

Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Video Games as Systems for Content Delivery, Data Collection, Assessment, and Entertainment (Part 1)

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This special issue provides the first half of a two-part focus on eSports. Our authors have shared insights on tournament details, demographics, and insights on professional eSports athletes. We hope you enjoy issue one of two on eSports.

Much has happened in the area of professional gaming since the Space Invaders Championship of 1980. We have seen live Internet streaming eclipse televised eSports events, such as on the American show *Starcade*. Is it really surprising that people want to watch other people play competitive video games? Video games have always served as entertainment for groups of people waiting for a turn at the controller. If one adds in the big money prizes people play games for, it is hard not to appreciate the potential growth of eSports. Revenues for e-Sports are predicted to grow 25 percent in 2016, which is better than most mature sports, many of which have been around for a century or even centuries. eSports: Bigger and smaller than you think

Deloitte Global predicts that eSports will generate global revenues of \$500 million in 2016, up 25 percent from about \$400 million in 2015, and will likely have an audience of regular and occasional viewers of close to 150 million people.

The very idea that people may be willing to watch other people play competitive video games for big money prizes may be surprise to some people. But perhaps skeptics are underestimating the potential global annual market size. In many ways, eSports has begun to grow in that same way that poker has become a televised sport. Players are being treated professionally, and ESPN is adding a sense of credibility to eSports, breaking news, doing special issues, features, and providing coverage.

Tech and media companies are investing in eSports, for both growth opportunities and because it appeals to a narrow and desirable demographic: 75 percent of those watching eSports are millennials aged 18-34. Of those who watch, 82 percent are men. Media companies see the value in connecting with this demographic. Amazon acquired Twitch for just under \$1 billion in 2014. Although e-Sports might not match or surpass traditional sports any time soon, it is already becoming a very lucrative business venture.

In our opening article, Castaneda, Sidhu, Azose, & Swanson explore differences in conceptualizations of game-play between what experts and novices pay attention to in game play. The value of this approach is that expertise studies provide insight into skill development ranging between beginners and accomplished practitioners. A common approach for studying skill acquisition is to examine accomplished practitioners. However, these experts are not always consciously aware of all

the knowledge and skills they use within their practice. A mixed-method approach was implemented in this study, drawing from game metrics, eye tracking and in-person interviews for analysis.

Eye tracking analysis indicated that there were differences between how novices played, and what they remembered. Expert-novice differences in this study are similar to expertise research findings from other domains. The qualitative and unique quantitative metrics that can be gathered from complex games may provide insight into the development of expertise studies and helping novice players develop expertise.

In article two, Groen asks the question, “why isn’t there an equal amount of women competing in e-sport tournaments?” The article provides insight on gender and competitive digital gaming as esports and examination of digital gaming communities as gendered, with an emphasis on male-centered spaces, even though studies demonstrate that many women and girls play digital.

In article three, Skubida presents an analysis of potential roadblocks to the legitimization of esports as a sport. The author presents four major issues: 1) the definition of terms esports and sport (and their separation); 2) the analysis of multiple definitions of sport, in order to find characteristics of sport to later compare them to esports; 3) research on attitudes towards esports being a sporting activity of both professional esports players and people who agreed to participate in an online survey; and 4) a list of problematic features negatively affecting perception of esports as sport was compiled, which was then analyzed with the previous formalization of the relationship between sport and esports in mind.

In article four, Kari & Karhulahti provide a mixed-method study on the training routines of elite e-athletes, with special focus on the subjects’ physical exercise routines. The study is based on a sample of 115 elite e-athletes. The results offer a researched departure from typical media reports, and should stand as a starting point for future research.

These articles offer indication that esports are now studied from many perspectives. Not just as for the player, but also as entertainment for spectators, and potentially rich area for psychological research. I am grateful to be sharing this two-part special issue on esports.

Game research has come a long way. Since our first issue in 2009, we have entered the major access databases, and have published some very interesting research by amazing researchers. This current issue reflects the diversity of questions, applications, and methods that have emerged with the growth of games research as an interdisciplinary field and the emergence of esports as a global phenomenon.

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