Whether in books, periodical articles, or on broadcast news programs, it is not uncommon to find arguments citing violence portrayed in videogames as a major influence upon the aggressive behavior of some players.

One of the most famous incidents of the supposed effects of game violence was demonstrated in the Columbine High School shootings of 1999. Anderson (2002) describes the shooters as "…students who habitually played violent videogames" and detail that one of the students, Eric Harris, "…created a customized version of *Doom* with two shooters, extra weapons, unlimited ammunition, and victims who couldn't fight back—features that are eerily similar to the actual shootings." Anderson (2003) provides additional evidence to the theories that violent videogames have a negative impact on players, stating "violent videogames are

significantly associated with: increased aggressive behavior, thoughts, and affect, increased physiological arousal; and decreased prosocial (helping) behavior." Looking at the issue with statements such as these in mind, it makes sense that library systems have stayed away from circulating videogames.

However, when looking at the Columbine shootings in relation to fifteen other similar school shootings, Jones (2002) concludes that, in fact, "most of the shooters showed no interest in games at all" and "other elements were much more common to the boys: bullying by peers, hostility with or dissociation from parents, suicidal threats, and fascination with news coverage of earlier rampage shootings." Prensky (2006) further points out that "most games are not violent" and even violent games "…are, in the opinion of many psychologists, emotional diffusers, rather than inciters." Nevertheless, to address cases such as Eric Harris and the videogame *Doom*, Jenkins (2006) proposes consideration that "aggressive people like aggressive entertainment" as opposed to the converse logic that aggressive entertainment begets aggressive people. Jenkins (2006) suggests "…a child who responds to a videogame the same way he or she responds to a real-world tragedy could be showing symptoms of being severely emotionally disturbed." In other words, the inability to discern the difference between fictional and real-world violence is not typical, but instead possible evidence of independently existing mental instability.

All the same, videogames became a focus of negative attention in media reports and legal proceedings reacting to school shootings such as Columbine. King and Borland (2003) suggest videogames were represented inaccurately, noting:

It quickly became clear that the legislators and pundits had little understanding of the variety of play or of the variety of players that had evolved over the past few years. In

ordinary times, that ignorance would have made little difference. In the wake of such a

tragedy, however, the broader social attention carried the potential to change or even

destroy game communities with legislation, market pressure, or other more subtle means

of censorship.

Put another way, "a major problem seems to be that most of the politicians and

antigaming pundits have never actually played a videogame for any significant period of time"

(Abanes, 2006). It can be argued that videogames were unfairly singled out as playing a negative

role they truly didn't fit into. Abanes (2006) supports a more expansive view of videogames,

stating that "videogames cannot be isolated from other forms of artistic expression that are

widely accepted and respected. All use mature themes, including murder, adultery, fornication,

suicide, and nudity (for example, operas, masterful paintings and sculptures, classic novels, and

award-winning films)." Though it is true there are examples within all forms of artistic

expression of works containing violent and adult-oriented content, not every single artistic

creation is representative of this. Like all other forms of artistic expression, videogames can

contain a wide spectrum of content, ranging from mature games like the *Grand Theft Auto* series

that contain profanity, sex, and murder to games that are suitable for all audiences, such as *Wii

Sports*. Especially considering that only 15% of all games sold in 2006 had a Mature rating,

videogames provide much for players than violent content, despite what mainstream media

reports and legislative campaigns would lead one to believe. Videogames belong in the category

of art, alongside the likes of books, movies, music, and other forms of artistic expression. The

Appendix provides a sampling of the diversity of genres that existed in games released in 2007.

Taking into account they are a legitimate form of artistic expression, it is not surprising to

discover that videogames have been shown to have benefits for players. Prensky (2006) states

that gamers display qualities such as excelling at collaborative problem solving, feeling

comfortable taking measured risks, multitasking, and thinking globally. Many videogames may

very well hold educational value as well. The argument can be made that, as with print materials

such as books and sheet music, videogames require a level of literacy in order to successfully

interact with them. Many videogames not only require but also sometimes help with the

development of reading and critical thinking skills necessary in literacy development.

> Literacy isn't just about print anymore. Literacy is the ability to rapidly decode abstract
>
> meaning from symbols. In reading, a set list of symbols—the alphabet—must be learned
>
> and mastered; in videogames, those symbols can be anything, are usually unique to each
>
> game, and there's a lot more than 26 of them. Gaming also requires text literacy in order
>
> to succeed. An example in elementary schools around the world is the ever-present
>
> *Pokémon* juggernaut. Success in the *Pokémon* world requires real-world literacy.
>
> (Neiburger, 2007)

Therefore, because they provide so many positive factors in such areas as artistic value,

the development of important real-world skills, and even literacy, videogames are deserving of a

place in libraries amongst other resources offered to the public. However, even when one realizes

that videogame violence may not truly be the problem it is often attributed to be, there are still

other issues that have served as roadblocks for the adoption of videogames in libraries.

Circulating Videogames in Public Libraries: Difficulties and Possible Solutions

Libraries have historically owned and circulated materials that have been questioned and

challenged by community members. For example, in the San Diego Public Library system, a

patron can read the newest issue of *Playboy* magazine or check out a copy of *Mein Kampf* (City

of San Diego, 2008a). Libraries serve as a forum for all ideas, opinions, and expressions, even those that are disliked or controversial. The first section of the American Library Association's (2008) Freedom to Read statement reads "It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those which are unorthodox or unpopular with the majority." With this in mind, videogames, which contain a vast assortment of views and expressions, seem like a natural fit for library collections. Unfortunately, many factors above and beyond even the sensationalism of game violence have served as obstacles to libraries circulating videogames.

Opposition From Traditionalists

Though typically library employees and administrators are educated and well-informed, that does not mean that they are free from sharing the same public perceptions of videogames as the rest of society. For instance, members of the generations that grew up before videogames became a major component of the entertainment industry might not have the same connection with gaming that newer generations have. Thus, the misperception about videogames held by some individuals working in libraries may influence decision-making and serve as an obstruction to circulating videogames. Oakley (2008) describes that when building a collection at the Guilderland Public Library, "there were some initial concerns from library traditionalists who saw gaming as the antithesis to reading" but states that in the year they launched their circulating game collection, the number of books borrowed by teens saw an increase of twenty percent. Still, most non-gamers know nothing of games beyond what they have seen reported in mainstream media and their mental representation of videogames lies in what they read about or see in the news. "Seeing *videogames* in the same sentence with *libraries* often raises eyebrows. Much of

the information we receive about games from the mainstream media is negative: they are violent, addictive, stereotypical, and do not fairly represent women or minorities" (Galloway & Lauzon, 2006). However, as previously discussed, the types of videogames highlighted in the news media represent only a small portion of what is truly being purchased and played. Additionally, videogames hold not only recreational value, but can provide artistic and educational benefits as well.

Lack of Videogame Knowledge

Even librarians and administrators who are open to the idea of providing videogame resources may feel intimidated by the abundance of videogames and systems that exist and don't have any idea where to begin building a collection. "For librarians who are not active gamers, it can be hard to keep up with what the most popular games and systems are in your community" (Saxton, 2007). While a wealth of information such as review archives and in-depth articles exists in videogame magazines and on game-centric websites, the multitude of data might be overwhelming to a librarian who has little to no experience with videogames. Nevertheless, options to gain information on providing videogame resources are available. Conducting outreach methods such as contacting library systems that have already begun circulating games provides insight into what methods of building videogame collections have been the most successful. Establishing contact also provides firsthand accounts of what videogames have been the most in-demand by library patrons and what vendors provide the most competitive prices and comprehensive selections for purchasing games.

Another possible solution for librarians with limited videogame knowledge is to go the source and ask for assistance from gamers directly. Oakley (2008) describes using input from a

library's Teen Advisory Committee in order to take direction on starting a videogame collection. Additionally, the New York Public Library System solicited input from patrons as one of its sources of deciding which games to purchase when first building its game collection (J. Martin, personal communication, April 21, 2008). Ultimately, libraries creating videogame collections are doing so to benefit the patrons they serve, so input and direction from the public is a critical source of information and assistance. Not only does public involvement provide insight and guidance on the types of videogames that have the most demand, but it also provides a possible avenue of support from community members for the new service.

Preventing Theft of Videogames

Libraries take many steps to thwart theft of materials, from magnetic strips in books to elaborate security camera systems. Still, the reality is that items will be stolen, especially those that are popular and in-demand with the public. With most new videogames costing $50 or more, the concern naturally exists that libraries' investments in building videogame collections may be compromised by stolen materials. Some library systems, however, have had much success with deterring theft of videogames. Oakley (2008) states that during the initial year of circulating games, with security measures including putting magnetic strips on both the games themselves and their instruction booklets, a total of six games were stolen. However, other library systems have not fared as well. Jack Martin, the New York Public Library's Assistant Coordinator of Young Adult Services, describes theft as the largest initial problem in circulating videogames. "We had huge numbers of games stolen from branches nearly as quickly as they hit the shelf. We created a behind-the-desk binder system to prevent this, however, and the loss rate has declined" (personal communication, April 21, 2008). As with other popular types of library materials,

finding an immediate safeguard against theft may be difficult, but once a pattern of use has been

established, solutions to the problem of stolen items can be found and implemented.

Justification of Funding

Even if libraries decide to start providing videogame resources for patrons, justifying the

procurement of funds to build a game collection may be troublesome. With library budgets

across the United States being cut in recent years, services and resources have been sacrificed.

For example, the Mission Valley Branch of the San Diego Public Library system went from

being open 80.5 hours a week in 2002 to being open 45 hours a week in 2005, a decrease of

approximately 45% of operating hours available to the public (City of San Diego, 2008b).

Convincing library administration, staff, and supporters that building a videogame collection

during times when funds are so limited is certainly a daunting challenge. Raina Lee[3], editor-in-

chief of *1-Up Megazine*, states, "You will have to justify and defend the reasons to include

games at the library, since it is taxpayer money, and some cranky people will want some

answers! Be prepared to have academic discussions and emphasize the social aspect of gaming"

(personal communication, February 28, 2008). Involving library staff and community members

through means such as soliciting input from a Teen Advisory Council as well as making

presentations about the benefits of videogames to library administration or at events like

Community Council meetings may have a positive impact on gaining internal and external

support for purchasing videogame resources. For instance, before the gaming initiative began in

the New York Public Library system, a formal proposal to library administration was drawn up

detailing the overall vision, background, benefits, potential costs, and plans for staff training (J.

Martin, personal communication, April 21, 2008). Educating library staff members,

administration, community members, and patrons about the reasons for libraries to provide

videogames resources will surely endow more widespread support and understanding for

justifying the funding of such a venture.

Finding Funds to Build Collections

Considering funding is so limited in many library systems across the United States,

libraries granted permission to build a videogame collection will still face problems if there is

not ample money to pay for the initiative. Saxton (2007) offers a possible solution to the problem

of finding funds with the example of how the Martin Luther King Jr. Branch of the Cleveland

Public Library system obtained gaming equipment for their library's collection and programs:

> There are several ways to procure equipment depending on your library and community.
>
> Several libraries have purchased the equipment, either out of their budgets or with grant
>
> funds, as part of plans for ongoing videogame programming. If this is not an option, then
>
> you may be able to solicit help from your local videogame store by asking them to
>
> cosponsor an event and loan the equipment.

Beyond library budget and grant funds, approaching a library's Friends group may

provide another resource for funding the creation of a videogame collection in a library. The Ann

Arbor District Library, for example, received substantial donations from the Friends of the

Library group in order to purchase videogames as well as prizes for participants at gaming

tournaments (Helmrich & Neiburger, 2005). In addition, rerouting some or all of the money

spent on low-circulating or unpopular portions of the collection provides another source of

funding. Historically libraries have always built their collections in large part upon the demands

and needs of the public, and funding has shifted throughout past decades to account for the

procurement of media such as vinyl records, laserdiscs, audiocassettes, and microfilm. Since

demand for various formats has decreased or been completely eliminated in recent times, funding

should shift to emerging popular formats, of which videogames have been demonstrated to hold

a significant place.

Approaching game companies directly is another method by which libraries can find

assistance in building a videogame collection. Lee (personal communication, February 28, 2008)

suggests that libraries provide an excellent method of publicity and marketing for videogame

publishers:

It's free marketing for game developers and publishers. Making games available at the

library won't hinder sales. Developers and publishers will love it since putting their

games into the library makes them part of the intellectual canon. Only then is gaming

taken seriously. It's the same as putting games at the Smithsonian or any other museum.

It's good public relations for game companies, and it also legitimizes their work as

cultural and relevant.

As circulating videogames in libraries becomes more common, it will be to the benefit of

public library systems to form relationships with game publishers. Already, some game

companies seem to be taking note of possibilities circulating videogames in public libraries offer.

For example, in February 2008 Nintendo donated 21 Wii consoles to five different library

systems as well as the American Library Association with the goal of encouraging library

gaming (*Library Journal*, 2008). Libraries have always enjoyed donations of a wide assortment

of materials from both publishers and members of public, and videogames have the potential to

be no different. Even with sales of videogames on the increase at a significant rate, having

videogames in libraries may actually help boost sales even higher by exposing more people to

the artistic, entertainment, and educational value gaming offers players. In that sense, it is within

the best interest of game creators and publishers to work with libraries in building collections.

Videogame Use In Library Programming

Beyond gaining public support and finding funding for building a videogame collection,

libraries face the problem that many users may not own the hardware needed to play the games

checked out. While some libraries may provide listening or viewing rooms for library materials,

this is not a constant amongst public libraries across the United States. In most cases, users are

expected to use the materials they check out on their home equipment. For instance, if a patron

checks out a DVD, the lending library usually does not provide the DVD player needed to watch

it. However, unlike formats such as DVDs, videocassettes, and CDs, videogames are released for

specific systems. A game released for the Sony Playstation 3, for example, will not run on

Microsoft's Xbox 360 or Nintendo's Wii. Considering that game systems often cost hundreds of

dollars, the audience of potential users becomes very limited.

Still, library systems that have begun circulating games have seen amazing demand for

the resource. The San Diego County Library system, for example, began circulating games in

late 2007 and many titles quickly had reserve lists of 50 or more patrons (County of San Diego,

2008). It goes without saying, then, that even with the necessity for patrons to own the hardware

needed to use the videogames they borrow, there is certainly a high demand and use. All the

same, there will always be a portion of the patron base that is not able to check out videogames

because they lack the necessary hardware. Libraries still have the option of bringing videogames

to such type of patrons, though, by hosting gaming programs such as tournaments.

The most common target audience of library videogame programs thus far is the historically reluctant Young Adult demographic. "Libraries realize that we need to take steps to get this generation in the door before they become jaded blog-reading, Netflix-subscribing, Google-fu masters who can't imagine why someone would bother actually going to the library" (Helmrich & Neiburger, 2005). Videogames are being used as a lure to attract more Young Adults into the library than what would otherwise be the case. The results show that such a strategy is indeed working and teens initially coming to the library solely for the purpose of attending gaming programs or checking out videogames expand their use of the library by exploring other available resources. Oakley (2008) notes that normally "the circulation of teen fiction and nonfiction at the library increased about four percent annually, but the year we launched the circulating game collection, there was a 20 percent increase in the number of books being borrowed by teens." Additionally, Saxton (2007) states "many teens who initially became involved in the library through gaming events have gone on to attend other library programs as well." Though videogames may be the reason that some patrons first begin using a library, there is definite evidence to suggest that an increase in use amongst other library resources rises by simply increasing the number of patrons coming through the library's doors.

Despite the initial aiming of gaming programs at the Young Adult patron audience, many libraries are starting to recognize that videogames are very popular with older audiences as well. In January of 2008, the Milford Library in Massachusetts held an all-ages gaming event on their Patron Appreciation Day in which library fines were waived if library users could beat circulation assistant Katie Spofford in a game of *Dance Dance Revolution* (Bernstein, 2008). Some library systems are even hosting gaming programs limited exclusively to adult participants. According to Amanda Schukle[4], Collection Development Librarian for the County

of San Diego, from the time when the San Diego County Library system began circulating games

and hosting gaming events in 2007, adult interest in videogames was so high that a Nintendo Wii

was purchased to be used specifically at events held solely for adult patrons. Since this first step,

the County of San Diego has purchased a Nintendo Wii for each library branch in the system to

promote both juvenile and adult gaming programs (personal communication, March 13, 2008

and May 6, 2008). Considering the figures previously stated describing the typical gamer—

namely that the average age of a gamer is 33 and 70% of all gamers are over the age of 18—it's

no surprise that libraries circulating videogames and holding gaming events were quick to learn

that the patron base for utilizing gaming resources goes far beyond the youth demographic. Even

so, the fact that many library systems still do not even circulate games in the first place suggests

that it will take a considerable amount of time before videogames become ubiquitous within

libraries.

Summation: Videogames as a Library Resource

Supplying library users with access to videogame resources falls in line with the types of

services public libraries typically provide to their patrons. Libraries go far beyond research and

reading materials, instead serving such diverse functions as providing space for community

meetings, making available collections of popular music albums and feature films, hosting events

such as concerts and seminars, and providing computer services for surfing the Web, writing a

résumé, or sending e-mail messages. Considering that public libraries are often reflections of the

demands and needs of the diverse communities they serve, it is reasonable to assume that

libraries will house resources that are popular and desired by users. Judging completely from a

statistical standpoint, it would seem logical that videogames, a form of media that is not only

extremely profitable but well-utilized by a surprisingly large and adult section of the population, would be a commonplace library resource. Yet, this hasn't been the case.

As discussed, a number of roadblocks have prevented videogames from becoming a standard library resource, with the most glaring being the popular perception of videogames being extremely violent. Still, violent games represent only a small percentage of the bulk of games being played and enjoyed by users, the majority of whom are adults. Though there is evidence to suggest that violent videogames lead to aggressive tendencies in players, there is also a great deal of contradictory evidence that proposes the opposite is true. In fact, a strong argument has been made that videogames actually hold educational and developmental benefits for players.

Beyond the violence issue, videogames face a number of other problems in becoming adopted in public libraries. The most notable issues include opposition from traditionalists, justifying and securing funding, preventing theft, and requiring the use of specific hardware. Nevertheless, for each of these issues, there are workable solutions that libraries seeking to provide videogames to their users can explore. In the end, if libraries have a vision of providing their patrons with videogame resources, there are myriad ways to do so.

In order to survive and stay relevant, libraries must broaden their outlook and meet the needs of all users by providing the resources and materials most needed and desired by patrons. Videogames are a resource that has demonstrated to be in demand by patrons from across the spectrum of generations, and libraries that have circulated games have benefited from it. Circulation of other types of materials has increased, attendance at non-gaming programs has improved, and community feedback has been positive. Having access to videogames provides users with a form of media that contains both artistic and entertainment value, allows some users

to have access to a resource they wouldn't otherwise be able to procure, attracts new and reluctant patron groups, and demonstrates that libraries are modern and in line with user expectations. Though many obstacles have prevented videogames from being adopted by libraries sooner, it seems like only a matter of time before the notion of libraries circulating videogames becomes natural. Neiburger (2007) states, "In the 35 years since the release of *Pong*, videogames have come a long way." In regard to public libraries, videogames still have a way to go before they become a standard resource, but their journey is already steadily underway.

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Appendix

Sampling of the Diversity of Videogames Released in 2007

Game	System	Rating	Genre
BioShock	Xbox 360	M	First-person Adventure
Brain Age 2	Nintendo DS	E	Brain Training
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	Nintendo Wii	E	Cooking
Dance Dance Revolution Universe	Xbox 360	E	Dancing
Guitar Hero III	Multi	E	Music
Halo 3	Xbox 360	M	First-person Shooter
Hotel Dusk 215	Nintendo DS	T	Detective/Mystery
Jam Sessions	Nintendo DS	E	Guitar Simulation
Madden NFL 08	Multi	E	Sports
Mario Party 8	Nintendo Wii	E	Board Game
MySims	Nintendo Wii	E	World Creation
Picross DS	Nintendo DS	E	Puzzle
Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	Nintendo DS	E	Role Playing Game
Project Gotham Racing 4	Xbox 360	E	Racing
Super Mario Galaxy	Nintendo Wii	E	Action
Trauma Center: New Blood	Nintendo Wii	T	Surgery Simulation
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	Playstation 3	T	Adventure
Virtua Fighter 5	Playstation 3	T	Fighting

Note. The source for release dates and system information is GameFAQs' *System List* website.

Footnotes

[1]   The word videogame has two spellings: video game and videogame. While many mainstream books and articles spell it as two words, most enthusiast gaming publications such as *Electronic Gaming Monthly* spell it as one word. I elected to follow suit and spell it as one word.

[2]   The New York Public Library's gaming initiative had received considerable positive coverage in the media. Jack Martin was very pleasant and excited about offering videogames to library patrons. He was happy to answer my questions and demonstrated great professionalism.

[3]   Raina Lee has not only published *1-Up Megazine*, but she was written for *Wired*, VH1, and recently wrote a book about karaoke called *Hit Me With Your Best Shot.* Raina is a great source of information because she a legitimate female gamer and has had extensive experience writing about the gaming industry.

[4]   Amanda Schukle works for the County of San Diego, whereas I work for the City of San Diego. The County circulates videogames, but as of the time this article was written, the City does not. I have been in communication with Amanda since 2007 and it has been very interesting to hear about the successes the County has had with circulating videogames and hosting gaming events.