Trials of Metadata:
Emerging Schemas for Videogame Cataloguing

ABIGAIL CHAPMAN, MA LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

SHERIF AGM 2021

Early Efforts in Videogame Cataloguing

Realia

- Nancy Olson's 1983 *A Manual of AACR2 Examples for Microcomputer Software and Video Games* 'recommended video games be treated as realia' (De Groat, 2015, p. 137).

Machine Readable Data File (MRDF)

- Early editions of AACR2 prioritised describing content over describing carriers, to the point that a change in carrier did not constitute a change in edition (Weiss, 2003, p. 173).

Finding Videogame Schemas

Academic Schemas

- GAMECIP – Game Metadata Citation Project – Core Metadata Schema
- GAMER Group – Game Research Group – Video Game Metadata Schema

Community-lead Schemas

- MobyGames - The MobyGames Standards and Practices

Commercial Schemas

- Steam
- Itch.io

Defining Core Elements

OLAC ***Best Practices for Cataloguing Video Games Using RDA and MARC21***

- Title

- Series statement

- Statement of responsibility

- Place of publication

- Publisher's name

- Date of publication

- **Edition**

- Identifier of a manifestation

- **Carrier type, content type, and extent**

Content, Carrier, and Extent

Importance of Controlled Vocabularies

RDA Media Formats

- Computer card
- Computer chip cartridge
- Computer disc
- Computer disc cartridge
- Computer tape cartridge
- Computer tape cassette
- Computer tape reel
- Online resource
- Other

9 terms

GAMECIP Controlled Media Formats

Common usage terms
- 3 1/2 inch floppy disk
- CD-ROM
- DVD

Branded terminology
- Nintendo Game Boy Advance Game Pak
- Nintendo Game Boy Color Game Pak
- Nintendo Game Boy Game Pak

59 terms

RDA	GAMER	GAMECIP	MOBY	ITCH.IO	STEAM
Content type	Distribution type	Content type			
Carrier type	Physical format	Media format	Media type		
	File type				
	File size				
Extent		Extent			

Content Type, Carrier Type, and Extent

Edition Statement

What Does Edition Mean for Videogames?

- 'Commercial edition'
- 'Software version'
  (De Groat *et al* , 2015, p. 10)

- Core game
- Add-on / DLC

- Platform
- System details

RDA	GAMER	GAMECIP	MOBY	ITCH.IO	STEAM
Edition	Version Information	Version			
	Local release subtitle				
	Add. content				
	Content name				
	Content type				
	Version req.				
	Platform	Platform	Platform	Platform	Platform
System details	System req.	System req.	System req.	System req.	System req.

Edition and System Details

What Elements Do These Schemas Consider Core?

- Platform
- System Req
- Developer
- Summary
- **Genre**…

The Genre Element

- LCSH are more equipped to describe books about videogames than videogames themselves.

- The subject heading 'video games' only has 200 NT, nearly all of which are videogame titles

- Existing genre terms are more helpful but equally insufficient (De Groat, 2015, p. 145):

Video games	Computer word games
Computer adventure games	Educational games
Computer baseball games	Fantasy games
Computer flight games	Video wrestling games
Computer war games	Simulation games

Genre on the Web

Search parameters for major retailers

- 'Recent popularity of genre as a search parameter in the Web environment' (Lee & Zhang, 2013, p. 909)

- Several unifying genre terms describe gameplay: **action, adventure, role-playing, simulation, sports, and strategy**

Descriptive tags created and defined by users

- 'User-centred or cognitive approach' to information retrieval, which 'emphasize[s] expression of users' information needs and information seeking behaviours' (Beak & Olson 2011, p. 2)

- These terms are consistent across the websites. Steam and Itch.io have roughly fifty per cent of their top three hundred terms in common

WHAT GENRE IS **CELESTE** ?

GENRE	GAMEPLAY	VISUAL STYLE	DESCRIPTIVE	EVALUATIVE
Indie	Platformer	Pixel graphics	Difficult	Great soundtrack
Adventure	Precision plat.	2D	Cute	Female protagonist
Action	2D platformer	Retro	Atmospheric	Story rich
Exploration	Puzzle plat.		Funny	
	Single player			
	Side scroller			

Traditional Genres

Narrative Genre
Theme	Spy, horror, war, aliens
Setting	Classical antiquity, Sci-fi
Trope	Hail Mary, Destiny Reveal

Visual Genre
Dimension	3D, 2D
Point of view	First person, third person
Art Style	Cel-shaded, retro, realistic

Gameplay Genre

Defined by what the game revolves around, focuses, or involves.

- Action
- Arcade
- Brawler
- Dancing
- Fighting
- Gambling
- JRPG
- MMORPG
- Maze
- Music
- Platform
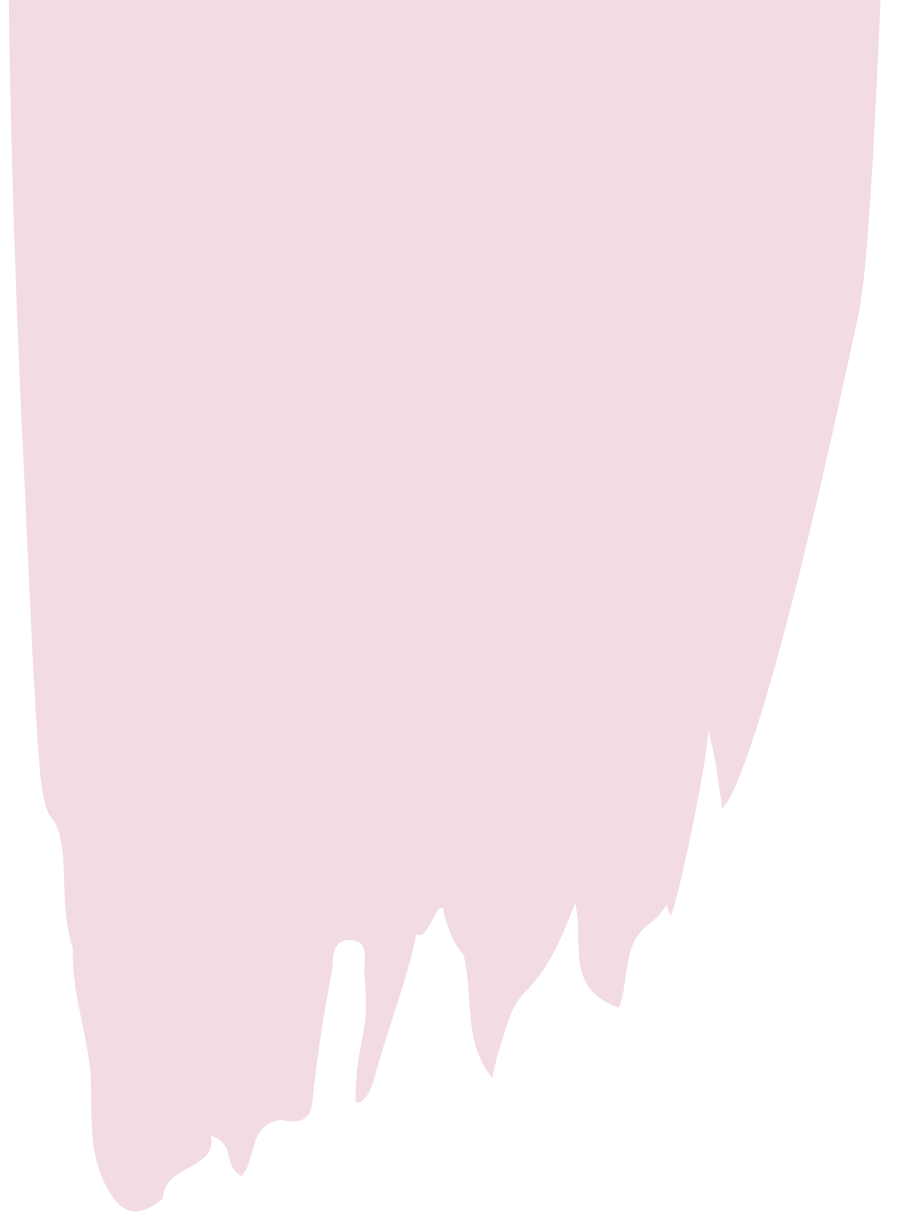- Racing
- Roguelike
- Simulation
- Stealth
- …and many more!

Conclusions

RDA is quite good!

Controlled vocabulary is vital for consistency.

The material culture of videogames need further attention.

Videogames will continue to evolve.

Useful Links

Videogame Cataloguing Schemas:

Best Practices for Cataloguing Video Games (OLAC)
https://olacinc.org/mon-07312017-2025document/best-practices-cataloging-video-games

Core Metadata Schema for Cataloguing Video Games (GAMECIP)
https://gamecip.soe.ucsc.edu/node/90

Video Game Metadata Schema (GAMER Group)
https://gamer.ischool.uw.edu/releases/

The MobyGames Standards and Practices
https://www.mobygames.com/info/standards

Controlled vocabularies:

GAMECIP Controlled Vocabularies
https://gamecip.soe.ucsc.edu/node/85

GAMER Group Controlled Vocabularies
https://gamer.ischool.uw.edu/releases/

And a couple of other interesting websites:

The Video Game History Foundation
https://gamehistory.org/blog/

Preserving Virtual Worlds Project
https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/17097

Other GAMER Group publications
https://gamer.ischool.uw.edu/publications/

References

Publications

- Beak, J., & Olson, H.A. (2011). 'Analysis of Metadata Schemas for Children's Libraries', in Smiraglia, R.P. (ed.) *Proceedings from North American Symposium on Knowledge Organization,* Toronto, Canada, pp. 1-12.

- De Groat, G. (2015). 'A History of Video Game Cataloging in U.S. Libraries', *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, 53 (2), pp. 135–56.

- De Groat, G., Kaltman, E., Barrett, M, Caldwell, C., Edwards, G., Lowood, H., & Wardrip-Fruin, N. (2015). *Core Metadata Schema for Cataloguing Video Games: Game Metadata and Citation Project (GAMECIP) Tech Report 1*. Version 1. Available at: https://gamecip.soe.ucsc.edu/node/90 (Accessed: 26 May 2020).

- Lee, H., & Zhang, L. (2013). 'Tracing the Conceptions and Treatment of Genre in Anglo-American Cataloging', *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, 51 (8), pp. 891-912.

- McDonough, J., Olendorf, R., Kirschenbaum, M., Kraus, K., Reside, D., Donahue, R., Phelps, A., Egert, C., Lowood, H., & Rojo, S. (2010b). Preserving Virtual Worlds Final Report. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/2142/17097 (Accessed: 3 March 2020).

- Weiss, A.K. (2003). 'Proliferating Guidelines: A History and Analysis of the Cataloging of Electronic Resources', *Library Resources and Technical Services*, 47 (4), pp. 171-187.