



2003 IGDA Academic Summit Notes

This year's Academic Summit was intended as more of a "working meeting" – a chance for attendees to participate in a focused, goal-directed discussion of the high-level theme: **Ideas & Aspirations**. In particular, the attendees discussed three topic areas: Theory & Scholarship, Curriculum & Instruction and Research & Application.

From the beginning, it was the Education Committee's goal to compile the results of each discussion, collate them, and release the resulting document on the IGDA website. This document is intended as a resource and as a starting point for further discussions and emerging efforts.

Day One: Brainstorming Issues/Challenges

To discuss the theme and related topics, attendees broke into groups of roughly 15 people each. Groups discussed and then recorded the issues they felt were most important to the community.

Specifically, individual groups were asked to "brainstorm the challenges, barriers and issues that impede our progress in determining what our aspirations are or should be and what forces prevent us from achieving our goals". Below are two sets of notes from these discussions

Set I

Academic Issues--Brainstorming

- Game bibliography
- Need annotated bibliography
- Cultural perception on campus defeats efforts before they begin.
 - Stereotyping of the audience—a bunch of nerdy boys
 - People have not played games, so do not take them seriously
- Should game studies be interdisciplinary or a stand-alone study?
 - If situated in a current department, leadership of the department will tilt study in a biased direction
- Is this one field, or many fields?
- Game studies need to be considered a single field with many disciplines.
- Film studies is not a good model for games studies
- Game studies are interdisciplinary—it is difficult to find a place to incubate its study.
- Interest in game studies is largely due to the power of the industry.
- Game studies should include other types of games—not just video games
- Academic land grab is inevitable—everyone want to get a piece of the hot new thing.
- Industry people don't have time to consider these topics.
- Industry does not have an interest in game theory.
- Current research focuses on negative behavior—for example, violence.

- Scholarship need to be applied to industry needs—fit into bigger picture.
- Need a list of major research topics—a canon of key research areas.
- Theory needs to be grounded in other disciplines
 - Human-computer interaction, for example, is still fragmented
- Need to understand some of the basic design principles

Academic Issues—Summary

- Interdisciplinary nature of game studies causes confusion around its academic place. So many threads running through so many areas makes it difficult to know where to start in terms of framing a game studies discipline.
- Relationship of industry to theory is not clear—do they need it? Will it help in the short or the long term?
- Issues with the quality and availability of the game studies bibliography which hamper scholarship.
- We don't have a canon of research questions, issues and areas of inquiry. We cannot define ourselves academically by how we go about studying games.

Possible Solutions

- Identify the disciplines that make up game studies
- Characterize the needs of the disciplines
- Define gaming—what are games? Define the space
- Define and catalogue game genres
- Review and summarize the current literature
- Put together more conferences and conference proceedings on the subjects
 - Hold regional events to increase access
- Gaming needs to reclaim its history—this is not a new field!
- Solicit student input, encourage student demand for curriculum.
- Change the university reward system—reward people for pioneering new academic areas
- Create more opportunities for academic recognition—journals, conferences.
- Create a bibliography
- Leadership—don't wait for others, act!
- Continue to build and enrich the curriculum framework.
- Need a white paper similar to the curriculum framework providing a roadmap of research directions.
- Draw in outlying, but related, academic areas (stand on the shoulders of giants).
 - Connect and reconcile with other digital entertainment scholarship.

Solutions Drill Down

Looking at the possible solutions discussed, this group agreed that the key solutions grouped into a set of solutions focused on the past, on the present and on the future. We tackled three solution spaces, one in each area:

- Where we have been—How to reclaim our history
 - Build an annotated bibliography
 - Connect the current game studies efforts to historical game studies efforts
- Where we are -- Develop a research canon—define the big questions
 - Take leadership—don't wait for others to act
 - Build community—connect and collaborate with other academics
 - Create a common identity of game scholars—agree on what it is we do

- Talk to industry—make sure our research areas meet some of the industries needs
- Show the industry how theory and applied academic research can benefit the games business
- Encourage industry to attend academic meetings and conferences
- Create community, build identity
- Where we are going – Develop understanding of game design principles
 - Look at how other industries develop understanding of their underlying principles
 - Build curriculum that meets applied needs—game developer curricula
 - Publicly fund research
 - Continue to create discourse
 - Pull in research from other areas
 - Sociology, psychology, etc.
 - License solutions from other companies—pay them for what they know
 - Leadership—from IGDA, academic institutions and individuals
 - Create regional events
 - Get funding—a lot of funding

Set 2

Part 1 – Generate a List of Problems:

- 1) **Better partnerships with industry** – Academia needs to know what they want (out of our students-curriculum and in terms of research)
 - a. How do we develop well-rounded people for the industry
- 2) **Intellectual property/copyright** – industry doesn't trust academia. We need a better process to obtain rights for showing games in class and holding in library (particularly for profit educational institutions)
- 3) **Common lexicon for game design** – what to include in curriculum
- 4) **Flexible, open game engines** – available for classrooms to realize their game designs
- 5) **Need for quality/relevant textbooks and instructors**
 - a. Book publishers are looking for ways to communicate with academia and get them involved in the process, as well as find people to write books
 - b. Hard for academia to connect with industry professionals for guest talks and advise

Part 2 – Work on solutions for a problem (or two)

- 1) **Developing Curriculum Better Tied to Industry**
 - a. **Universal Job descriptions**
 - i. What we need
 1. Break out the roles
 2. Earning potential (set appropriate expectations)
 3. Demand
 - ii. How to get there
 1. Have academia team research job descriptions (mostly mine web sites of game companies)

2. Create a summary, categorizing listings, and come up with most common naming as proposed standard
 3. Have IGDA bridge the gap with industry to refine the job descriptions and hold it out as a standard for the industry to adhere to.
 4. Book publisher could create a book on the subject matter (we had two at our table ☺)
 5. This could help academia in setting up curriculum as well
- b. Build a bridge from academia to industry for student and faculty internships**
- i. There must be a balanced “give and take” relationship
- c. Maintaining relationships with graduated students in the industry**
- i. They can provide feedback back to their academic program
 - ii. Serve as guest speakers
- d. Get industry people to teach**

2) Intellectual Property/Copyright

- a. We should promote a standard practice of industry releasing photos and clips into an “educational domain” (For use in the classroom)
- b. We need a standardized, streamlined process of release for placement of games into libraries and use of games in the classroom
- c. Perhaps there should be a central clearinghouse for release on games as there is in the music industry
- d. Perhaps releases could be tied in with the development of a game cannon
- e. Need to provide “payment in kind” with industry
 - i. Play testing
 - ii. Beta testing
 - iii. Intern program
 - iv. Money
- f. There is a disjoint between developers and publishers. Developers are often willing to help, but they do not have the rights over their products (which is controlled by the publishers)
- g. We need to expand and further define “fair use” perhaps to also include for-profit academic institutions
- h. There needs to be academic licensing on game software products similar to applications (ala a 50-seat academic license for Unreal.
- i. Perhaps IGDA could help develop a standard release form that
- j. Academia/publishers could use for releases on intellectual property issues.

- k. Perhaps we could add legal language to the end user licensing agreement to allow for use by for-profit academic institutions.

Day One: Final List of Issues

After reviewing the other 8 tables of notes, the committee converged upon the following list of high-level issues of concern to the Summit attendees and the larger Game Studies community:

Curriculum & Instruction

- **Managing our Reputation**
 - How do different groups View Games & Game Research
 - Parents
 - Students
 - Academics
 - Developers
 - How can we evolve these views?

- **Finding the right People**
 - How do we find experienced Instructors?
 - How do we evaluate those instructors?
 - How do we identify and support champions (Industry/Academic)?

- **Developing the right Curriculum**
 - Depth vs. Breadth: What's appropriate, when?
 - Academic approach
 - How do we produce well-rounded students?
 - Vocational approach
 - How can we stay fast and focused on industry needs?

- **Working across many Disciplines**
 - How do we evaluate students?
 - How should we involve/choose content from diverse programs?
 - How do we assess and tackle moving targets:
 - Platforms and tools
 - Styles and genres

- **Understanding Industry Desires & Goals**
 - What are common roles & careers in this industry?
 - Do pre-professional programs make more sense (a la pre-med)?

- IP and copyright issues
 - Value and trust: who shares what?
 - Managing rights for display and distribution
- Content Distribution:
 - What are the possible/feasible formats?
 - Can we construct a delivery channel for niche content?

Research & Applications

- **Generating Funding**
 - DOD
 - NSF
 - Industry
 - other
- **Creating Community**
 - Matchmaking: Establishing & maintaining communication
 - Between fields and peers in the academic community
 - Between developers and academics
 - Removing collaboration barriers
 - Developers: Focusing academic efforts
 - Academics: Generating interest and support
 - Information Sharing vs. hiding
 - Are there concrete incentives for collaboration?
- **Understanding How Games Work**
 - What is good gameplay?
 - What do games teach you?
 - What social skills are learned by/through play?
- **Designing and Creating Tools**
 - Storing and analyzing data
 - Maintaining libraries of games and source code
 - Building experimental game engines (flexible)

Theory & Scholarship

- **Cultural Studies/Theory**
 - How do games work as propaganda/persuasion?
- **Encouraging Interdisciplinary Communication**
 - How can we generate research questions
 - Can we change conferences fees & locations?
 - Will peer-reviewed journals help?

- What is the desired quality & scope of a game bibliography?
- Are dev kits helpful for academics?
- **Understanding Emergence/Interactivity**
 - Is there a cannon of games?
 - Are there overarching design principles for this emerging media?
 - How can we build a common Vocabulary for discussing them?
 - How can we use games to Teach?

Day Two: Brainstorming Solutions

Breaking into small groups again, attendees were asked to discuss a list of ten critical items, drawn from the list generated on day one. The theme for this discussion was: **Implementation Strategies**. Once again, groups were asked to discuss the challenges at hand, and brainstorm possible approaches and solutions.

To guide these discussions, the committee supplied the following **Sample Questions**:

- *How would you fund it?*
- *How would you gather data?*
- *Who is your audience?*
- *How do you get in touch with them?*
- *How would you communicate results with them?*
- *What is your ideal goal? What are interim steps?*

Specifically, participants were asked to generate and then present to the entire group a **Task List** that enumerated next steps as well as :

- Guidelines or Tips for others
- Scenario or prototype example
- Detailed list of key challenges

Table 1: How can we attract & integrate developers into our classrooms?

Developers as Teachers: Needs and Potentials

Mark Meier

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Summary: The roundtable focused on connecting the world of academics with that of the game development industry. Specifically, dialogue at the roundtable focused on: (1) the impact developers can have on students training to enter the game industry; (2) the ways teachers and academic institutions can better organize themselves to insure clear communication with the development industry.

Key Questions:

Below is the list of questions posed at each roundtable session.

- . Should the industry have a hand in training its future workforce (i.e., current gaming students)?
- . How can academics attract and integrate developers into our classrooms?
- . How can academics attract and integrate developers into a community of dialogue, or shared information?
- . What are common misconceptions academics have when imagining the development industry, and vice versa?

Key Findings and Development Ideas:

TOPIC 1: *DEVELOPING COMMUNITY BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY*

Industry professionals are open to forming a community with the growing academic field of gaming. However, professional developers need to have access to this community when it is convenient *for them*, and as development schedules allow.

- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Central online database for communication between academics and industry professionals. Potential location for “guest lecturer” database from which schools can draw as necessary. (Format for database entry: Name; Position in the industry and what that means; Explanation of your company/dynamics of your development team/cycles; Possible topics for discussion / what does the developer feel comfortable talking about; Open time for speaking). Most industry professionals welcome academic inquiry into all aspects of development. However, development schedules and production cycles require the *effort be made on the part of academics* to gather this information. Academics must reach out if they seek information that will enhance the education of their students; not vice versa.
- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Continued engagement on the part of academics at major industry functions like GDC. Instigation on the part of academics to found and maintain relationships with development houses and/or industry professionals via email or other forms of regular correspondence.

TOPIC 2: *DEVELOPER INVOLVEMENT IN ACADEMICS.*

Employment for industry professionals in academics fails to be attractive due to low wages; the average developer has skills worth considerably more money if applied in the development industry than in the world of academics.

- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Institutions must amend salary structures if they hope to attract industry developers to their programs and thereby grant these programs greater legitimacy in the gaming industry. Industry professionals fear a loss of creative freedom in academic settings that are sometimes dictated by enrollment numbers, accrediting boards, department developed curriculum, and other constraints.
- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Use (or institution of) of academic sabbaticals for industry professionals who’ve turned to teaching. Sabbaticals insure a continued link to the gaming industry and a creative environment for these teachers with a foot in both worlds.

TOPIC 3: *WARNINGS, MISPERCEPTIONS, AND ITEMS OF NOTE.* Developers moving into academics will need help, training, and assistance to thrive in their new environment.

- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Curb the number of classes initially given to instructors who move from development to academics until they have acquired the necessary skill sets for classroom success. Additionally, make these skill sets available for learning and encourage the development of these skills. . Academics is not a place to retire. As Warren Spector put it, “Some day my hair is going to get gray and I’m not going to have the energy for production.” However working in an academic setting can be just as demanding as development, albeit in other ways.
- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Increased education about the “real” role of a gaming academic. Teaching loads, paperwork schedules, classroom management, etc. Academics aren’t just a bunch of “oldies.” Age gaps between academics and the development industry are great.

- **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** Recognition that many topics related (and necessary) to gaming education are those that don't have a "shelf life," so to speak. (i.e., theory, design, aesthetics, etc...). Industry professionals aren't just a bunch of talented youngsters. Many professionals would make terrible teachers, and vice versa. **DEVELOPMENT IDEA:** When hiring for academics, know what you're looking for; don't cut corners just to staff a position. Proper instructors need to have current technological proficiency, and a current understanding of what's going on in development regarding tools, programming, art, storylines, and other development dynamics as *well* as the ability to teach.

Table 2: How can we create internships for students and faculty?

Issues

1. *Cultivating Relationships and Placement*
2. *Protecting "contacts"*
3. *Training time and duration of internship*
4. *Housing issues*
5. *Supply/Demand problem*
6. *Focus of internship*

Solutions

- *Marketing to companies*
 - Educate on how to effectively use interns
- *Online Internship Coordinator*
 - Online database!!!
 - Help industry setup internships
 - Particularly small and regional
 - Help students/faculty find internships
 - IGDA help drive companies to site

Solutions

- *Faculty-driven internships Model*
 - Faculty intermediary between company and students
 - Lead students on project (training period)
 - Experience students => on-site internships

Table 3: How can we legitimize game studies within the academy?

Summary:

1. **Migrating content is the best answer** with limited resources
2. **Serving on the boards of existing journals** – encouraging those who do already to take more game-related topics/papers.

3. **Lots of different academic agendas and expectations:** Let's each identify what area you are addressing – working with the existing journals is really important because it helps you find your best area.
4. **Separate tract as part of GDC:** dealing with empirical work on games, etc – start with an IGDA-sponsored session would be the best way to bring out additional topics.
5. **Legitimacy is tied to money** - getting \$\$ means going out and asking for it, getting traditional funders.
6. **Mention your affiliations** in your media (IGDA, etc)
7. **Shift your attitude, not theirs:** Mike gives the example of his office game shelf - by placing these games in his office, he elevates the status of game software to the level of research texts.

Table 4: How to facilitate exchange between departments & disciplines?

Summary: Instead of trying to solve the communication problem from the top down, what are some grassroots/DIY approaches that we can take to make headway?

1. Student Involvement

- a. *Egads* of UT Austin – working with students to define programs outside the curriculum proper, doing outreach within the community to create a groundswell of interest, which has promoted changes from the bottom up.
- b. Capture the excitement and drive of the students, encourage math and science educators and parents with younger children to consider games as a valuable inspiration in these areas!

2. Programs as “Tents”

- a. The key to facilitating exchange is to create a “safe space” where students and/or faculty can make headway.
- b. Establishing a program that draws on the different strengths of academic, industry and government agencies has helped University of East London produce a self-sustaining department.
 - i. Here, products developed in conjunction with industry allow for internships (two-way), proceeds fund future efforts, and tax benefits are distributed.
 - ii. Most importantly, this program acts as it's own ambassador, actively soliciting the people most likely to object, building its own bridges and incenting involvement with financial and other rewards.

Final thoughts:

- The key to facilitating exchange is to create a “safe space” where students and/or faculty can make headway.

- Small successes and progress lead to larger/more opportunities. As students and faculty become excited about their work, their enthusiasm and energy lead to discussion and overall organizational efforts gain momentum.
- By creating a “tent” that draws interested people in, you can succeed in the face of competing agendas, bureaucratic “drag”, and red tape.

Table 5: How can we structure & fund an academic games conference?

Summary: Not necessary to fund a new conference – rather, we need to find ways to structure and think about smaller, discipline-specific conferences and how to facilitate communication:

1. **Co-located event** with SIGGRAPH that emphasizes our overlapping interests.
2. **DIGRA event** – needs to be moving around instead of new location
3. **Transforming the IGDA Summit** into something more academic
4. **Approaching certain cities** interested in sponsoring a game conference
5. **Build a data clearinghouse** – something more specific than Gamasutra, w/more community-based discussion
6. **Academic, refereed journal**

Final Thoughts: Funding specifics are very difficult and hard to pin down.

Table 6: How to design, fund & implement a game research database?

Summary: Questions to consider w/r/t Game Studies:

- What is happening?
- What would we like to build into the site?
- What are the basic services we would like to provide?

Thoughts:

1. Published resources should be stored, copies archived.
2. Publishing and IP are difficult so maybe working papers and other types that can be submitted (showing key points without really going into details) and analyzed by key word so that we can find them easily?
3. Creating a community around this site would involve translation – translating the abstracts will help people start communicating (by getting people over the hump w/r/t to reading foreign language papers. Also make the database it searchable and such.
4. Should possibly allow rating or collaborative filtering feedback w/r/t hit rates. What are some data tools/ways to evaluate this possibility?

Questions:

1. How would you fund it?
2. Gather data?
3. Who is audience?
4. How to get in touch with them?

5. How to communicate results with them?
6. What is the ideal goal? How to organize?

Design?

1. Published results, stored in the database as full text, as much as possible. Linking outside, or using draft version, when necessary.
 - a. Full text search into database.
 - b. Range is challenging: lots of different disciplines: how to categorize?
 - c. Academy: disciplinary classifications, IGDA curriculum categorization & library categorization.
2. Services would be web based, accessible.
3. Researchers are responsible for updating their own information?
 - a. Bibliographies of research.
4. Community portal sits on top of the database.
 - a. Discussion forums.
 - b. Moderators & leaders that filter spam away.
 - c. Researchers finding potential collaborators, students finding others working at similar areas, industry finding for experts.
5. Directory of research centers & people to find.
 - a. Directory of researchers and projects, people.
6. Google page rank feature: quality by system self-learning how valuable/interesting a resource is for users.
 - a. EBay/Amazon-style social filtering / recommendation system?
 - b. Translation of at least abstracts of non-English language resources.
 - c. Research data e.g. for recording emotional reactions players.
 - d. Open source repository for tools and research data?

Funding?

1. Supported by academic institutions and other members of the community: digra.org
2. Sponsors of specific information areas (e.g. motion tracking company sponsoring forum for that research data?)
3. Resource that has value: so it should have membership fee.

Implement?

1. Public source portal/BBS/database solution.
2. XML as the solution?
3. Markup standard for adding data into the database.

Task list for next steps

1. Guidelines or tips for others
2. Scenario or prototype example
3. Detailed list of key challenges
4. Resources?
 - a. sourceforge.org?
 - b. slashdot.com?
 - c. guru.com

Final Thoughts: What are some examples of successful interdisciplinary posting formats? How can we structure will help people find what they want, given how varied interests will require varied approaches to organization?

Table 7: Facilitate tech transfer, sharing of dev. tools & info?

Summary: For researchers interested in “contracts” - who do they talk to?
One member has volunteered to make a list of university outreach people

- **Who is the main contact**
- **Is the company interested in disclosure?**
- **What is their geographic location**
- **What is their history?**

Group 8 - How do we educate the academy about industry research needs?

Summary: Industry leads by selling games. Taking this into account and seeing how any particular problem will benefit the bottom line – this will lead you to find projects that are attractive to industry.

Notes

Initial Goals

1. Identify common areas
2. Industry needs to ask for a type of student
3. Academia needs to sell ideas to industry: “This will save the industry money!”
4. Identify common language/phrases
5. Discover common interests
6. IGDA could put research papers in GDC tracks

IGDA

1. Articulate benefits of long term research on a website
2. Post areas of research that the industry is seeking (similar to the DARPA website)
3. Ask academy for their ideas of research
4. Post forum for developers to discuss what they want to know/need solving.

Actions

IGDA should create a research web page and online forum that accomplishes the following:

1. Articulates areas of interest to the industry
2. Articulates academic ideas that could benefit industry
3. Facilitates contact and communication between both sides
4. Educates the developer decision makers of the benefits of collaboration (cost savings, recruitment, etc.)
5. Points of contact need to be identified “whom to ask?”
6. Panel discussion from industry leaders. What would benefit industry?
7. Publicize what you are doing.
8. Add to a database: panel discussion to discover common areas.

Table 9: How should we define professional industry roles & training?

Summary: What are important are job skills, not roles. Here, it is important to increase clarity with respect to how industry, students and academics understand the skills required to fill certain positions within the industry.

Specific issues:

- How and where can we find data on these issues?
- What would be the deliverables given such data?
 - 8-15 high level skill descriptions
 - breadth within each topic area

Final thoughts: A web site where job descriptions are listed with snapshots and bios might help create a better understanding of who does what within the industry as it stands today.

Table 10: How can we create a games canon or a standardized vocabulary?

Summary: Changes and evolution seem to be the entire point of this industry, so establishing fixed cannon seems like it might not be the best idea. Instead – could we focus on building a vocabulary that reflects the industry, and allows academics and developers to define and discuss games with some clarity & transparency?

Final thoughts: Could a simple vocabulary effort generate 200 terms?

Our Valiant Moderators

We would like to thank everyone who attended the summit for their patience and hard work – especially the people who volunteered to moderate discussions on Days 1 & 2. They were critical to the success of the meeting!

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Thank you!