

XXVII Board Game Studies Colloquium

Die Fabrik, Chemnitz, Germany

April 8 – 11, 2025



With the kind support of:

SIS Sächsisches Institut für Spiel
Pädagogik • Forschung • Systematik



DVSI Deutscher Verband
der Spielwarenindustrie e.V.



Ludus

XXVII Board Games Studies Colloquium

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Die Fabrik,
Zwickauer Str. 145, 09116, Chemnitz

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Associação Ludus
DVSI Deutscher Verband der Spielwarenindustrie e. V.
Europäische Spielesammler Gilde e.V.
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Foreword

We're back! The Board Game Studies Colloquium will take place in Chemnitz, in April 2025.

We are intent to keep promoting these Colloquia for many more years to come!

This year the Board Game Studies Colloquium will be held in Chemnitz (Saxony, Germany), which is the actual European Capital of Culture, in cooperation with the Europäische Spiele-sammler Gilde (European Game Collectors Guild).

Its members, who own valuable private collections of games, board games, and playing cards, have been taking part in the Board Game Studies for decades, and their network includes the major associations, museums, and archives of Austria and Germany devoted to the preservation and promotion of board games as cultural heritage.

It includes the Game Archive of Nurnberg, where the Board Game Studies 2016 took place, and among its members are Tom Werneck and Bruce Whitehill, who remarkably contributed to the promotion and dissemination of the activities of the Board Game Studies Colloquium.

This years edition counted with the kind support of SIS Sächsisches Institut für Spiel UG, DVSI Deutscher Verband der Spielwarenindustrie e. V., OSTIA Spiele, Spiel de Jahres, and, Ludus

We are proud to organize the twenty-sevenths colloquium in the series. There will be a natural outlet for written versions of presented works. Selected papers will be encouraged to submit to *Board Game Studies Journal* (<https://sciendo.com/journal/BGS>). Please send your submissions for editorial considerations to bgs@ludicum.org until September 31, 2025.

You can get more information at <https://boardgamestudies.jimdofree.com/>.

The organization

Program

Tuesday, April 8

8:30 Registration desk opens at 8:30

8:50 **Opening**

Cynthia Kempe-Schoenfeld & Thomas Kempe

9:10 **Session 1: Board Game Studies Concepts**

Ambiguity and board games - on the trace of Brian Sutton-Smith in Chemnitz

J. Peter Lemcke (ESG)

The intangible, the ephemeral, and the preservation fallacy:

collecting mancala board games

Alex de Voogt (Drew University)

From official history to face of battle

Mike Cosgrave (Dept of Digital Humanities, University College, Cork)

10:30 **Coffee break**

11:00 **Session 2: Board Games and the Abstract**

Les Jeux d'Esprit, a gamebox" or "The JEUX project:

preparing early-modern games for players today",

Hannah Freundlich (University of Oslo, Norway)

Friedrich-Wilhelm von Mauvillon

Ingram Braun

The unfinished game before and after the advent of probability

Carla Cardoso (Ludus)

12:15 **Break for lunch**

14:00 **Session 3: People, Places, and Play**

Some notes on n-player Mancalas: Considering Mathematical Games in Education

Tiago Hirth (Interuniversity Center for the History of Science and Technology, Ludus)

Polish Board Game Market in the Years 1949–89

Michał Stajszczak

Games in Italy in the 1960s:

The Outstanding Season of the Corriere dei Piccoli Magazine

Cosimo Cardellicchio (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy)

15:20 **Tea break**

15:50 **Session 4: People, Places, and Play Continued**

Pieter Curten and the Malay draughts game,

Liuwe Westra (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)

Face to face with Argentinian Truco: origins and evolution,

Nicolás Martínez Sáez (Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina)

19:00 **Game Night and Friendly Hall Football Match** *Rooftop of Die Fabrik*

Wednesday, April 9

8:30 Registration desk opens at 8:30

8:50 Session 5: Collections & Games

Collecting and preserving games as a cultural asset,

Gyaneshwar Singh R (Ramsons Kala Pratishthana, Mysore, India) - Remote Presenter

A register of old frisian draughts boards,

Marten Walinga

The gaming collection of the MAC-Barcelona,

Ilaria Truzzi (University of Reading)

What we talk about when we talk about games: Ludic terms across linguistic glossaries,

Jacob Schmidt-Madsen (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)

10:30 **Coffee break**

11:00 Session 6: Board Games and Materiality

Early electric quiz games

Melissa Rogerson (The University of Melbourne)

The history of dice machines over four centuries

Jakob Gloger

The foldable three-games-box: a revolutionary concept,

Ulrich Schädler (University of Fribourg)

12:15 **Break for lunch**

14:00 Session 7: Pan-material Culture of Games

Board games in higher education – A personal account,

Jorge Nuno Silva (University of Lisbon, CIUHCT, Ludus)

Creating an international legacy of games,

Bruce Whitehill (AGPI; BGS; ESG; SAZ)

From bakelite to boardgames: the plastic revolution in classic game pieces, 1800s-1900s,

Douglas Polumbaum

15:20 **Tea break**

15:50 Session 8: GDR & Germany and its gaming heritage

Eurogames in the east? On the innovativeness of the games industry

in the last phase of the GDR,

Michael Conrad (University of Konstanz, Literature, Art and Media Studies)

Nachgemachte Spiele in der DDR – Spiegel, Subversion und kulturelles Erbe,

Martin Thiele-Schweiz (Playing History GmbH)

Juden Raus! Revisited,

Mauricio Castro Valdez - Remote Presenter

18:00 **Evening City Tour**

Thursday, April 10

8:30 Registration desk opens at 8:30

8:50 Session 9: Pictorial aspects of Board Games

Graffiti games of central Maharashtra: new documentations, revision and theory,
Ashwini Gawli - Remote Presenter

Curating art works to visually preserve the cultural asset of games,
Dharmendra H.S. (Ramsons Kala Pratishtana) - Remote Presenter

*Tangled lines of descent: unravelling vertical & horizontal lines of transmission
in English Cupid games,*
Eddie Duggan

Monkeys in art. The function of monkeys in board games,
Wim van Mourik Wim (KNDB)

10:30 **Coffee break**

Session 10: Board Game Origins

The origin of Chinese Checkers – in Germany, China or Japan?,
Peter Michaelsen

"Pilkentafel" problems. On the history of shovelboard,
Jonas Richter (Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities)
and James Masters

Mehen: Petrie's 'Serpent Stone'. Genesis of the very concept of a board game?,
James Masters

12:15 **Break for lunch**

Afternoon, Conference Excursion

Cartamundi Plant Altenburg

or

Altenburg Playing Card Museum and Yosephinum

Friday, April 11

8:30 Registration desk opens at 8:30

8:50 Session 11: Board Games and the Inner-Self

Comparative analysis of ceremonial spaces and game board layouts in ancient India,

Rachna, Amit S and Sundaram, Deshmukh (MIT Institute of Design – MIT ADT University) - Remote

GameMood – An empirical framework for emotions in boardgames,

Mehringer Volker (University Augsburg)

Let's play! – social and emotional skill training with boardgames,

Valentiner-Branth Christina (Brettspielakademie)

Board games between self and world,

Katharina Herde (Bielefeld University)

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 Session 12: Board Games and Education

Board game classes in lower secondary education: A novel approach to fostering 21st century skills

Cornelia Hofmann (Wissenschaftliche Einrichtung Laborschule an der Universität Bielefeld)

A University collection of board games in France: issues of recognition, cataloging, and preservation

Vincent Berry and Louis Delespierre (Sorbonne Paris Nord University)

Board game digitization on tabletop simulator: platform, preservation, and piracy,

Mirek Stolee (The Strong National Museum of Play | University of Central Florida)

12:15 Break for lunch

14:00 Session 13: Board Games As Mediators

Beyond good and evil – About board game (facilitation) ethics,

Christian Hoffstadt (Denkhafen, KIT)

These games are nice, but I can't play them - About the lack of accessibility in board games,

Valerie Quade (Ludovico Graz)

Frustration, fatigue, & fiddliness: why your favourite board game might be fighting against you,

Michele Masini (VIE Genoa) and Marcello Passarelli (Game Science Research Center, Lucca)

15:20 Tea break

15:50 Session 14: Board Games in the Making

Smart games, cool games: interrogating a collection to better understand the role of technology in board games

Annie Xiang (Sorbonne Paris Nord University)

The role of color in board-game design from a historical perspective,

Daniele Aurelio (University of Milan)

Mancala in Türkiye: Unearthing Connections Across Anatolia and Beyond,

Fatih Parlak (Cappadocia University, Türkiye) - Remote Presenter

17:10 Cloture

Abstracts

Tuesday, April 8

Ambiguity and Boardgames - on the Trace of Brian Sutton-Smith in Chemnitz

J. PETER LEMCKE, ESG

Brian Sutton-Smith (leading play theorist), his play research, his three game theories, and our personal friendship, which arose because I translated his classification of games: Skill, Chance, Strategy, Mixed Games in the DSM into practice—for better understanding of board games and games for young and old. The topic "classification of games" is more relevant than ever in light of the current efforts to preserve and consolidate larger collections in Germany and Europe.

Brian and I met at international conferences of play researchers, TASP and ICCP, and privately in Florida and Germany. I invited him several times to Chemnitz for lectures. I will show previously unpublished video material from Germany and America with Brian Sutton-Smith.

Before his death, Brian handed me a retrospective of his childhood years in "Windy Wellington," and I later walked through the locations in New Zealand, his first book, *Our Street*, in hand.

Final: the world's most important game museum *The Strong*, Rochester, its activities, where Brian's archive is curated accessible for research. This we should have in Germany and Europe!

Paper presentation at the DSM is accepted.

The intangible, the ephemeral, and the preservation fallacy: collecting mancala board games

ALEX DE VOOGT, Drew University

When board games are collected by individuals or institutions, the collectors are confronted with limitations of their collecting practices that have biased today's board games collections of physical game boards. Playing practices, often essential information for anthropology collections, require documentation that goes much beyond the physical specimen of a game board. Playing pieces, which are an essential part of most board games, may be locally sourced and varying with each player. Finally, game boards themselves may defy collection when they are scooped in the sand or scratched on a pavement. But even when a game board with pieces and documentation of its playing practices is made part of a collection, its life in game play is interrupted, changing the nature of the object. Game boards that were used and display traces of play become a different source of cultural information compared to game boards that are in pristine condition or that were primarily conceived as a work of art.

Using examples from a selection of museum exhibits and activities, this paper identifies the specific problems when collecting mancala games and how these problems have been addressed or have challenged the nature of mancala game collecting practices.

From Official History to Face of Battle

MIKE COSGRAVE, University College, Cork

In this paper I will look at correlations between the rules for civilian board wargames and military historiography in the second half of the Twentieth Century as part of the evolving cultural understanding of warfare

There was a significant growth in wargaming as a civilian hobby in the years after WWII, peaking in the 1980s. The main focus here is on 'board wargames'; that is games played on a map, with movement regulated by a grid, usually hexagonal, and units represented by cardboard counters. In the period up to the mid 1970s, the rules for these games aligned with a dominant paradigm in writing of military history, particularly official histories. In this genre, battle was treated as a chess game, with an emphasis on the commanders intent being articulated through the almost mechanical movement of units.

An alternative view centred around John Keegan's 'The Face of Battle' (1976), including the work of SLA Marshall, Norman Dickinson and Johanna Bourke who argued that battle did not in reality work in this way. Contemporaneously, the rules for board wargames began to deal with abstract issues like morale, troop training, quality and fatigue. Rules also began to explore the practical limits of command.

This paper will thus trace how developments in how military history is written since the 1970s have crossed over to board wargame rules so that simple kinetic force on force models have been replaced by more complex rules which better reflect the chaos of conflict.

"Les Jeux d'Esprit, A gamebox" or "The JEUX Project: Preparing Early-Modern Games for Players Today".

HANNAH FREUNDLICH, University of Oslo

The JEUX Project (ERC, 2024-2028) investigates how early-modern games were used in the salons of seventeenth-century France. As part of the project, we have taken literary games described by the author Charlotte-Rose Caumont de la Force and turned them into playable games for participants in workshops that we held at Oxford in October and November 2024. The paper discusses the process of turning the historical description of games into game materials in terms of the preservation of game heritage and in terms of its pedagogical implications.

The conception and development of the game materials was conducted by myself and project leader Karin Kukkonen. In this presentation, I will outline how we used the materiality of game cards and objects in order to create immersive and intuitive gameplay in these games from the seventeenth century. For instance, for the Game of the Metamorphoses, in which the players are telling the story of a person turned into an inanimate object, we first provided some objects for participants to use in the pilots. For the workshops, we invited participants to bring an object themselves. In this paper, I will explore these different dimensions of materiality in gameplay. Finally, I will discuss the steps we are planning to take to develop a gamebox from the initial game materials.

If time permits, we will conclude the presentation with a hands-on gaming experience, inviting participants to directly engage with one of these intriguing 17th-century games.

Friedrich-Wilhelm von Mauvillon

INGRAM BRAUN

Friedrich-Wilhelm von Mauvillon (*1774 Kassel †1851 Kleve) was born to a family of known Huguenot scholars. He served as high-ranking officer in the Dutch, Westphalian and Prussian army. Since his father was acquainted with Johann Christian Ludwig Hellwig, he practiced the "Kriegsspiel" since youth and later as military instructor. While in Den Haag he became a member of Elias Stein's chess circle. After his early retirement due to the end of the Napoleonic Wars he published a lot on military issues, poetry, constitutional law, and chess. Though not an inventor or master of board games himself his contributions provide us with insights into the practice of play during the first half of the 19th century. Today the chess world remembers him basically for the first recorded correspondence games. Hitherto there are only short and defective biographical sketches available.

The Unfinished Game Before and After the Advent of Probability

CARLA CARDOSO, Ludus

In 1519, the author Gaspar Nicolas published a work aimed at teaching Mathematics in Portugal, in which he presented a solution to the so-called "Problem of Points" or "Unfinished Game". This concept would later inspire, in mid-17th century, works that led to the birth of Probability Theory.

Around a hundred years after Gaspar Nicolas's publication, the newly emerging probabilistic perspective introduced the idea of possible future outcomes, revolutionising the approach to solving the Unfinished Game. Initially developed within the context of games of chance, Probability established itself in the 21st century as a highly significant scientific field in Western societies.

At the same time, games of chance continue to serve as an educational tool for teaching Mathematics and other subjects, often being incorporated into projects within the Erasmus programme.

Some notes on n-player Mancalas: Considering Mathematical Games in Education.

TIAGO HIRTH, Interuniversity Center for the History of Science and Technology, Ludus

Mancala games are broadly studied and often given as a educational tool for mathematics education, bridging customs and play practices and formal thought processes. In this presentation a few games of the mancala family that might have contributed to this notion will be discussed.

The parting point will be the game that gave origin to Dead Pan, a "modern" four player mancala game invented by the German engineer Franklin Punga in the 1930's and promoted both in the french and English world by Maurice Kraitchik who was spoken about previously at the BGSC. The game was in turn inspired by Henry Delannoy's 1895 study of Tchouka. This game too was included in widely disseminated in various transnational publications such as *Arithmétique amusante*, *Altes und Neues aus der Unterhaltungsmathematik* as well as *Math is Fun*.

Some parallels will be drawn to ethnomathematical publications and mancala games played in Southern Africa such as N'tchuva.

Polish Board Game Market in the Years 1949–89

MICHAŁ STAJSZCZAK

Although the topic of this session is games in the GDR, I would like to show what the situation was like in the years 1949–89 in the games market in Poland, a country with a similar political and economic system. The shape of the games market in Poland was determined by three main factors:

- destruction as a result of the war,
- the act on the nationalization of industry,
- “the battle for trade,” i.e., the nationalization of most stores.

However, the authorities decided that toy production was not a strategic sector of the economy and left it in the hands of private craftsmen and cooperatives of disabled people. But this does not mean that the craftsmen producing toys could run a fully independent business. Each craftsman had to belong to a craft cooperative and sell through it. Even on the packaging, there was only the name and address of the cooperative, but there was no information about who the specific manufacturer was.

In turn, trade was monopolized by state chains of stores—one for each province. As a result, the distribution of games looked like this: the cooperative sold games to the state chain, which distributed them among its stores. And the stores did not compete with each other, because they all had to sell at the same price.

An additional factor influencing the quality of games produced was the economy of shortages. In a planned economy, raw materials were distributed centrally, and the private toy industry was at the end of the allocation list. As a result, there were downright humorous situations. In order to make game pieces, a craftsman would buy plastic buckets and melt them down.

What games were on the Polish market at that time? Mainly classics - Chess, Checkers, Chinese Checkers, Ludo, Nine Men's Morris. There were also various roll-and-move games. The most popular one was Grzybobranie in which the player moved a basket around the board to collect mushrooms. The most interesting game, released in the 60s, was Manewry Morskie, which was likely a copy of the game Dover Patrol. The only game released under a license was Master Mind.

The situation on the market changed only in the 80s. Mass production of pirated editions of games by foreign authors began (Monopoly was released in a dozen or so versions under different names).

But one could learn about foreign games, both old and more modern ones, from books and articles in the press. There were also several clubs in Warsaw where people could play copies of games brought from the West or homemade ones based on descriptions.

Games in Italy in 1960s: The outstanding season of the Corriere dei Piccoli magazine
COSIMO CARDELLICCHIO, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

Over the last 60 years, the board game industry has seen incredible growth, due to new and productive ideas and projects. This exceptional progress does not allow us to forget other times, in which few game ideas dominated the scene. These old games, unlike the modern and refined ones, are no less interesting, because it is possible to understand history through these games, as Rudolph Ruhle (1934–2022), a master of German game collectors, taught us.

The case study in analysis is linked to the Corriere dei Piccoli's extraordinary season during the 1960s (under the direction of Guglielmo Zuconi and Carlo Triberti). This journal was a weekly magazine for children of the Italian daily newspaper Corriere della Sera. Usually, comics were published, but also short stories and novels, illustrated by the most illustrious Italian artists and writers of the period.

Occasionally, games were published. Some of them had an educational purpose; many were simple variation of the Game of the Goose; only sometimes new interesting mechanics were proposed. An overview of these games will be shown. These games are intended as a valuable tool for understanding the spirit of the times of those years.

Pieter Curten and the Malay Draughts Game
LIUWE WESTRA, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

In 1798, the Dutch mathematician Pieter Curten (1767-1840) wrote a treatise on three types of checkers: Polish, Frisian and Malay. The manuscript was lost in the German bombing of Rotterdam in 1940. However, one copy has survived, including diagrams. This manuscript, kept at Tresoor in Leeuwarden, is the only source for Malay draughts.

While Malay draughts is most similar to Frisian draughts, it is also a peculiar variant within the large family of draughts games and moreover a variant that has not been researched at all. As far as known, the game has not been played anywhere for centuries either. An initiative has recently emerged within the Frisian Draughts Federation to research the origins of this game and also to revive it.

The presentation will not only report the results of the research so far, but also show something about the viability of this forgotten game form. It turns out, to give a hint, that with a minor adjustment of the rules of the game, an unparalleled exciting game is created, in which win and loss remain uncertain until the very last move.

Face to face with Argentinian Truco: origins and evolution
NICOLÁS MARTÍNEZ SÁEZ, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata

The card game Truco, popular in Argentina and Uruguay, originates in Spain, specifically in Catalonia and Valencia. Some authors, with considerable imagination, have proposed legends of a more remote origin linked to Muslims, perhaps because the four-suited playing cards, which entered Europe from the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt (1250-1517), may have derived from some trick-taking game with a peculiar card hierarchy similar to that of Truco.

During the 16th and 17th centuries in Spain, various card games emerged. Some, like Flor, were predominantly games of chance and associated with betting; others, like Truc or Truque, were trick-taking and more social, prioritizing intuition and strategy over luck. From the times of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata up to the 19th century, a card game developed and became popular in these lands, combining the strategy of Truque and the chance of Flor: Truquiflor. The South American gauchos expressed, through this game, their character and temperament, transforming it into a dialectical game, full of sayings and verses. Truco, which is now played with or without flor, exquisitely expresses a trait of the criollo identity: irreverence both in seduction and, in the face of objective and irrefutable adversity, to “scare the devil himself.”

Wednesday, April 9

Collecting and preserving games as a cultural asset

GYANESHWAR SINGH R, Ramsons Kala Pratishthana

The city of Mysore is the cultural capital of the state of Karnataka. In 1799 C.E., the treaty of Srirangapatna allowed East India Company to have a solid grip over the ruling Wadiyar dynasty. In the year 1830, the British took over the administration of Mysore and the king Krishna Raja Wadiyar III (Mummadi) was relegated to being a nominal head.

Without whiling away time, Mummadi invented newer versions of existing boardgames and solved the puzzle of Knight's Magic Tour.

His court artists created amazing specimens of game boards and playing counters in a variety of materials. The well-known art of ivory inlay on rosewood was used to make a mind-boggling array of boards, painted game boards, lithographs of Knight's tour and copper plates.

RKP has been collecting and documenting games for over 25 years with an aim to preserve them as the cultural and historic treasures which narrate the passion and ingenuity of Mummadi. These have originated in Mysore and have a special connection to the city. RKP is striving to popularise to these Mysore treasures to the world.

A Register of Old Frisian Draughts Boards

MARTEN WALINGA

The Frisian draughts game is the oldest draughts game played on the 100-square board. The Dutch province of Fryslân boasts its own language, culture and sports, including a mind sport. This game is internationally considered one of the most complicated forms of draughts.

The boards on which this game was played in earlier centuries have largely been lost. However, a few have survived: inherited in families, sold to collectors, included in museum collections. In the process, a lot of information is lost: origin, history, whether and by whom it was researched.

Recently, the Stifting WFD set up an official register of Frisian pre-1900 draughts board, with as much information as possible for each board, supplemented by independent research. This information is kept in the register and shared with the owner. In this way, not only is the necessary information about 100-square boards compiled for future researchers, but owners can better appreciate and, hopefully, preserve their game board.

During the presentation, the principles of the register will be explained in more detail, and illustrated by one specific 18th-century board. The research carried out as part of the register allowed the origin of this board to be identified.

The gaming collection of the MAC-Barcelona

ILARIA TRUZZI, University of Reading

Recognising and interpreting objects as gaming items when meaningful information is lacking can be challenging. In museum collections, items often enter as donations, or from previous private collections, meaning that significant data about their findspots and archaeological context is often missing. Some items could have been found in organized excavations but were not identified; others are stray finds. However, these contextual data are essential to hypothesise whether an object was used as a gaming implement in the past. What, then, is the process of reading an object when such data is lacking?

This paper proposes a case study of objects identified as gaming items – bone and glass counters, tesserae, knucklebones and dice — from the MAC-Barcelona. I will explain how I tackled the process of identification, and the challenges and conclusions drawn from this research. Due to unfamiliar with ludic objects, many were previously misinterpreted as ludic items, including beads or textile whorls. The preliminary results have shown that this identification process is useful to improve the interpretation of an object which data is fragmentary. This paper therefore aims to give insights and open a discussion about interpreting and reading procedures that can be applied for gaming items in museum collections.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Games: Ludic Terms Across Linguistic Glossaries
JACOB SCHMIDT-MADSEN, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science

Board games can be described using the metaphor of language. Components become nouns, actions become verbs, and rules become the syntax that translates the activity of play into a series of ludic utterances. Metaphoric as that language may be, it has a very real vocabulary associated with it. Squares are houses, fields, pits, heavens. Pieces are animals, humans, spirits, planets. Actions cause movement, capture, promotion, death. What emerges are narratives of play that travel and transform across time, space, and language.

This talk presents a nascent project to build a database of ludic terms across linguistic glossaries. The database will focus primarily on textual sources from trans-regional Asia as one of the richest and least understood reservoirs of traditional games. It will serve as a platform for research into the relationship between the formal properties of games and the words we use to describe them; the transmission of ludic terms together with and independent from particular game elements; the adoption and adaptation of semantic frameworks for interpreting games across cultural and linguistic boundaries; and many other topics certain to arise as the project develops.

Early Electric Quiz Games.

MELISSA ROGERSON, The University of Melbourne

From the first implementation of electricity into the game Lichtra, in 1910 ("Lichtra," 1910; Museum für Energiegeschichte(n), 2007, pp. 240-241), quiz games have been at the forefront of the use of hybrid technologies in boardgames. Yet there has been little to no investigation or documentation of the history of these games, nor of the different genres and forms that they take.

This presentation will describe some early examples of electric quiz games, showing how they used electrical current in different ways to reveal answers. Nevertheless, these games remain fundamentally physical. Based on detailed examination of 25 games from over sixty years of twentieth-century electric quiz games, as well as some non-electric quiz games from the same period, we discuss recurrent themes and topics in these games as a view into their contested nature. Are they for children or for adults? For play or for learning? Sufficient as they are, or in need of a non-playful purpose? And to what extent can they be considered boardgames at all?

Our presentation will discuss what these games may tell us about boardgames in general and, more specifically, about hybrid boardgames. It will conclude with reflections on the challenges that these games – and hybrid games in general – offer for game collection, presentation, and preservation. We return to the notion of patina and the balance between valuing the use of a game and its condition and preservation, considering not only the game artefact itself but also the materials – including batteries and circuitry – that are integrated into these games.

The History of Dice Machines Over Four Centuries

JAKOB GLOGER

While virtual dice machines can be found in present times, they have a history spanning four centuries. In the middle of the 20th century, particularly in Japan, one could find endless types of electronic dice machines and dice games. The beginning of the 20th century was characterized by mechanical dice machines. Pocket dice machines, as well as bigger varieties made for pubs and fairs were common in the period. By the end of the 19th century, the first coin-operated dice machines had appeared on the market whereas at the beginning of the same century and at the end of the 18th century, a wide variety of mechanical games could be found, including dice machines. Through the Age of Enlightenment, board games earned a positive appreciation and were used as mean of educating and imparting knowledge. Mechanical dice machines could also be found in the catalogues of the well-known toy retailers Bestelmeier and Catel. A historical print dated 1885 shows a mechanical dice game from dated 1738. Could it be possible that this print showed the first mechanical dice machine in the world? A further focus will be given to different notions through different epochs.

The foldable three-games-box: a revolutionary concept

ULRICH SCHÄDLER, University of Fribourg

Some things have become so commonplace that it is hard to imagine a time when they did not exist. This is the case of the foldable three-games box with (usually) a chess board on one side, a Nine-mens'-morris board on the opposite side and a „backgammon“ board inside.

Throughout the middle ages folding double-sided game boards were in use. All of a sudden, the new concept appeared and immediately gained success all over Europe. It became the standard form for board games in such a way, that still in 1972, Georg Himmelheber, in his Catalogue of the games in the Bavarian National Museum, wrote: „Unter Brettspielen versteht man aufklappbare Kästen, die drei Spielpläne in sich vereinen und gleichzeitig zur Aufbewahrung der Figuren oder Steine dienen“. This is of course not correct: a board game is not a box, but the box serves as a support for several game boards.

As far as I know, nobody has ever tried to retrace the origin and history of this groundbreaking invention, which has influenced the culture of play in Europe over centuries. In what cultural and gaming environment was this concept developed? And why exactly these three games were chosen? How did it spread over Europe?

Board Game Digitization on Tabletop Simulator: Platform, Preservation, and Piracy

MIREK STOLEE, The Strong National Museum of Play, University of Central Florida

This presentation uses Berserk Games' Tabletop Simulator (TTS) as a case study to examine the role that amateur digitization efforts could play in board game preservation. TTS players have created freely playable digital versions of thousands of commercial board games by scanning physical copies. By examining TTS mods and the surrounding community through overlapping lenses of archival access, digital labor, and intellectual property, this presentation explores the tensions between analog and digital media preservation, between personal collecting and institutional archiving, and between preservation and piracy.

Digitization has been the subject of much hype and debate in media preservation fields. Through digitization, information contained in analog materials may be made more easily accessible to those outside of the institution, and without risking damage to the object through repeated physical handling (Hughes 2004). Murray (2023) and Stolee (2023), however, show that the gameplay of digitized board games differs from that of physical copies due to the affordances of platforms like TTS. But does digital access require playability at all? Nathan Altice's Analog Joy Club, for instance, preserves digital images of Japanese board game boxes and components in a non-playable format.

TTS mods also raise important questions about digitization and labor. Game creators benefit from the free labor of modding communities (Kücklich 2005). For many players, TTS's value lies primarily in its selection of over 30,000 free mods on the Steam Workshop. As argued by Lee (2019) and Reyes (2019), institutional media digitization in general is a devalued, laborious process. Memory institutions benefit from crucial video game preservation work performed by personal collectors (DeWinter and Kocurek 2017). Institutions interested in board game preservation must consider these factors when forming relationships with personal digitizers.

However, institutional digitization has also been the subject of legal battles, notably in a recent lawsuit against the Internet Archive regarding digitized books (Knibbs 2024). Games journalist Ryan Cooper (2019) has likened the distribution of TTS mods to video game piracy. Scholars like James Newman (2012), though, has argued that video game emulation efforts have played an important role in preservation, and piracy may play an important role in media preservation more broadly (De Kosnik 2020). Both personal and institutional board game digitization efforts may face similar legal challenges.

Creating an International Legacy of Games

BRUCE WHITEHILL, AGPI, BGS, ESG, SAZ

The histories of countless games have been lost because neither the games nor information about them has survived. Thousands of new games are created every year around the world. How are they to be remembered or preserved? How can we maintain a record of their existence for future generations? Collecting, housing and preserving all physical games in archives would be a nearly impossible task. But the information can be stored. It is said that the digital age has taken its toll on the production of tangible games (though this may not be true), but now we can use digitization to record the games that

are produced. What is required is the involvement of people who have access to games and/or the information about them, and the people who can record that information (possibly the same people). How do we go about it? Like in this abstract, there may be more questions than answers. This presentation suggests the need for international cooperation, lots of volunteers, and possible government involvement for continued record-keeping and possible funding.

From Bakelite to Boardgames: The Plastic Revolution in Classic Game Pieces, 1800s-1900s

DOUGLAS POLUMBAUM

Discoveries in plastic technologies during the 19th and 20th centuries had a profound impact on manufacturing and everyday life, making numerous products more accessible to broader audiences. For instance, Bakelite, invented in 1907 by Leo Baekeland, ignited a consumer boom by enabling the mass production of affordable yet desirable items like cameras, telephones, and radios. This contributed to new design trends such as Art Deco. Celluloid, developed in the late 1860s, became widely used for photographic film and as a substitute for expensive materials like ivory and tortoiseshell.

This paper explores the evolution of plastic technologies[1] by providing a visual context to the development of materials used in classic games, starting with pre-plastic materials like Gutta Percha and Vulcanized Rubber. The illustrations include a unique collection of chess, backgammon, and checker pieces from a seldom-seen private collection. The objects highlight the evolution of materials and help trace the craftsmanship and artistry involved in creating them throughout the 1800s and 1900s.

Eurogames in the east? On the innovativeness of the games industry in the last phase of the GDR

MICHAEL CONRAD, University of Konstanz

The official board game culture of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) is commonly characterized by a strong focus on children's games and simplistic, unchallenging game mechanics. Much like the broader economy, the GDR's games industry is often described as lacking in innovation. Indeed, prior to the 1980s, many board games in the GDR were devoid of significant innovation. This extended even to the collectivist-sounding titles of the many "Wir" ("We") games, such as We Go Fishing, We Go Shopping, We Search for Mushrooms, We Celebrate Joyful Festivities, or We Congratulate the Soviet Army. Frequently, new releases were little more than slightly modified versions of old, simple gameplay mechanics, often uninspired roll-and-move clones.

While this perception might justify the accusation of the GDR as "the most boring country in the world"; (as writer Volker Braun once put it), it does not entirely apply to the country's final phase. Besides the infamous necessity for creative improvisation in daily life under the pervasive scarcity of goods, certain products from the Plasticart combine during the 1980s contain noteworthy examples of a more creative and experimental games industry. Among the various products of the combine, located in Annaberg-Buchholz, Saxony, particular attention will be drawn to the board game Train. This strategic game, developed by a teacher from Erfurt, was presented at the Leipzig Autumn Fair in 1981 and even reviewed in Neues Deutschland, the official newspaper of the Socialist Unity Party's Central Committee, on October 16, 1982.

One of Train's distinctive features is its economic, resource-management-based gameplay. Players are tasked with building and managing a railway line through five towns, requiring resource extraction and allocation. Their progress is hindered by random "natural disasters"; adding a layer of complexity that is unexpected and bears notable parallels to early examples of "Eurogames" emerging in the West at the time, as for example the games from Avalon Hill (Diplomacy, Civilization, and 1830).

This raises immediate questions about the extent to which decision-makers within the GDR's combines were aware of contemporary game developments in the West. Moreover, it invites a broader inquiry into the processes behind game design and the factors that made more complex game mechanics seem desirable. Possible explanations might lie in Erich Honecker's efforts to reshape the GDR into a "consumer socialism" Mikhail Gorbachev's détente policies under the banners of glasnost and perestroika, or the economic pressure to earn foreign currency, which pushed the GDR games industry to market its products increasingly in the West.

Through this and other contemporary examples, the internal contradictions of the real-socialist system and its modes of production can be explored—contradictions between cooperative collectivism and competitive individualism, between cautious openness and steadfast isolationism—and how these were conveyed to players through the medium of official board game culture.

Das Spiel wird traditionell als alternative Lebenswelt betrachtet, die außerhalb der Realität stattfindet. Gleichzeitig ist das Spiel stets ein Abbild oder Kontrapunkt zur raumzeitlichen Welt, in der es entsteht – sei es durch Inhalt, Mechanik oder Materialität. Besonders aufschlussreich sind in diesem Kontext nachgemachte Gesellschaftsspiele aus der DDR. Diese handgefertigten Spielekopien, ein flächendeckendes Kulturphänomen, wurden erst durch das Ausstellungsprojekt „Nachgemacht – Spielekopien aus der DDR“ systematisch in ihrer Bedeutung für die deutsch-deutsche Spielelandschaft erforscht.

Der Vortrag untersucht dieses Phänomen in drei zentralen Dimensionen: die Objekte (nachgemachte Spiele), die Prozesse (Kopieren und Aneignen) und die Subjekte (Personen, die diese Spiele herstellten und spielten). Dabei wird analysiert, wie kulturelle und diskursive Rahmenbedingungen die Entstehung dieser Spiele prägten und wie sie Rückschlüsse auf das Verhältnis von Bevölkerung und Staat zulassen.

War das Nachbauen von Spielen eine subversive Aneignung oder ein Indikator für politische Praktiken? Der Vortrag geht diesen Fragen nach und beleuchtet, wie diese Spiele die Lebensrealität in der DDR spiegelten, soziale Praktiken formten und als Ausdruck eines kreativen Umgangs mit staatlichen Restriktionen fungierten.

Juden Raus! Revisited

MAURICIO CASTRO VALDEZ

Juden Raus! is one of the most problematic board games in existence. Such is the aversion it provokes in Western culture that even its preservation and reproduction for museographic purposes has been debated. Is it worth preserving and reconstructing this object, and under what conditions? After all, at this moment in history, what new insights can we gain from an anti-Semitic propaganda artifact from World War II?

To date, there are works that highlight the historical and cultural relevance of this artifact. Analysts have exposed the hegemonic narratives of violence that the game articulates, but the subaltern narratives of play, those that account for the victims' trajectories, have been overlooked. It remains to highlight the subaltern narratives articulated in the game and examine their potential to challenge the hegemonic narratives the game itself produces.

For this reason, I propose, as a critical exercise in preservation, reconstructing this violent artifact as a mnemotechnic resource that raises critical awareness of the violence exercised by governments against their citizens.

The critical exercise carried out with Juden Raus! demonstrates that it is possible to use the algorithmic structure of a board game to challenge its own rhetorical operations. More specifically, this exercise shows that it is feasible to employ the residual elements of the board game system to reconstruct the perspective of the oppressed during the simulation. In this way, the original propaganda purpose is subverted, granting it value as a critical mnemotechnic resource.

Thursday, April 10

Graffiti Games of Central Maharashtra: New Documentations, Revision and Theory
ASHWINI GAWLI

The following presentation explores newly documented etched games/graffiti games found at monuments located within the protected expanse of Gautala Wildlife Sanctuary, namely, the Buddhist rock-cut caves of Pitalkhora and Ancient Saivite temple called Chalukya Shri Hemadpanthi Mahadev Temple. Explorations at the above-mentioned locations pose a sole etched game and another site featuring a plurality of mancala boards, respectively.

Further explorations revealed an unidentified variant of mancala, previously not observed in this region as documented at the active temples located in the periphery of the Lonar Crater Lake. Lastly, new etchings were sighted at the site of rock-cut caves of Aurangabad, formerly known to have yielded only mancala boards.

Combining current data with previous data collected by the authors, the work aims to shed light on the find patterns within regional gaming culture of central Maharashtra, explore the concentration and distribution of graffiti games in these areas and further discuss the cultural memory of mancala from the state of Maharashtra.

Curating art works to visually preserve the cultural asset of games
DHARMENDRA H.S., Ramsons Kala Pratishtana

In the year 2000 R.G. Singh, Secretary of Ramsons Kala Pratishtana (a not-for-profit art foundation based in Mysore, India) and myself planned doing some craft based products in traditional board games. We began design interventions in different craft forms across India and produced game boards, casting pieces and play counters.

Simultaneously, we started commissioning art works by many artists of Karnataka in various media like water colour on paper, acrylics on paper, acrylics on canvas, gouache on paper, ink on cloth and wood marquetry.

These artworks decorated the walls at our board games exhibition - Kreedaa Kaushalya (first held between 11 to 21 May 2007 which now is a biannual exhibition). The same were used in our book – Indian Traditional Boardgames.

The main aim behind this curation of art and artefacts is to visually record the different aspects associated with board games like material culture, game culture, oral tradition and religious practices.

The multimedia presentation will take the audience through the artworks in the collection of Ramsons Kala Pratishtana and the stories about them.

Tangled lines of descent: unravelling vertical & horizontal lines of transmission in English Cupid games
EDDIE DUGGAN

In a recent article in the Board Game Studies Journal, Adrian Seville and Alex de Voogt discuss the horizontal and vertical axes of mutation and transmission with regard to tracing the "lines of descent" in both physical and printed board games, drawing on ideas from the archaeological concept of "cultural transmission theory". Concentrating on examples of printed Cupid games, Seville and de Voogt identify specific game components (using the term "markers", borrowed from phylogenetics) such as the game rules, the layout of the game board, and decorative elements thereon, and analyse specific iconographic aspects of various examples of the Cupid game, informed by notions of vertical and horizontal transmission. When concentrating on purely decorative elements of the game board (i.e. decorative parts of the game board with no gameplay function) this insightful method can suggest lines of descent where a distinctive element appears to have been copied from an earlier edition, or may suggest different editions share a common source (Seville & De Voogt, 2024).

The authors show an awareness of and sensitivity to the usage and ownership of mutable components of a printers' stock (for example, stock might be inherited, or acquired through purchase, following the death of a publisher or the sale of a business) and how this awareness can help identify stages in the production of an edition where change is introduced (for example, a printed game, an artefact produced from a combination of elements – some engraved or incised parts, assembled in a printer's forme along with text and woodblock components – might be deemed to be in a different "state" when a worn plate is

re-cut or a redundant piece is replaced; alternatively, a new edition might be created if a printer changes the business address on a plate acquired through the purchase of another printers' stock in order that his own business address will appear on the print, replacing a rival printer's old address; this was the case when Laurie & Whittle acquired Robert Sayer's stock and, "on 12 May 1794", reissued "a large number of Sayer's plates over the new imprint of their joint names" (Fisher 2001, p. 59).

This presentation will discuss several British-published editions of *The Royal Pastime of Cupid*, including two examples previously unpublished in a board-game studies context, viz. Robert Sayer's edition of ca. 1770, and an edition published "at The White Horse without Newgate", an address used by Henry Overton from 1665-66; the print can be attributed Henry Overton and is likely to have been issued after 1717. The proposed presentation will draw on the methodology demonstrated by Seville and de Voogt to examine the relations between extant and previously unpublished British editions of the Cupid game to infer both vertical and horizontal lines of descent. The presentation will also show evidence to establish more precise publication dates than some of the loose dates currently associated with particular archival records.

The following examples of *The Royal Pastime of Cupid* will be discussed in the presentation:

- John Garrett (1690-1700)
- Henry Overton (after 1717)
- William Dicey (ca. 1738)
- Robert Sayer (ca. 1770)
- Carrington Bowles (1753-1784)
- Bowles & Carver (1793-1830)
- Laurie & Whittle (1794)
- James Lumsden (1810-1830)
- R. H. Laurie (1850)

Monkeys in art. The function of monkeys in board games

WIM VAN MOURIK, KNDB

In the context of board games, anthropomorphic or animal figures, such as monkeys, are often used to represent human behavior. Known as *singerie* (or *bestiary* in English), it is an interesting subject to study in art history with board games as a theme. *Singerie* came into fashion in painting in the 16th and 17th centuries, but have been used since the Middle Ages. Monkeys imitate human behavior and emphasize human weaknesses, virtue or absurdity. We see this in the monkeys who pretend to be able to make the same intellectual decisions as humans sitting behind the board. But they also seem to be presented as spectators with a function as advisors. Whether the monkey is able to contribute to the strategic decision-making in a game or to participate in the social interaction, I will not give an opinion on. My short presentation can be seen as a support for further research in this relatively unexplored area. My material consists mainly of images of draughts/checkers and backgammon; less of chess and morris. It is therefore important to conduct further research into how monkeys are used as symbols for human behavior in board games. I make my collected material completely freely available for further research.

The origin of Chinese Checkers – in Germany, China or Japan?

PETER MICHAELSEN

The origin and history of Halma, an abstract game of traversal invented around 1883 by the American surgeon Howard Monks, is well documented. It was first produced by E. I. Horsman in 1885 and later by Milton Bradley, with the title *Eckha*. From 1888 and onwards Halma gained enormous popularity in a lot of countries. In 1890 it was published in Scandinavia and Germany, and in 1892 Otto Robert Maier (1852-1925) published Halma in Ravensburg, Southern Germany, in the same box as another abstract game, "Go" (which was in fact *Go Bang*, a variant of *Go-Moku*, Japanese Five-in-a-Row).

As a result of the success of Halma, several derivative games soon appeared: in 1892 at least three: Colorito, Samson and Rocco. The two last mentioned games were invented by Sophus Tromholt (1851-1896) and published by Otto Maier in Ravensburg. In that same year Otto Maier is supposed to have published one more Halma derivative or variant: Stern-Halma, played with the same rules as Halma, but on a star-shaped board with a topologically different pattern, using 3x15 pieces. This game appeared in the United States in 1928, originally marketed by J. Pressman & Co. as Hop-Ching Checkers, but they soon changed this to Chinese Checkers. Under this name and its translations, it has usurped the popularity of Halma in many countries.

The information mentioned in several game books, that the star-shaped Halma game was first published in 1892 by Otto Maier Verlag, Ravensburg, derives from Erwin Glonnegger: DAS SPIELE-BUCH, first published in Ravensburg in 1988. At a closer examination this piece of information cannot be confirmed and is not reliable. It seems more likely that the star-shaped game, also known as Trilma, was not published before the beginning of the 20th century. It will be discussed if this happened first in Ravensburg, elsewhere in Germany, in some other European country, or perhaps even in China, where the game is quite popular under the name of Tiaoqi, or in Japan, where the game is known as The Diamond Game.

"Pilkentafel" problems. On the history of shovelboard

JONAS RICHTER, Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities

Shovelboard is a dexterity game in which players slide disks down a long table, receiving points for reaching a zone close to the far end but not falling off the edge. It seems to be remembered best in Great Britain where several tables for it survive. Despite centuries of history, the German equivalent of shovelboard, called Pilkentafel, Beilke, Trocktafel, and other names, is mostly forgotten, and it is unclear if any boards still exist.

Which sources do we have, and what makes untangling the history of Pilkentafel/ shovelboard so difficult? How does it relate to French games called galet, palet, assiettes, or the Dutch sjoelen, the British Shove Ha'penny, or the German Eisschießen/Stockschießen? Where is its place compared to billiards? What social standing did the game have?

Mehen: Petrie's 'Serpent Stone'. Genesis of the very concept of a board game

JAMES MASTERS

As potentially the oldest known board game, the importance of Mehen in ludological history should not be understated but, until now, no comprehensive analysis of any Mehen board has ever been undertaken. Technologies now exist that were unavailable when these objects were acquired, giving opportunities to understand better the genesis and evolution of this ancient game during the Old Kingdom.

The gameboard held by the Petrie Museum, London was chosen as the subject of a comprehensive study of a Mehen artefact, encompassing the board's acquisition history, materials, manufacture, chronology, ludology plus its specific hole and turtle head features. Microscopy, reflectance transformation imaging, X-ray fluorescence, Raman spectroscopy, experimental archaeology and photogrammetry were used to test theories posed by former researchers regarding this specific Mehen board as well as Mehen in general, including conclusions outlined in my two 2024 articles on Mehen.

Illuminating facts concerning the accumulation of Flinders Petrie's collection were revealed and the importance of retaining objects in both physical and digital forms became apparent. This presentation will concentrate on elements of this study that demonstrate why maintenance of physical collections is vital in ensuring that scholars are able to undertake research that becomes possible only when future technologies appear.

Friday, April 11

Comparative Analysis of Ceremonial Spaces and Game Board Layouts in Ancient India
RACHNA, AMIT S SUNDARAM, DESHMUKH , MIT ADT University

This research investigates the relationship between ceremonial layouts and game board layouts in India, inquiring the connections between spatial composition and symbolic representation. By analyzing the archaeological evidence and architectural treatises, this study reveals how the spatial arrangements of sacred sites, such as Vedic fire altars, parallel the designs of traditional board games like Pachisi and Ashtapada.

The geometric configurations found in both ceremonial spaces and game boards demonstrate a shared understanding of cosmic order. For instance, the quadrangular layouts prevalent in Vedic architecture are mirrored in game board designs, suggesting an interplay between sacred geometry and recreational spaces. The use of cardinal directions and central focal points in temples is reflected in the gameplay dynamics, where movement patterns often echo ritual circumambulation practices.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how ancient Indians conceptualized space, merging the sacred with the ludic. The dynamic relationship between religious and recreational designs highlights a cultural continuity that reinforces common cosmological principles. This research not only sheds light on the historical significance of games but also offers new perspectives on the interplay between play and ritual in ancient Indian society, underscoring their importance in the history of spatial design. The paper thus tries to evolve parameters to analyze the impact of board games on spaces & thus would throw light on the “space context” with reference to Indian board games tracing it to the contemporary time.

GameMood - An empirical framework for emotions in boardgames
MEHRINGER VOLKER, University Augsburg

It’s hard to imagine play and games without emotions. Emotions are an integral part of nearly every play definition. But there isn’t much research on emotions in play and games. GameMood is an empirical framework for research on emotional perception while playing board games. The framework builds upon Heckhausen’s psychology of play and on Russel’s (1980) circumplex model of affect. The methodical design uses an app to record the emotional activity and valence of all players individually during the game. The players must assess for themselves at each measurement point how activated they feel and where they would classify their emotional state on a scale from negative to positive. At the same time, the game is observed on video using two cameras so that the game and the players’ actions and reactions can later be compared with the app data. The presented paper will focus on the empirical framework and on first results of initial test runs. Furthermore, the practical use of the framework will be discussed.

Let’s Play! - Social and emotional skill training with boardgames with boardgames
VALENTINER-BRANTH CHRISTINA, Brettspielakademie

Parents, educators and researchers share a common goal - helping our children become healthy and well-adjusted adults. We are looking for effective tools that create social, emotional, and cognitive stability in a fun way. We want them to develop a firm personality with the ability to easily adapt to new situations, to be interested in other people, to investigate and solve problems, to face the world with curiosity and self-esteem. A good foundation of executive skills is essential for successful classroom behavior and lifelong learning. It provides resilience and causes a happy and fulfilled life.

Using boardgames in a professional way can enhance those executive skills without the children even noticing the training. Let’s look at what we have to do to play games. We have to

- wait until it’s our turn
- understand and apply the game rules
- control our emotions while playing and especially when losing
- trade with the other players
- talk, ask, bluff, find allies, be fair ...

Playing boardgames is brain building at its best. In this lecture you will get a short view of the positive effects on various types of player-personalities and how to use boardgames in different educational settings.

Board Games Between Self and World

KATHARINA HERDE, Bielefeld University

The recurring call to recognize board games as cultural assets is closely tied to taking them seriously as a medium. This perspective also involves considerations of board games as a medium for education. What potential do board games hold regarding educational processes? The added value of board gaming is often discussed and emphasised in pedagogical discourse. The list of learnings that can supposedly be fostered through playing board games is extensive—ranging from hard skills like mathematical knowledge to soft skills such as social competencies. But what can board games convey to players about themselves, their perception of themselves, and their view of the world?

Board games address a wide variety of societal topics. Through their formal components, they tell stories, classifying them as narrative media. The realities constructed in games are inspired by our real world but remain entirely distinct in their nature. Board gaming allows us to immerse ourselves in these worlds. During gameplay, we take on roles that might be unfamiliar or inaccessible to us in our everyday lives. Our actions carry significance—we play and decide the course of the game. Additionally, the social aspect of playing together creates interpersonal spaces for interaction, which also open up educational opportunities. At the same time, the narratives embedded in games reveal further aspects beyond the active role of the players. By playing, we engage—consciously or unconsciously—with the game and its narratives. On an individual level, this process can spark educational insights and create opportunities for reflection. Our perception of ourselves and the world can be challenged through gameplay. These spaces of possibility are determined by the formal characteristics of the games. Identifying and utilizing these characteristics for analysis is an essential task in the scholarly examination of modern board games.

The talk ‘Board Games Between Self and World’ deals with considerations on educational spaces of the modern board game on a micro-level, set against the backdrop of media education theory, exploring its role as a medium for education and a source of orientation.

Board Game Classes in Lower Secondary Education: A Novel Approach to Fostering 21st Century Skills – more than 2 sides of a die

CORNELIA HOFMANN, Universität Bielefeld

In the realm of education, analogue games have emerged as powerful tools for learning, offering a unique blend of engagement and instruction. Like the multiple faces of a die, the relationship between games and education presents various aspects, each contributing to a holistic learning experience. For a board game class, we might consider using a d20 (20-sided die), symbolizing the multifaceted nature of game-based learning. Since the academic year 2024/25, two board game classes have been established in Germany as a counterpart to sports or music classes. These classes utilize board games as an educational medium in subject-specific instruction, alongside traditional media. One class is located in a socially disadvantaged area at the Stadtteilschule Hamburg Horn (led by Markus Zimmermann), while the other is at Laborschule in Bielefeld (led by Cornelia Hofmann). The engagement with board games promotes the development of 21st century skills, namely critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (4Cs). These skills are essential for children to navigate the challenges of future life in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. The project is being scientifically monitored by the Research Department Laborschule at the University of Bielefeld. Competency gains are regularly assessed using a calendar-diary method, in which students complete questionnaires and regularly reflect on their learning processes. Analog board games have proven to be effective tools for teaching not only general competencies but also subject-specific content. This dual capability requires the development of specialized didactic approaches tailored to each subject area for optimal implementation of these games in educational settings. Currently, we as educators and researchers of the board game classes are working on creating comprehensive didactics and an overarching pedagogical framework for the use of analog board games in education. This extensive work is still in progress, with the anticipated publication date set for summer/autumn 2025. In the meantime, my presentation aims to provide valuable insights into this emerging didactic approach for using board games in education. It will cover three main aspects: 1. Introduction to initial components: The presentation will outline the foundational elements of the developing didactic approach. These components form the basis for effectively integrating board games into various subject areas. 2. Preliminary research findings: Results from questionnaires distributed in board game classes will be shared. These findings offer early indications of the effectiveness and reception of board games as educational tools. 3. Practical classroom examples: To illustrate the real-world application of board games in education, the presentation will showcase concrete examples from actual classroom

experiences. These examples will demonstrate how teachers have successfully incorporated board games into their lessons to enhance learning outcomes. By exploring these aspects, the presentation aims to provide educators with valuable insights and practical guidance for implementing board games in their teaching practices, even as the comprehensive framework continues to be developed.

An extensive literature list may be provided on request.

A University Collection of Board Games in France: Issues of Recognition, Cataloging, and Preservation
LOUIS DELESPERRE, Sorbonne Paris Nord University

In a French context where board games are not subject to legal deposit and where there is no other public reference collection, the development of a significant collection such as the Fonds Patrimonial du Jeu de Société (FPJS) faces many constraints. The goal of this presentation is to use the example of the FPJS to address several issues surrounding the creation and preservation of a board game collection intended for scientific research.

Starting with its history and drawing on the recent experience of the current team in charge of the collection, we will explore several aspects: the challenges of enriching the collection and its cultural, scientific, and heritage recognition, as well as issues of cataloging, classification, and preservation.

Beyond the absence of a legal deposit for board games in France, board games struggle to find their place in cultural and academic institutions, despite being an undeniable social and cultural heritage. In this context, the aim of the FPJS is to promote the game as a legitimate object of research while contributing to its preservation for future generations. While the process of collection expansion has long been driven by donations and opportunities, it is now structured within a rigorous framework, facing multiple challenges.

The lack of tools and procedures perfectly suited for cataloging leads to a variety of approaches: digital libraries, databases, paper catalogs, etc. The issues of classification and indexing remain unresolved, as board games still elude a systematic typology.

Finally, the physical preservation of board games presents significant practical challenges: how to preserve these objects while avoiding degradation due to storage and researcher handling? Digitization appears as a partial solution, not only preserving a record of the games but also making these works more accessible to a broader audience. However, this approach does not resolve the problems posed by managing physical collections, where the goal is to optimize often limited space without compromising the integrity of the documents.

Board Games in Higher Education – A Personal Account
JORGE NUNO SILVA, University of Lisbon, CIUHCT, Ludus

In the 2008/2009 academic year, the University of Lisbon offered, for the first time, a course titled History of Board Games, created and taught by us. This course was open to all students with scientific majors. The goal was to demonstrate that board games are intellectually stimulating, possess a rich history, and have significant cultural connections.

In a typical session, students would learn about and play the Royal Game of Ur while also studying and practicing the sexagesimal number system of the Babylonians.

Later, we developed another course—Game Theory and Its History—introducing students to strategic thinking. This included, but was not limited to, Classical Game Theory (von Neumann) and Combinatorial Game Theory (Conway).

A few years later, we incorporated board games into yet another course at the same university—Critical Thought. In this course, we used abstract games to explore the rational processes characteristic of mathematicians, emphasizing both rigor and creativity.

In this paper, we present a personal account of these pedagogical experiences and offer a subjective assessment of their benefits.

Beyond Good and Evil – About Board Game (Facilitation) Ethics

CHRISTIAN HOFFSTADT, Denkhafen, KIT

Picking up a book title from Friedrich Nietzsche, I would like to illuminate the relations of board gaming and ethics.

First Round: A very short intro to ethics, short, nice and simple.

Second Round: On which levels can we experience, facilitate, scale and reflect on ethics regarding board games? Third Round: Some short examples – Dilemma in games (“Trial by trolley”, Frostpunk”, “This war of mine”), Political/history/ideological games affecting or hindering players (“Stasi: Over and out!”, “Secret Hitler”), postcolonialism in games etc.

Fourth and focus round: the meta level of board game ethics: Is it just “Good” vs. “Evil” we are playing? In which games can we explore alternate moral decisions? How “serious” is gaming then? In the end I would like to highlight this with a view on player interaction, characters and game mastering/facilitation in “Blood on the Clocktower”, a highly interactive social deduction game with a lot of reflection potential for a non-binary ethical view on games.

These Games are nice, but I can't play them - About the lack of accessibility in board games

VALERIE QUADE, Ludovico Graz

These Games are nice, but I can't play them - About the lack of accessibility in board games Board games are considered a cultural asset that brings people together. They let us gather around a table, make us laugh out loud, occasionally damage our friendships and remind us that luck is sometimes more important than strategy. Our board game library (Ludothek) in Graz, Austria is called Ludovico. In addition to an extensive educational games program, you can play and borrow almost 5000 games from us. In 2021 we closed our warehouse - almost 10,000 board games found new owners, e.g. the game collection in Nuremberg. However, the most important board and video game treasures - valuable contributions to game culture for us - remain in our new warehouse In case we want to show or play them at some point.

Ludovico also focuses on making games accessible. For example, we develop and adapt games for blind and visually impaired people. We are involved in the training of specialist educational and social care workers, teaching them how to work with games designed for different disabilities.

Impairments are highly individual, just like our taste in Games. But for most people with disabilities, taste is not the key factor for choosing games. When I think of the treasures in the warehouse - very few of the games could be played self-sufficiently by people with disabilities. Independence is an important word. It means that people can be around their peers, without needing the help of others who are not disabled. Because it's not the same to be told where someone else moves your game piece as it is to move it yourself. The board games of the past are only suitable for a very specific group of people - namely people without disabilities. It's time to change that and make the games of the future more adaptive so that the next boxes in the warehouse are full of games that can be played by everybody.

This is where our talk comes in. We'll take you on a humorous but honest journey through the world of board game barriers. Why are there still pure color dice, even though 8% of all men in Germany are colorblind? Together, we look at how the “cultural asset game” unfortunately remains an exclusive club far too often at present.

But we also show how board games can be turned into inclusive experiences with just a few changes, tactile playing fields, 3D printed elements or easily tangible game pieces. How could the efforts and ideas of many individuals reach the major publishers? And best of all, these adaptations not only make the game more accessible for people with disabilities - they are often a win-win for all players. Perhaps we can manage to establish board games as a truly unifying cultural asset.

Frustration, Fatigue, & Fiddliness: Why Your Favourite Board Game Might Be Fighting Against You.

MICHELE MASINI, VIE Genoa, **MARCELLO PASSARELLI**, Game Science Research Center

Modern board games can be highly engaging, but they may also present visual and cognitive ergonomic challenges that compromise player enjoyment. While some difficulties are intentional, designed to challenge players, others—defined as unwanted difficulties—arise unintentionally due to flaws in design elements, such as illegible components or cluttered visual layouts.

Our presentation introduces an analytical framework to identify and mitigate such difficulties by observing player behaviors during gameplay sessions, such as frequent rulebook consultations, skipped game phases, and disengagement, using them as indicators of undesired cognitive states. The process then analyzes dysfunctional design elements to propose adjustments that enhance clarity and usability

while preserving gameplay integrity. This study incorporates findings from interviews with players to explore how the unwanted difficulties are perceived in practice. The interviews highlight which games are most associated with such challenges and what strategies players adopt to manage them, including homemade tools, customized reminders, and physical modifications to components. The results suggest that while some players enjoy the challenge of overcoming these obstacles, others feel that they detract from engagement and enjoyment.

The implications of this study extend to both game design and gamification, emphasizing how an ergonomic approach can improve accessibility and user satisfaction.

Smart Games, Cool Games: Interrogating a Collection to Better Understand the Role of Technology in Board Games

ANNIE XIANG, Sorbonne Paris Nord University

This presentation explores the role and use of technologies (magnetic, electronic, digital) in published board games, based on a collective research project conducted as part of the Master 2 program in Game Studies, under the direction of faculty researchers from the EXPERICE laboratory. The research aims to produce original knowledge on the relationship between technological innovation and ludic culture, operating under the hypothesis that these uses can be categorized into two primary types: First, there is the use of technology in "smart games," where board games serve as privileged vectors for introducing, showcasing, and disseminating new technologies. Historical examples include the role of electricity in the late 19th century and artificial intelligence applied to chess and strategy games. Second, there is the use of technology in "cool games," where technology is either a central element of the game's mechanics or a promotional device, enhancing its attractiveness to target audiences. Iconic examples of such games include Telephone Secret and Dr. Maboul.

To test this hypothesis, the research draws on the Fonds Patrimonial du Jeu de Société (FPJS) to analyze a material corpus of games. The FPJS, hosted within the University of Sorbonne Paris Nord, holds approximately 16,000 board game titles from the late 19th century to the present day, in addition to about 6,000 role-playing games. It is one of the largest collections of board games in Europe. The FPJS allows us to trace the history of the French board game industry, witness its emergence, and observe its evolution. The study employs documentary analysis applied to this exceptional collection. Methodologically, and in alignment with the theme of this edition of the BGS conference, the presentation aims to showcase the research process and demonstrate how collections can be leveraged and interrogated in an academic setting for both teaching and research purposes.

The role of color in board-game design from a historical perspective

DANIELE AURELIO, University of Milan, **ALESSANDRO RIZZI**, University of Milan, **CARLO IOCCO**, University of Milan, **BEATRICE SARTI**, and, **MARCO TIBALDINI**, University of Bari

The making of the game: how the production of gaming materials is indicative of processes of intercultural transmission. This lecture focuses on the production of dice and counters in Antiquity and compares different findings and collections (mainly Ancona, Boston, Paris, Wien, Brescia, Cividale del Friuli) analyzing shapes, sizes, materials, handcraft techniques. The results of this analysis can shed a light on the processes of cultural exchange and the directions followed by games during their transmission from culture to culture. Some interesting findings will be displayed, like an unfinished gaming counter which show the handcrafting process caught in its middle, and other precious glass counters found in celtic grave whose back can provide many more details about their production rather than their front. The outstanding analogies between two gaming scenes represented on bronze tokens shed a light on the standardization process and open to further hypothesis about the game industry in the Roman Empire.

Mancala in Türkiye: Unearthing Connections Across Anatolia and Beyond

FATİH PARLAK, Cappadocia University

This research investigates mancala variants played in Türkiye, aiming to address the lack of research on this topic. To achieve this, mainly the existing literature in Turkish will be examined. The study identifies numerous games (such as göçürme, fodik, altı ev, and mene/melle) with similar and distinct rules, most involving digging pits on the ground or engraving them on stones. By documenting these games, the research hopes to introduce them to scholarly literature, establish a linguistic and ludic connection between mancala games played in Anatolia and its hinterland, such as Bulgaria, Turkmenistan, and Crimea, and build upon recent efforts to document mancala games in Azerbaijan.

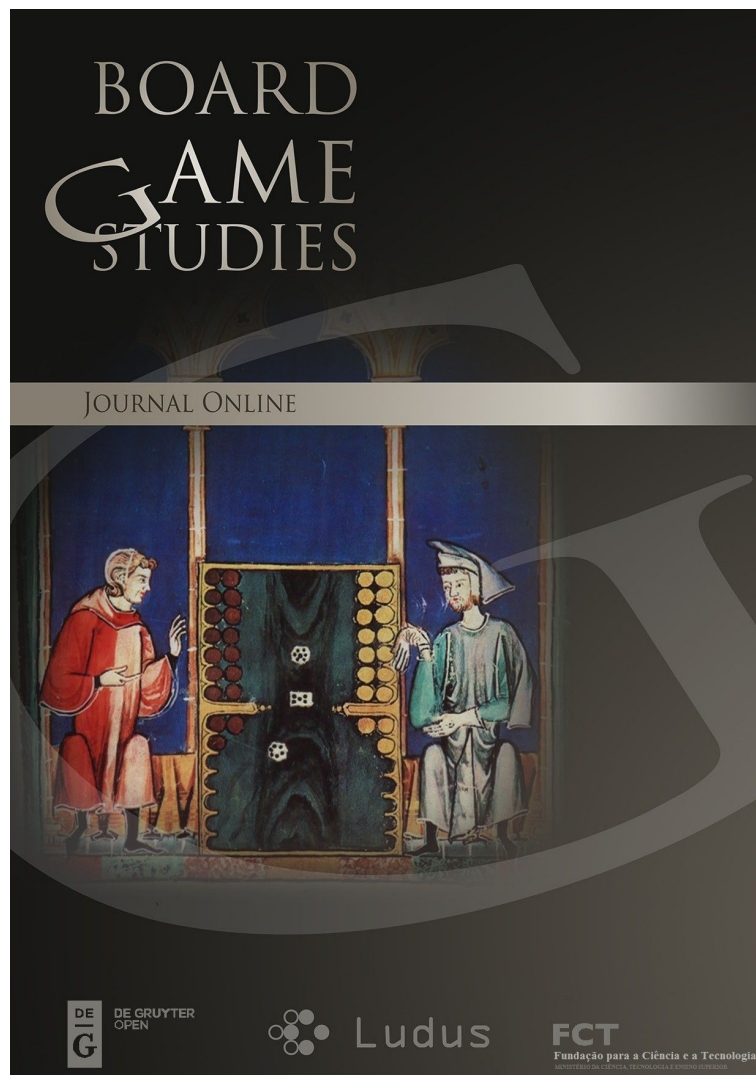
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We believe that we offer to our community a top quality journal, and we want to keep things that way. But we ask the collaboration of all. We encourage you to submit to BGSJ and thank all those willing to help with the refereeing process. Let your friends and colleagues know about our magazine!

The Editors of *Board Game Studies Journal*

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