
Are you intrigued by the possibility of starting a gaming collection at your library but feel daunted about how and where to start? Are you excited about the opportunities of video games and libraries but unsure how to convince library stakeholders? Is your library already onboard with gaming but unsure how to create an effective circulation policy or which gaming resources to consult? If so, Beth Gallaway’s *Game On! Gaming at the Library* is certainly worth adding to your professional reading list.

Beth Gallaway graduated from Simmons Graduate School of Library and Information Science in 1998. Following graduation, she worked as a YA Librarian at Havervill Public Library in Massachusetts. In 2006, Gallaway was named a *Library Journal Mover and Shaker* for her advocacy efforts related to gaming and libraries. The following year, she started her own company, *Information Goddess Consulting*, which provides independent consulting on gaming, technology and youth services. She is currently serving as Assistant Director at Havervill Public Library. Gallaway indicates in the preface to *Game On!* that, as with many children and teens of the 1980’s, her personal love of gaming dates back to when she was a child and first played Nintendo’s *Super Mario Brothers*. Gallaway’s combination of personal interest and professional experience make her a qualified author on gaming. Her book is a great guide to helping libraries get their “game on.”

Upon opening *Game On!*, readers will immediately notice its unique structure. Rather than organizing topics into traditional chapters and appendices, Gallaway chose instead to pay homage to gaming and organized the sections into “levels,” “strategy guides,” and even “bonus rounds.” By adding a little playfulness and whimsy to the book’s structure, Gallaway manages to make a subject that may seem intimidating to some, very accessible. She also includes many useful visuals throughout—everything from screenshots, sample forms and templates, to photos and charts. True to its intended audience, *Game On!* is written in a simple, well-organized fashion that easily allows readers to find relevant sections and flip back and forth, serving as a very nice “how-to” for professionals with limited time.

The companion website is disappointing. Throughout the book readers are encouraged to visit the website; however, the site no longer appears to be active, and there are no links or redirects to a new site. This is unfortunate because the book was published in 2009, and it would be useful to have access to the most current forms and core collection gaming lists for the latest gaming consoles.

According to Gallaway, the purposes of the book are “to educate the beginning gamer and support the master gamer” and to bring librarians working in all types of libraries “up to speed on the topic of videos.” There is no doubt that Gallaway absolutely hits the mark. Perhaps the biggest strength of *Game On!* is its comprehensiveness. Not only does the book cover the history of gaming, it also addresses why libraries should
include gaming in the first place. According to Gallaway, video games are simply another form of storytelling and information—something that libraries are already in the business of providing. She argues that many library patrons are already avid gamers, and, by not providing access to this particular format, libraries are not delivering the best customer service. In addition to gaming advocacy, Game On! covers everything from the various gaming formats (e.g., console gaming and PC gaming), collection development and circulation, to programming, and marketing and promotion. Gallaway also thoughtfully included many useful core collection lists and “ready to go programs.”

Other helpful additions include a glossary of terms for those who may not be familiar with gaming jargon, as well as a lengthy annotated bibliography for those wanting to delve deeper into certain topic areas. Anyone interested in exploring gaming at his or her library would be hard pressed to find anything missing from Gallaway’s book.

Another thoughtful inclusion in Gallaway’s Game On! is the brief history of the evolution of gaming culture. For example, many people, including some hard-core gamers, believe that Spacewar, created in 1962 by two students at MIT, was the first real video game. However, Gallaway points out that the first video game was actually Table Tennis for Two which was developed four years earlier, in 1958, using an oscilloscope. Equally as interesting as the historical background are Gallaway’s thoughts and predictions on the future of gaming. Gallaway predicts that the gaming industry will continue to grow and attract more interest due in large part to the introduction of next-generation consoles such as Xbox 360 and Nintendo Wii which connect to the Internet (and now, the interactive Xbox 360 +Kinect and Nintendo Wii U). She also speculates—and most readers would likely agree—that mobile gaming will experience rapid growth, especially as the technology becomes cheaper and more accessible. Gallaway also offers encouraging predictions that the gaming industry will, just as with comics, become more “inclusive” of women and minorities both in terms of game content and in terms of design.

In a future edition of Game On! it would be interesting to read Gallaway’s thoughts and/or experiences with iPad or tablet gaming and the opportunities and challenges associated with providing collections and services with these types of devices. Given that Game On! was published nearly 5 years ago, it is not surprising that this topic was not covered.

Overall, Game On! packs a lot of punch in just over 300 pages. It is well written, engaging, and incredibly comprehensive. Despite being a few years old and promoting a companion site that is no longer active, Gallaway’s book nonetheless offers an excellent starting point for those interested in bringing gaming to their libraries. It also acts as an excellent resource for those who are already experienced with gaming at the library. Strongly recommended.

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