EDITORIAL PREFACE

Leading and Leaving with the Right Questions about the Impact of Games and Simulations

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The year was 2008 and I had just submitted the final draft of a three volume handbook of research on educational games (Ferdig, 2009). Given the large amount of interest in the topic, the publisher asked me to be the founding editor of the *International Journal of Games and Computer-Mediated Simulations*--a role I gladly accepted. This issue--5(4)--represents the end of my fifth and final year as Editor-in-Chief of IJGCMS. Starting in 2014, I am handing the baton to Dr. Brock Dubbels who will carry the torch with renewed vigor.

Endings cause reflection; I obviously want to thank all the people who made the last five years possible. I won't name every individual in fear of missing someone. However, the work was obviously supported by my friends at IGI. Although some of the names and faces changed over the five years, the staff members were always kind and helpful. I was also blessed with a great international advisory board. And,

the work could not have been published with such quality and rigor without the insight of my associate editors and editorial review board members. Finally, a journal is nothing without its authors. I owe a debt of gratitude to the authors who chose IJGCMS as the outlet for their research.

In preparing for this last editorial, I have also spent time reflecting on where we have been over the last five years. Many things have remained the same; in some sense, 2013 looks a lot like 2009. There are still major debates regarding the impact of video games and digital simulations; we also lack much of the necessary research to answer critical questions. In another sense, the field has grown significantly in a relatively short amount of time. IJGCMS used to be one of the few gaming journals; now there are multiple outlets to inform the field. We know much more about the impact of games and simulations than we did five years

ago, including cross-disciplinary research with computer science, HCI, STEM, and neurology. And, games and computer-mediated simulations have gained a new level of respect in home, school, military and business settings.

I cherish the opportunity I had to participate in that process; I am pleased that IJGCMS played a role in supporting the game and simulation movement in the field. I look forward to continuing to support the field from the perspective of author. In my 'last stand' in this role, I want to return to something I have spent five years trying to advance. I want to end by asking us to remember the importance of asking the right questions about electronic games and computer-mediated simulations. Too many readers, writers, and pundits in the popular press—and admittedly in our own ranks—want to make broad-sweeping claims about the outcomes of all games and simulations at all times. Many have failed to recognize that there are affordances and constraints not only of the larger concepts of games and simulations, but also in very specific applications of game and simulation technologies within specific fields, disciplines, and environments.

A simple and yet controversial example is the impact of games on violent behavior of youth. For every study that provides evidence of violent outcomes or attitudes after play, a different study seems to negate those claims. Media grasp on to these studies and attempt to claim that no one should play games or no one should be afraid of game play. Imagine a more beneficial perspective of asking under what conditions games lead to violent outcomes. This is a form of questioning people are used to me asking, but I can't state enough how much I value trying to play more deeply with important questions about games and simula-

tions. If we were to ask this question, we would discover research that shows that much of the game and simulation outcomes are directly correlated and/or altered by family involvement. Instead of broad sweeping claims, we would come to recommendations that teachers and parents could implement. We would use such research to recognize that gamers and parents are not in conflict; in some cases, they are the same person!

We have spent time in our editing process attempting to make sure authors include implications for research, policy, and practice. We have also asked authors to consider the implications of asking different kinds of questions. (I hope readers saw these efforts, as evidenced in the five excellent articles and book review in this issue of IJGCMS.) At the publication stage, however, it is often too late to ask authors to revisit their research questions. I am using this final editorial to ask us all to think more deeply about the kinds of questions we are asking and the potential implications they offer.

I thank you for joining me on this adventure and I look forward to working with you all in the years to come.

Be Blessed.

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REFERENCES

Ferdig, R. E. (Ed.). (2009). *Handbook of research on effective electronic gaming in education*. Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference.

Richard E. Ferdig is the Summit Professor of Learning Technologies and Professor of Instructional Technology at Kent State University. He works within the Research Center for Educational Technology and also the School of Lifespan Development and Educational Sciences. He earned his Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Michigan State University. He has served as researcher and instructor at Michigan State University, the University of Florida, the Wyzsza Szkola Pedagogiczna (Krakow, Poland), and the Università degli studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia (Italy). At Kent State University, his research, teaching, and service focus on combining cutting-edge technologies with current pedagogic theory to create innovative learning environments. His research interests include online education, educational games and simulations, and what he labels a deeper psychology of technology. In addition to publishing and presenting nationally and internationally, Ferdig has also been funded to study the impact of emerging technologies such as K-12 Virtual Schools. Rick is the Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Gaming and Computer Mediated Simulations*, the Associate Editor-in-Chief of the* Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, and currently serves as a Consulting Editor for the Development Editorial Board of Educational Technology Research and Development and on the Review Panel of the* British Journal of Educational Technology*.*