

Editorial

The State of Our Art

Welcome to issue three of the International Journal of Role-Playing.

The year and a half since the publication of issue two has both seen incredible formal advancements within the study of role-playing as well as witnessed several cases of people trying to reinvent the proverbial wheel, or to improve it while not actually acknowledging its existence. What has, however, set this season apart from earlier ones is that even the latter category has produced some very remarkable works, which while seemingly ignorant, dismissive, or both, of existing key research, add in certain parts something very significant to our shared pool of knowledge. Jon Peterson, for example, in his magazine analysis based *Playing at the World* (2012), chronicles to incredible, unprecedented detail the early days of how *Dungeons & Dragons* came to be. The essays of *Dungeons & Dragons and Philosophy* (Cogburn & Silcox, eds., 2012), in turn, illustrate many wonderful facets of looking at role-playing phenomena as philosophical issues, in a light and playful tone that I hope will guide new readers to also the philosophical articles in the issues this journal.

Three major events have especially shown a change - a fulfilment of sorts - on role-playing research. The first of these is, in my opinion, the professionalization of our scholarship. We have seen plenty of academic publications about role-playing, or at least a nice, solid few, but things have in general been an uphill battle about credibility towards both the academic community and many role-players themselves. One key measure of proper scholarship in a young field is whether it is able to produce works that can be appreciated also by the standards of the academic community outside itself, works in which the practitioners nevertheless still recognize themselves. I believe that point has now been passed.

In addition to the handful of earlier doctoral works, the time between issues 2 and 3 has seen no less than four new doctoral dissertations that directly study role-playing: Marie Denward, in *Pretend that it is real!* (2011), studied media convergence in the Emmy-awarded larp / ARG / television hybrid *Sanningen om Marika*. Karl Bergstrom (2012) wrote on how games - especially role-playing games - can promote a sense of togetherness. His article on the rules of tabletop role-playing games in this issue, *Creativity rules*, was by special permission included in that very thesis before its current publication in IJRP. In my own doctoral dissertation (Harviainen 2012), I studied physical role-playing environments as social information systems, and our previous editor, Markus Montola, wrote his (2012) on especially the methodological aspects of studying and understanding role-playing and pervasive games - the very core questions of this very journal.

In a way as remarkably, the time period also witnessed an influx of refereed role-playing articles in much older journals, such as *Simulation & Gaming*, a role-playing seminar at the University of Tampere (the cherrypicked papers of which will form an upcoming issue of this journal) and a larp-as-art course at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Documentation has also become increasingly active. Journalist Lizzie Stark (2012) wrote a book about her journey through both the North American and the Nordic larp scenes, providing a seminal perspective on what is taking place in both the theory and practice of several live-action role-playing cultures. Out of a Northeast Modern Language Association conference track arose a diverse book about one of the most debated concepts of game studies, immersion (Torner & White, eds., 2012). *The Book of Kapo* (Raasted, ed., 2012) demonstrated a new, holistic style of role-playing documentation, and *Playing the Learning Game* (Andresen, ed., 2012) showed how actual

experiences can be used to teach the creation of new educational role-playing games. All of these works combined a practicality with a tradition of precision, to build something that would be even academically useful, yet directly applicable to the field as well.

Simultaneously to its maturation, role-playing scholarship still in many ways stays true to its grassroots origins. The great majority of its now-accredited scholars - both hobbyists and professionals - perform their research not from outside role-playing, but as practitioners themselves. Whereas in some fields that might be a possible point of suspicion, the ephemeral nature of role-playing makes it often quite necessary to be a part of the first-person audience, i.e. to play the game as one of its participants.

In this issue, five authors, through four articles, further enrich our knowledge on role-playing. In *Creativity Rules*, Karl Bergström examines the impact of game rules on player creativity in tabletop role-playing. Mikael Hellstrom has studied the larp cultures of two cities, one in Sweden and one in Canada, and their differences in the formation of symbolic capital. Simo Järvelä and Petri Lankoski write on player, character and the impact of embodied cognition on the relationship. Mikko Meriläinen, based on two surveys, describes the self-reported personality development of role-players, comparing those to a control group. Together, these texts form a journey from the beginning of game experiences to the way they are experienced and utilized both at once and at much later points of life.

On behalf of the editorial board, the reviewers and the authors, I proudly bid you welcome to the third issue of the International Journal of Role-Playing.

J. Tuomas Harviainen

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