SUBREDDITS &
STORYTELLING: IS
WHAT'S OLD IS NEW
AGAIN?

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Welcome to Gen Con 2025!

Industry Experts in TTRPGs

 This presentation is geared towards the technical folks in the industry

Roll for Growth

Estimated 85 million players and watchers of just D&D in 2021

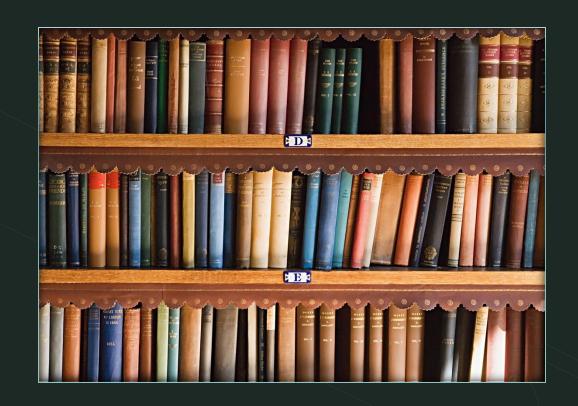
According to Hasbro, Wizards of the Coast (WotC) doubled their growth between 2018 and and 2023



Not Just Dungeons & Dragons

•Kickstarter for
"Shadowdark: the
Western Reaches" has
raised \$1.7 million and
it's not complete yet!

Clearly, there are many players interested in playing Old School Revival games



What's so Different About OSR?

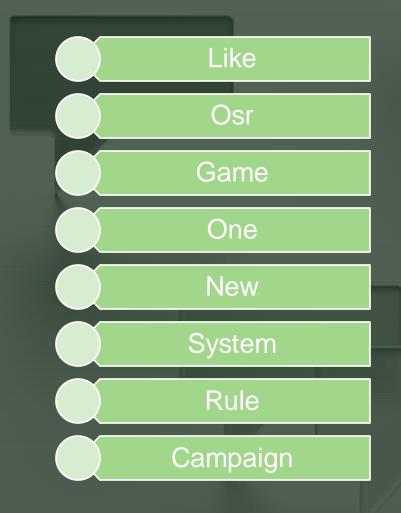
This project intends to make a model that can predict, with at least 75% accuracy, the textual differences between posts scraped from the "RPG" and "OSR" subreddit communities, in order to inform table top industry professionals of factors relevant to TTRPG game development and marketing.



Data Collection

- •Used PRAW to collect posts from subreddits r/rpg and r/osr
- TF-IDF Vectorizer, stop words, lemmatization
- Unigram and Bigrams

Unigrams and Bigrams for R/osr





Unigrams and Bigrams for R/rpg

Game Like One Player Time Rpg People

Feel like Years ago First time One players Star Wars Sci fi Call Cthulu

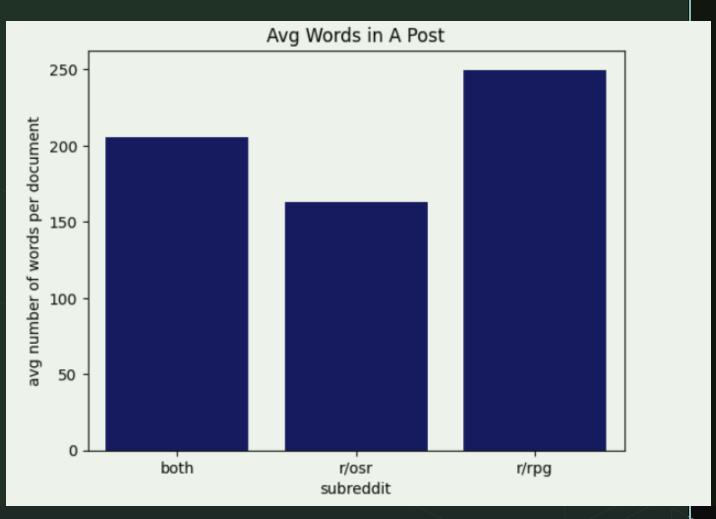
Unigrams and Bigrams for Both

Game Like One Player Osr Rpg People

Old school Feel like ВХ First Time One Shot Role playing Dungeons dragons

Model Selection

- •The classification goal was to predict whether a given document was more likely to originate from the OSR community or the broader RPG community.
- Used the body of post,
 title, the UTC time, and
 word count of documents
 to build models



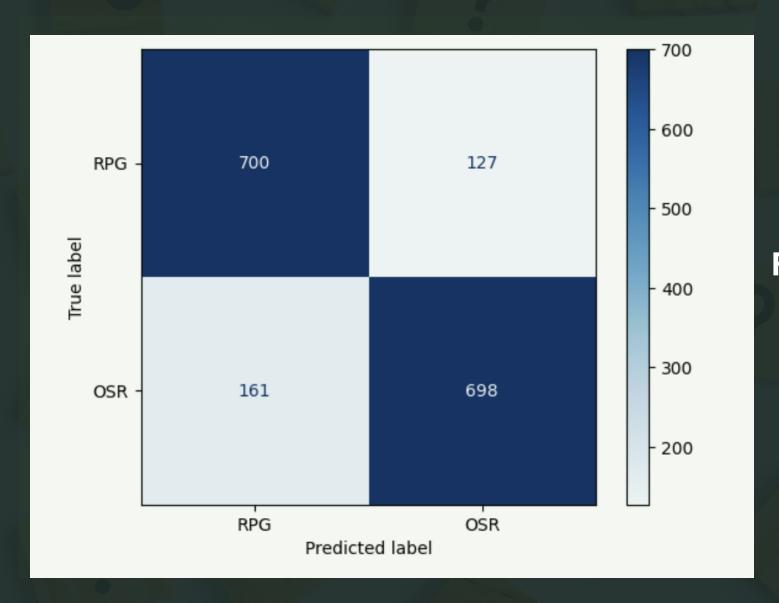
Model Selection Between 2 Models

Random Forest Classifier vs Logistic Regression

Rolled a Nat 20!

correct ~83% when predicting which subreddit a post came from

Confusion Matrix for r/Osr and r/Rpg



F1 score of ~83%

Insights

- Our classifier demonstrates a meaningful (though not perfect) ability to distinguish between the two, highlighting the linguistic cohesion of the OSR scene while acknowledging overlap in user interests and topics.
- •The OSR community exhibits a strong preference for discourse prominently featuring discussions of mechanics, traditional play formats, and particular systems such as B/X or Old School Essentials.
- •The general RPG community has a larger scope of games and genres, therefore their language may not be as consolidated around specific terminology as the osr community.

Recommendations

 Tap into the existing conversation around popular OSR frameworks like B/X and Old School Essentials

- •Be prepared to showcase how your rule system supports an "old school" approach—e.g., simplicity, modularity, random tables, or robust character creation. Unigrams such as "rules", "system", and "campaign" rank highly for osr
- Position your marketing and pitch decks around these thematic anchors to signal you speak their language

Recommendations

•Future research should explore sentiment analysis on these key terms to measure not only their frequency but the connotation of the document where they appear.

•Consider expanding the dataset to include other platforms like Discord servers, blogs, or forums to verify whether these trends persist beyond Reddit.

