Playing History:

How *Ars Magica* Players Develop Historical Literacy

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Abstract

The issue of academic content in games is a tricky one. Filling a game with facts and figures is no guarantee the game will help students learn – and generally makes for a bad game to boot. On the other hand, players have an immense capacity to engage with the content of games, often learning about the material on their own time and with far more depth of engagement than they demonstrate in school. The role-playing game *Ars Magica* contains factual and literal historical material – yet rather than turn the game into academic work, as many explicitly educational games do, it turns history into part of the game. How does *Ars Magica* achieve this? How does it avoid the "problem of content?" And how do specific groups using the game negotiate that historical content and incorporate it into play? Through analysis of game observations and in-depth, semi-structured interviews, this paper examines the texts, practices and technologies of an *Ars Magica* group in which players have successfully developed and deployed historical literacies. Players voluntarily engage in historical thinking, reading and research, including both online and offline activities. Additionally, the group has developed an idiosyncratic but historically grounded approach to thirteenth century thinking and behavior, which they attempt to simulate in play.

Keywords: medieval history, new media literacies, role-playing games

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What does it mean for an ordinary person to "know" history? Does it mean having an expert command of names and dates, and the ability to produce them on demand? Or does being historically literate go beyond the possession of information?

Content matters, of course – but not without context. Literacy means the ability to "read" (understand meaning) and "write" (produce meaning) in the context of a particular semiotic domain, or field of knowledge (Gee, 2003). To be historically literate, therefore, is not to master disconnected facts, but rather to develop the skills and techniques of meaning-making defined by the field of history. Without becoming historians themselves, learners can come to understand history as a process of asking questions, gathering evidence, interpreting data, making arguments and more (Squire & Barab, 2004; Lee, 2005).

This model of learning asks students to participate in history, not simply to consume it. For this reason, we have chosen to explore the development of historical literacy through the lens of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009). Jenkins lays out eleven skills central to participation, ranging from play to negotiation. "Role play, in particular," he writes, "should be seen as a fundamental skill used across multiple academic domains" (Jenkins, 2009, p. 30). We therefore examine how role-playing can serve to tie traditional academic content – namely the learning of history – to new literacies and participatory culture.

This paper examines the texts, practices and technologies of one role-playing group that has successfully bridged this divide. The *Ars Magica* players described in this paper use twenty-first century skills to create deep engagement with thirteenth century history. The presence of history does not turn the game into work; instead, players make the work of history part of the game. This sort of engagement does not happen by accident. This paper will explore what, exactly, this group does to make history playable, as well as how they both understand and produce meaning with that history.

Game Structure in *Ars Magica*

The issue of academic content in games is a tricky one. Filling a game with facts and figures is no guarantee players will learn, and often makes for a bad game to boot (Gee, 2003). On the other hand, sometimes game-play can create deep engagement with the historical material (Squire & Barab, 2004) and new ways of working with it (Uricchio, 2005), as we posit *Ars Magica* does for our subjects.

To better understand the relationship between historical content and game design, we must acknowledge that all historical games are not alike. Some games attempt to portray the flow of historical forces, while others take place in extensively detailed historical settings. Some are quite faithful to history, while others play fast and loose with the facts.

What kind of game is *Ars Magica*, then, and how does it relate to history? It is a table-top (or "pen and paper") role-playing game, in which players regularly gather in person to adopt the roles of characters in an ongoing narrative structured by game rules (Mackay, 2001). This narrative is highly open-ended. The game provides a common setting and mechanics, but not the details of what happens during each game session. Instead, players work together to create stories collaboratively and in real-time (Hammer, 2010). In *Ars Magica*, these stories take place in a fictional thirteenth century. Despite the historical setting, however, the game is not intended to be pedagogical; it is positioned as a pastime. Players can, and often do, play fast and loose with history.

It is important at this juncture to note something that this project is *not* meant to establish. Although players engage deeply with history during play, this project makes no claim that these players have suddenly become qualified to teach college classes on medieval history, submit articles to academic journals, or spend serious time doing original archival research. Rather, the question is: have the players actually learned any history? More to the point, have they learned *how* to learn history? This paper attempts to establish that not only have these players learned to formulate and investigate questions about historical fact, but that they also demonstrate a complex understanding of the different

types of historical knowledge as well as an ability to incorporate that knowledge into active performance.

In short, we must understand how players participate in a process of historical learning, interpretation and inquiry. Are they engaging with history in a way that historians would recognize as meaningful? There are many kinds of historical inquiry, and many schools of thought as to the direction the field of medieval history in particular ought to take. It would be tremendously difficult to show that the players have satisfied all the requirements of each school, but fortunately that is not necessary. We will be satisfied with demonstrating that the players are learning material which at least one subgroup of historians regards as the subject matter of real historical inquiry, as will be seen later in the paper.

Methods

We chose to examine a group of adult *Ars Magica* players who have been meeting for bi-weekly game sessions for over two years. They supplement their face-to-face meetings with multiple digital channels of communication. Players voluntarily engage in historical reading and research outside of game sessions, using both online and offline resources. Additionally, the group has developed an idiosyncratic but historically grounded approach to thirteenth century thinking and behavior, which they attempt to simulate in play.

In order to understand our chosen *Ars Magica* group, we observed multiple play sessions over the course of several months. One author of this paper served as a participant-observer, engaging in play along with the subjects. The other served as a researcher and analyst of the game sessions. The authors also recorded joint interviews with each participant. These were semi-structured interviews on the themes of history, technology and play. Each researcher brought different areas of expertise – as a game researcher and a historian, respectively – to bear on the analysis of the data.

While this group may not be representative of the entire *Ars Magica* player population, they represent a point on the spectrum of historical engagement that *Ars Magica* supports. By examining this group's practices, we believe we can start to understand what makes play succeed for them as a way of engaging deeply with history. These practices can then be applied to other *Ars Magica* groups, and potentially to the design of other games aimed at historical literacy and learning.

All player names given in this paper are pseudonyms.

Player Interviews: Historical Research and In-Game Usage

We began our interviews by asking players to discuss their prior experiences with history. Nearly all of them asserted their lack of experience. Although all had completed their high school history requirements, some had taken courses in history in college, and one had a history professor in the family, none of them had been formally trained. Curiously, most of them also used a particular word to describe what they thought of history: namely, that history was about "details." Many players volunteered that these "details" consisted of specific dates, names, and places. Their attitude toward these details was generally neutral or negative; this type of historical fact was not, they felt, the kind they interacted with in game. One player even ventured, when explaining that history felt too impersonal, that "I don't like history.… You can't root for history."

It is unsurprising that these "details" are at the core of players' ideas about learning history. In schools, history is largely presented as the memorization of facts and "correct" explanations (Seixas, 2000). Without formal training, few students are exposed to the far wider variety of activities historians undertake: formulating meaningful questions, engaging in research, interpreting data and more (Squire & Barab, 2004). This emphasis on the acquisition and retention of facts repels students from history (Loewen, 1995), as one can see in players' reaction to the concept of "details." As we will see below, these players participate actively in historical research and performance – yet their alienation from "school-based" history continues long after their formal history education is complete.

By contrast, players emphasized the pleasure they took in their historical experience in *Ars Magica*, which they felt was narratively or creatively based. One player said that where students are "fed" history, he felt that roleplayers instead create with it; roleplaying, he commented, provides an environment in which to "grab onto details" and make history "relevant." Players were enthusiastic about historical elements that improved the play experience, such as details about day to day living. This kind of historical knowledge helped provide "specificity" and "verisimilitude," as Rick put it. It had an immediate purpose – to help players portray their characters better. Annie explained that these sorts of details can make a character come alive. "History should be exciting," she claimed, and deeply engaging with the life of an individual could make it so.

In fact, when situated in the creative, narrative context, players were very positive about the facts they gleaned from history. Rick explained that incorporating history into the game differentiated *Ars Magica* from the "bland medieval setting" that he felt was used in many fantasy games, books, and movies. "There are more interesting things in truth," he said, "than [can be] made up casually." Samuel agreed: the medieval mindset might seem alien to a modern individual, but that strangeness was precisely what produced interesting, quirky stories. We will return to this distinction between types of details later in the paper.

Ars Magica is set in "Mythic Europe," an alternate thirteenth century in which magic exists (Tweet, Rein-Hagen, & Chart, 2004). While this might seem completely ahistorical, the game's premise is that many popular beliefs of the thirteenth century, including those regarding magic, are largely true. For example, in the game surveyed for this project, demons exist, and may cause any amount of trouble for the characters. Though demons did not, to the best of our historical reckoning, exist in thirteenth-century Europe, belief in them was widespread. When players engage with the game, therefore, they are engaging with a thirteenth-century belief system – one made concrete and literal. This allows players to interact with contemporaneous ideas through the lenses of their

characters and their fictional actions. Furthermore, this points up the fact that these players in particular possess a sophisticated comprehension of the historical record—in this case, an understanding that belief in demons is historically accurate, even if the fact of demons is not.

All eight participants engaged with history during game sessions both by portraying historically grounded characters through performance, and by telling historically based stories as part of play. Many players also told us they engaged in research outside of game sessions. Two primarily learned from other players through conversation and through the group email list, but the other six demonstrated a wide range of research topics and methods. All six mentioned their use of Wikipedia. Although Wikipedia is not the most scholarly of resources, most took those primary investigations as a launching point for far more in-depth research, including visits to libraries to gather primary source material. The material they gathered then, in turn, was used to flesh out character or to take action in the world of the game.

For example, nearly every player recalled voluntarily, and fondly, a particular research project into bestiaries. This project spawned a group catch-phrase, which multiple players repeated to us verbatim during interviews: "Bees are the tiniest of birds." Two of the players had been sorting through medieval bestiaries when they'd stumbled across this phrase: bees, according to the bestiary they were reading, were in fact members of the bird family. Since the paradigm of "Mythic Europe" holds that any information disseminated as fact in the time period of the game is real in the game world—even if not every medieval person necessarily believed it—this meant it could be taken as true in the game's fiction. They related it to the group, who happened at the time to be negotiating an in-game alliance with the King of the Birds. Since they had found evidence that medieval people counted bees as birds, the bees were allowed to join the alliance as well. This provided the players with a decisive—and memorable—victory against an in-game enemy.

Much of the players' research operates in this vein: players explore primary sources, which are then incorporated into play because they provide information which is relevant, compelling, or both. However, players also formulate research questions and execute plans for discovering the answer. They then interpret those answers to their advantage during play. For example, Roger's character was returning home to her native Sweden after many years away. The player wanted to know what family obligations the character might have, so that he could arrange for her to fulfill them. While researching Swedish family traditions of the thirteenth century, he encountered the concept of the "grand family" (Pulsiano & Wolf, 1993), which the player called a "kin house." This referred to a single household containing the character's extended family as well as other resident members of their community. The player then had his character visit her kin house when she arrived in Stockholm. The social connections the character made there influenced the course of the story.

Other research topics have included, but are certainly not limited to: the Latvian crusade, late medieval and early modern metallurgy, the medieval custom of putting animals on trial for crimes, conflicts surrounding rebaptism, and the Irish conversion to Christianity. Each of these research projects yielded historical information, which was then interpreted and appropriated to serve the players' purposes in the fictional world of the game.

The *Ars Magica* game books encourage players to undertake this sort of game-oriented investigation. For example, when choosing a game setting, the game text provides recommendations about how to research the chosen area, including reading books, conducting online searches, and watching documentaries, and suggests ways the "Mythic Europe" approach can help incorporate this research into play (Tweet, Rein-Hagen, & Chart, 2004, p. 199-221). The book's advice is primarily aimed at the people who guide the game story during play sessions, more generally referred to as gamemasters. A gamemaster is a special class of player who may control antagonists, resolve conflicts, mediate disputes between other players, and manage the logistics of play (Mackay, 2001; Tweet, Rein-

Hagen & Chart, 2004; Hammer, 2010). Because the gamemaster is tasked with providing the world with which players will interact, it is usual for a gamemaster to pursue background research on the game they plan to run. However, we observed *all* players—not just the gamemasters—undertaking historical research and incorporating it into play. The group may have been influenced by the game's recommendations about how to handle history, but they also democratized the research process and made it their own.

What we can see here, therefore, is how play and performance create context and social meaning for history. The appropriation of history provides narrative control and improves the players' ability to perform their characters. But just because something appears to be participatory history does not make it so. Is this a case of "face validity" or is what players are doing recognizable to historians?

Historical Accuracy and Communities of Practice

Though these players are, by their own admission, not professional historians, much of their work nevertheless parallels a widely recognized and well-established historical subfield: social history. For a concise definition, we turn to Kocka (1995):

> "By social history I mean... a subfield of historical studies which mainly deals with
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> social structures, processes and experiences, for example, with classes and strata, ethnic
>
> and religious groups, migrations and families... gender relations, urbanization, or
>
> patterns of rural life." (p. 67)

Players themselves echoed some of these categories when discussing their experience with history in the game context, especially "social structures… and experiences." Allen commented that in play, "you pick up what a time and a place feel like… what the average person was like back then." Alison said, "I'm always more interested in how events shape people than anything else," and connected this to her character creation: when making a character, she said, she wanted to know what

experiences the character would have had, in order to see how those would shape what kind of person they were.

Thus, for example, when Rick decided that his character would be Muslim, he thought not only about the political and historical implications for his character, such as where the character would be born and live, but also the social implications, such as how his character would experience interactions with his largely Christian compatriots, and how his religious differences would affect his social stratum and day-to-day life. Being an outsider made him feel that he could not take his participation in the game's social structure for granted, and helped him think through what it meant for his character to be a wizard. It also had practical implications: because his character was the only one among the group who understood fractions or the concept of zero, he became the group's designated accountant.

Even if these players are researching questions which a professional historian might pursue, how accurate is the research they do? In answering this question, one must consider both accuracy and verisimilitude. Accuracy, as we use it here, reflects the factual correctness of historical information. Verisimilitude, on the other hand, is a feature of roleplaying and historical re-creation that others have noted. Mackay comments that the "attempt to convey an immersive experience of verisimilitude - an authentic, realistic fantasy world that exists and is continually changing and developing - is integral to the gamemaster's intention to engross his players" (2001, p. 28). While verisimilitude is highly valued in play, the realism of the game world is subordinate to the pleasure of the players and exists precisely for that purpose. To some extent, this means that all historical "fact" presented in a game or historical re-creation must be taken with a grain of salt: play comes first.

However, this is not news to those who participate in such activities. Indeed, their awareness of the distinction between accuracy and verisimilitude can highlight the depth of their understanding of historical study and historical fact. In a recent study of the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA), Cramer asserts that members of the SCA understand that what he calls "re-creation... is a make-believe

activity in which various aspects of a particular time period or periods are performed as a contemporary creation coded with period details, often romantic and nonhistorical" (2010, p. 25). He goes on to note that "[t]he word 'authentic' has several meanings, the most important of which for this [Cramer's] study are the ideas of 'historical authenticity' and of 'emotional authenticity.' In other words, things that feel authentic to some people we know to be historically inaccurate, while things that we know to be historically authentic seem old and dead, and do not carry with them an emotional impact" (Cramer, 2010, p. 66).

As in the SCA, our subjects used historical material to create an immersive experience of "what a time and a place feel like." Their research provided a flexible framework for improvisation and simulation. By familiarizing themselves with the underpinnings of day-to-day life, players could apply them to the specific narrative situations their characters encountered, even when those situations were unrealistic or impossible.

Players clearly understood the limitations on the accuracy of the game. "It's not like we have a history teacher checking over the details at the end," commented one player. However, players drew a distinction between the accuracy of these "niggling details" and the "broad strokes" of the historical experience. Not all types of accuracy were equally valued, nor were they always required. For example, Alison pointed out that even when details were not in order, she felt the game "accurately reflect[ed] the way people thought." For her, this kind of accuracy was good enough for use in play.

Charles, one of the game organizers, laid out this distinction more formally. He noted that the group generally plays "pretty fast and loose with the details." However, they manage to get the feel of the world down by means of, as he put it, a different sort of detail. Detail tied to a particular time and place, such as the year a famous person died, he said, would make the story more "accurate," but was not the sort of detail the group was good with. However, the group did like to include some details not tied to a particular time and place, but rather relevant to a general cultural region and era, such as the

custom of elevating the host at mass. Those sorts of details, he thought, gave the game an authentic

feel, a sentiment which echoes Cramer's idea of "emotional authenticity."

With regard to this particular detail, a medieval historian may note here that traditions of

elevating or not elevating the host might vary widely from place to place or year to year within

medieval Europe. However, the astute observer will also note that understanding these temporal and

cultural variations does not depend on the memorization of a particular date or town—the sort of

knowledge which, as Charles explained, the group does not emphasize, and with which, as we have

also noted, players have negative associations—but rather a general knowledge of the customs of a

broad region and period. These details, Charles said, bring the story "to life." In this way, he noted,

"History is both the frame upon which the story hangs and the embellishments that make the story what

it is."

Even when it comes to the first sort of detail, players explicitly discuss whether the game's

historical elements are accurate, and when to cleave to or ignore accuracy. They carefully balance

competing needs and decide when answers are adequate. For example, when describing a game

session about the Latvian crusade, Rick said the players were not sure which Western armies had been

present, and they had "fudged" the dates of certain events. However, as Samuel commented (regarding

a different game incident), "This answer is good enough for our purposes without actually having a

time machine," and that sentiment pertained in this case as well. The players understood the impact of

the Latvian Crusade both on the historical record and on their narrative, without needing to know on

precisely what dates it took place, or a comprehensive list of the groups involved. More information

would not have been relevant to the story.

Players also try to avoid contradicting known historical fact, and will work around any pre-

established information. Multiple players commented that they try to accommodate both the historical

record and any events established in the game canon. One player commented, "I like to pretend we're

telling the secret history rather than telling an alternate history." Historical events are not intentionally contradicted, if possible; the players are simply telling a story that never made it to the present day.

This underscores their grasp both of historical fact and of what constitutes accuracy. Players and gamemasters neither blithely ignore nor blindly follow the historical record, but instead use their judgment about which dates and cultural elements to keep.

Players and Technology

The development of players' historical literacy is heavily mediated by their technology use. The group primarily meets face to face, but supports play with digital tools such as email, Internet search, wikis, and shared spreadsheets. We observed players conducting online research, using spreadsheets, and contributing to the game wiki during face-to-face game sessions. Players also use these technologies between sessions to conduct research, to communicate with each other about the game, and to track information about the game world.

These tools are deliberately chosen to meet specific group needs. Multiple players described using Google to find and examine primary sources. Rick, for example, read the Koran online to flesh out his Muslim character. Alison used Google Image Search to find period artwork and analyze it from the perspective of someone who could not read. However, during game sessions, time is at a premium, particularly that of the game organizers who coordinate play. Charles explained that even if he has read a particular fact in a book, he prefers to look it up online if he needs to reference it during session. Google and Wikipedia make research "quick, dirty and easy" when he has limited attention to spare.

The best example of digital tool use is the group wiki, which includes nearly five hundred articles on people, places, things and events associated with the game. It also contains notes on player actions during game sessions, which makes it both a repository of factual information about the fictional game world and a canonical history of the game's past. Information is then retrieved from the

wiki to maintain internal consistency, settle in-game disputes, and provide verisimilitude. As Roger put it, the game wiki provides the level of detail needed to make the game successful.

The wiki allows players to extend their narrative reach. No single player can remember the hundreds of characters in the game, along with their histories, affiliations, and preferences. This is all the more true because not all players are present for every session, or for every dramatic scene within a given session. The wiki serves as an external memory for players, but also as a way to peer into the memories and experiences of other characters. Since multiple players with different experiences contribute to the wiki, one could argue that the wiki "knows" more about the game than any individual in it, including the group's organizers (Hammer, 2010).

Finally, the wiki lets players participate in narrative play between sessions. Samuel uses it to fictionalize historically relevant information, as when he created a dialogue between a wizard friar and a Cathar heretic that was based on the Dialogue of Trypho. Alison focuses on world-building; for example, she researched the MacCarthy family and their role in Irish history, then linked them (both narratively and hypertextually) to the fictional characters of the game. Because the wiki can be edited by all players, players have a great deal of freedom to create, knowing that it will be edited if necessary to bring it into line with the group's consensual narrative reality.

The use of the wiki to store information, share knowledge and support participation is not accidental. One of the game's organizers explained that in previous games, the organizers used spreadsheets and static websites to store and disseminate information, but that the philosophy of the group has changed over time. More and more authority for in-game creation has been given to the players. As a result, the group has moved to technical tools, such as wikis, which allow for universal access and editing. The tools the group uses consciously reflect and support group values.

In their use of technology, we can see players engaging in distributed cognition (using tools thoughtfully to augment their capabilities), transmedia navigation (following a narrative world across

multiple modalities), and collective intelligence (finding effective ways to pool knowledge). We must note, however, that players' use of these literacies is always in service to their goals during play. Players develop historical knowledge, use technology, and share information in order to play more successfully.

Tools and Techniques

If players are participating in historical literacy in order to play better, we may inquire what, precisely, about this group's play inspires this engagement. Is it an artifact of this particular group, or are there techniques this group uses that could make other games more historically engaging for their players? We believe this case study suggests the latter. While a full exploration of the group's play practices is beyond the scope of this paper, let us explore one example of how players integrated historical knowledge, new media literacies, and play techniques.

The portrayal of character appeared repeatedly in players' discussions of historical research and authenticity. Roger sought out information about Swedish trade in the thirteenth century because his character was the daughter of a mercantile trading house. Rick studied comparative medieval science in order to accurately portray what his character, trained in Islamic science, would know – and what the other characters would not. Allen explored the "narrow medieval mindset" of a Crusader, as he put it, simultaneously emulating and critiquing it during play. Alison described choosing which links to follow online depending on their relevance to her character. Whether players were pursuing specific facts or filtering incoming information, the character served as an inspiration and point of reference.

What made character matter so much? In part, personalization: with input from the game organizers and the game rules, players created and designed their own characters. They looked to the game rules for help defining what kinds of characters were possible, but within those constraints they chose characters they found meaningful and whose research challenges engaged them. For example, Allen's Crusader character is part of what the player identified as his larger dramatic project: to take

characters he would not like and find a way to play them sympathetically. The player's motivation – to make a sympathetic yet narrow-minded person realistic – led the player to investigate how such a person would think and what kinds of experiences they would have had. In other words, creating one's own character is, for these players, much like setting a research agenda for the game.

Characters also serve as a major source of agency in the game (Hammer, 2007). Players' influence on the ongoing narrative is largely filtered through the thoughts, speech and behavior of their character. The more the player knows about the character and the game world, the more actions are available to the character and the more the player influences the communal story. Partly this gives the player the power to try interesting things. For example, Rick knew about Emperor Frederick's historical interest in Islam. Because he was playing a Muslim character, he was able to discuss religion with the Emperor, portrayed by a game organizer, and form an in-game relationship. However, history is also deliberately used by this group as a way to break the rules of the game. Roger explained that knowing history lets players make a case for their characters to get special treatment: when game rules and historical plausibility conflict, historical plausibility wins. This approach allows players to deploy historical evidence persuasively – and, if successful, to receive in-game rewards for their clever research, interpretations and arguments.

These elements begin to suggest design techniques for creating more effective characters in historical games. Characters can suggest specific research projects, particularly when players are able to develop their own characters and subsequent research challenges. Those projects can then, in turn, provide sources of power in scenarios designed to reward historical investigation. Finally, players can agree to allow a historical reference to trump game rules when appropriate, to motivate players to seek out history knowledge as a source of character advancement.

Several players mentioned bringing the skills they had developed into other games. One player compared the *Ars Magica* game with the group's previous game, set in ancient Rome, and discussed

how historical research was rewarded in similar ways. Another told us how she teaches other game groups to incorporate research in their game, and helps them adopt more democratic creative practices. While anecdotal, these stories indicate that the skills and techniques of this group can transfer across historical periods, and even to other play groups. We believe the transferability of historical design techniques is a fertile area for further research.

Conclusions

The players of this *Ars Magica* game are exceptional in their ability to investigate historical questions, make judgments about the utility and accuracy of the information they find in their researches, and then put what they have learned to use strategically in the game. They expressed to us both that they value the history they have learned, and that they appreciate the social forum in which they interact with that knowledge and with one another. As Dave put it, "History makes narrative stronger and narrative allows us to more easily communicate what we learn from history."

Are these players so exceptional, however, as to be unique? We think not. The group's practices rely on material factors, such as a regularly available play space, laptop ownership, and access to local libraries. However, few players in the group began with an unusual level of historical interest or knowledge, and none had specialist training in the field. Players themselves see the group's style as portable, and have acted on this assumption to train others in this model of play. We consider these factors strong indications that this model of historical literacy—learning through self-directed investigation, group discussion, and group play—can be extended to other groups with similar resources.

The scope of this paper is limited, and has been able to provide only a brief overview of the data we collected. There is much more to be done. For example, group values provide much of the motivation for the players' development of historical literacy. A microgenetic analysis of our observations and interviews could illustrate how moment-to-moment interactions create and reinforce

group ideas about the value of history and its narrative power. Similarly, a careful analysis of narrative

design in the game could illustrate the many ways in which a given scenario transforms history into a

source of player agency and in-game power.   Finally, we might work with other groups to see what

challenges arise in adopting this group's techniques. We believe that these studies, and others like

them, can help transform the development of historical literacy through play.

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