

Playing video games is an emotional experience. It's almost a pilgrimage where players journey through a skillfully curated virtual world that tingles their cognitive, physical and emotional sense. At the 2019 GDC, Marie Foulston, curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, speaks about finding different ways to exhibit video games in museums. She emphasises that their effort in bringing video games alongside other art forms is to show that video games have a rich history (that is thankfully well documented) and is equally important as other art. She also highlights the challenges of bringing video games to museums; i.e. the space and time constraints, who and how many people can play the game, etc. In order to handpick those aspects of the game which are bound to draw an audience to them, the curator has the developers of each game take her through the development process, capturing the evolution of the game from scratch board to target platform. The curator then expresses the game to visitors by means of a succinct video.

In order to develop a game, the team immerses themselves into the concept. They experience aspects of the game in real life to get a better understanding of not just the physics involved, but to also have a touch of humanity; To emotionally connect to the game. The team is then better able to prototype and subsequently develop a full-fledged game. Throughout the development process, we see how emotionally vested the team is. When the game is finally introduced to the masses, the end result is quite evident, we clearly see the creator's emotions come to life in the creation.

When we peel this back a bit further, we notice that this journey began the day we came into existence. Play is crucial to the development of a child's life skills. Through play, children exercise and sharpen their imagination, agility, perception, physical and emotional strength. In Chapter five of the book *'Play, Dreams and Imitation of Play in Childhood'* by Jean Piaget, the author studies a few children from birth to their early childhood and attempts to bucketize games and their evolution throughout a child's life. He concludes that practice, symbol and rule are the three main structures that contribute to classification.

Practice games are games that require almost no thought. This is seen when the child acquires new skills which makes them want to do it over and over again. These sort of games however become repetitive and boring over time. Practice games can be either purely sensory-motor or those which require some thought. An example of practice games is stacking building blocks on top of each other. As the child grows, the practice play becomes symbolic schema; where the child's own behaviour is practiced but the practice includes imagination. This in turn transforms into symbolic play. An example of symbolic play is a child playing tea party with her dolls. Children from ages 7 onwards are seen to play games with rules which can be either sensory-motor or intellectual combination. An example of this is playing chess. The book also explains how practice and symbolic play disappear due to their ultimate transformation to rule games.

Both Foulston, through her curation, and Piaget, through his book, clearly emphasise the humanness that is seen in games. This touch of humanity can be seen throughout the lifetime of a video game. Games typically start out with some form of practice play, or an experience that is very straightforward and related to some aspect of daily life. Say for example, tossing a coin in a well, listening to the sound of the splash and watching the waves of ripples interfere with each other. This can then be given an imaginative spin by introducing a portal in the well that leads to another dimension in the space-time continuum. We can then go one step further and introduce constraints, for example, the portal only appears when a gold coin that is forged in the mines of Mordor is dropped into the well. And viola, the game becomes rule based.

How is curation of video games any different from curation of movies?
How are imitative and practice play different?