On behalf of Meaningful Play 2010 conference chair Brian Winn, fellow co-chair Alex Games, and myself, we are grateful to the International Journal of Games and Computer-Mediated Simulations for this opportunity to share five compelling research articles based on the five top conference papers as determined by peer review. The biannual Meaningful Play conference, hosted by the Michigan State University GEL Lab (games for entertainment and learning), is a conference about theory, research, and game design innovations, principles and practices. Meaningful Play brings scholars and industry professionals together to understand and improve upon games to entertain, inform, educate, and persuade in meaningful ways.

In this special issue, Crespo et al. report on their qualitative and quantitative comparisons of math learning effects of children’s interactions with multiple media (games, web, and public television). Cummings and Ross study and offer game design advice about creating choice experiences in which options can be assessed and compared through clear metrics and attributes supported by social systems. My colleagues and I compare commitment, performance, challenge, and affect when serious games are assigned rather than self-selected by the players, and therefore face a much less enthusiastic, more diverse player audience than entertainment games due to the lack of the players’ ability to choose which game to play. Mitgutsch develops new understandings of how today’s generation experiences deep and meaningful learning in their playful biographies. Murphy and Zagal examine ethical frameworks and experiences offered by videogames; comparing the effectiveness of learning through multiple media, including games.

In keeping with the conference focus on both academia and the game industry’s interests in meaningful play, we include in this IJGCMS special issue a research essay that is the edited transcript of an outstanding industry keynote (and call for infrastructure to move serious games to the next level) by the founder of serious games, Ben Sawyer. The full conference program and extended abstracts are available at the conference web site (http://meaningfulplay.msu.edu). Digital videos of the academic keynotes (James Gee, Constance Steinkeuhlert, and Katherine Isbister) and industry keynotes (Ben Sawyer, Robin Hunicke, and Helle Winding) are also online.

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