Digital Games and Learning: Series Introduction

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While clearly the use of games for supporting education is not new, the use of digital games is comparatively recent. With the emergence of web-based services, increased broadband and the growth of online communities, the use of digital games presents us with a unique set of engaging tools and techniques, based upon game mechanics such as competition, narrative, missions and quests.

Increasingly games are being seen not as a technology but as a cultural form with its own genres, be they casual games played by everyone, serious games played to learn and engage or gamification whereby game elements are used to reach new audiences. Games offer us new toolsets that can be used effectively in activities as wide-ranging as therapy, awareness-raising or marketing as well as more conventional curricula. The versatility of digital games to be applied to any problem or challenge has gained games new cultural status that they previously did not have. Digital educational games seek to inform, educate and motivate learners and to extend the range of our ability to learn in classrooms by making the world our classroom and by putting social interaction rather than curriculum objectives at the centre of the learner's experience.

Game science is evolving, too, and game mechanics are just beginning to transform education and how it is produced and how learning is assessed, with real potential for providing just-in-time learning and supporting hard-to-reach learner groups. However the growth and spread of digital games in educational contexts is still relatively in its infancy and the best methods for developing, assessing and deploying these approaches are also in their earliest stages of advancement. This book series thus aims, primarily, to bring existing game theory and practices together to support the ongoing development of game science as a sub-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary academic body of evidence, as a methodology of investigation, and as a set of tools and approaches, methods and frameworks for learning.

While game science has the power to transcend normal silos of disciplines, the academic communities in different disciplines and in different continents have had too few opportunities to work as an interdiscipline, in part because the field is so new and research has been taking place in such diverse disciplinary, sectoral and international contexts. This book series therefore specifically aims to build bridges between diverse research, teaching, policy and learner communities and is inspired by the next generation of young researchers currently completing their early studies in the field. Towards this end, the series brings together leading theorists, thinkers and practitioners into a community of practice around the key themes and issues of digital games and learning. These theorists come from areas as diverse as health and well-being, business and innovation, education, computer science and engineering to name a few. Their perspectives include views from professional practice as well as as from theoretical perspectives.

It is important not to underestimate the scale of the work ahead in this new field, but it is also important to recognise the power of these new tools beyond our current understanding of what they can do or will do in the future. Games will always be a central part of early-stage learning, but

now the capability of games to save lives, to inform citizens and to contribute positive outcomes socially are just beginning to be understood. We have always understood the power of games to entertain: this series shows us scientifically how the power of play can be harnessed for more profound purposes, more altruistic reasons in new forms of sustainable and scalable education. *Digital Games and Learning* will explore the lineaments of the new learning, and will reveal how and in what contexts that learning will take shape.

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