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# From Joysticks to Pokémon Go: Games and Play Research in SIGCHI

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**Abstract**

At CHI 2016, a record number of games-related papers were accepted into the conference proceedings and the SIG meeting for games attracted almost 100 people. The games and play subcommittee remained strong at CHI 2017 and showed a variety of submissions. In addition, we see games practitioners within the SIGCHI community running workshops and taking part in the CHI conference. This SIG will continue to be an important forum for everyone doing games research at CHI. We want to engage the community in a discussion about the directions that games research at CHI should take and gather feedback about current HCI research trends for games. To expand this community, we plan to discuss current HCI and games trends, academic dissemination, community outreach, and collaborations with practitioners.

**Author Keywords**

Video Games; Entertainment; HCI; Games; Play;  
Gamification; CHI PLAY; Playful Experience; Pokémon

**ACM Classification Keywords**

H.5.0. General; H.5.2 [Information Interfaces and  
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### Organizers

This SIG is organized by Lennart Nacke, Zach Touns and Daniel Johnson, who have all three been extremely active in organizing the CHI games community in the past. Lennart and Zach have each chaired CHI PLAY conferences; Daniel was the papers chair for CHI PLAY twice. All three of them have multiple CHI publications and organized workshops and SIGs for CHI in the past.



### Reaching our Audience

A goal of this SIG is to help people interested in games and entertainment form the community and organize action groups. We want to increase the representation of commercial game practitioners at CHI. We will ask all CHI 2017 game-related workshop organizers to communicate this SIG to all their participants and plan to be active within the CHI PLAY community and online.

### Introduction

Games and play technologies have been a driving force of research at CHI since emotionally engaging experiences become a prominent area of user research at CHI [1]. CHI research focuses on the new and inspiring ways that technology is used in playful and highly immersive ways, ranging from explorations of the location-based game Pokémon Go toward immersion studies of users exploring games and playful space with head-mounted displays like the Oculus Rift and HTC Vive. Technologies are now explicitly build around video games or leverage game design in some form allowing humans to connect through play [4]. Video games have moved from niche leisure activities to a new art forms or drivers of healthy behaviour. Evidently, the games community at CHI has grown over the years [1-3,8] and it has organized different workshops and courses [5-7]. Studying video games is a serious and important area of research at CHI that continues to grow as games pervade into many areas of research. We are now also starting to see more research into areas that provide tools that support evaluation of player experiences at SIGCHI venues [9].

Within SIGCHI, games have grown as an important area as well. The games community now has its own conference called CHI PLAY and CHI had a subcommittee for games and play for the second year in a row. Games at CHI span across domains, techniques, and contribution types. Games are by nature more than just technological systems, but sociological and cultural influencers that often shape human behaviour and our understanding of ourselves.

The games community includes researchers and practitioners focusing on player-centered design and

evaluation of games and entertainment applications, but it does not stop there. More topics that are consistently of interest in this SIG are player-oriented game development including analysis, design, games user research and evaluation of desktop games, mobile games, mixed reality games, table top games, serious and educational games, exertion games, affective games; development of (interactive TV) formats, DVDs and related media; interactive applications for media consumption and usage on the web, in the car, and using mobile platforms; and other entertainment-focused applications. In addition, the use of gaming techniques is essential in new applications, allowing software applications to be more playful or gamified. Gamification, which uses game design in non-game applications and systems, is receiving much attention and being applied in several domains to increase user engagement and retention.

Games researchers at CHI are an unusual community because interaction with entertainment-oriented software and applications is different from interaction with standard (productivity-focused) information systems. In that, players of these kinds of applications care most about the moment-to-moment experience, rather than task outcomes, and may be driven just as much by their emotions as by logic and reason. What is usable and satisfying may not always be the easiest or most straightforward interface. These criteria make development and evaluation of video games more challenging, hence cutting-edge research, methods and tools are evolving all the time to meet the needs of the industry, designers, developers, and players.

However, the Games SIG at CHI should discuss where it is at [1-3,8] and how it can move forward.

### Goals and Action Items

- To bring the community together to share their work (conferences and workshops)
- To bring experts together to identify directions for research and standards for reviews and excellence
- To ensure that the review process of game-oriented submissions is of CHI quality by mentoring new researchers
- To publish white papers that identify open problems and goals in the field
- To publish a regular newsletter of current activities and highlights of research in the field
- To continue and improve the Student Game Design Competition
- To make games and entertainment content even more prominent during the conference, including on-site games during the conference
- To document the community efforts beyond the standard publications by extending existing work in games research

### Issues to cover during the SIG

The aim of this SIG is to provide a forum for the members of this important sub-community of CHI, to plan ways to serve the community best at upcoming CHI conferences. The following issues have been identified:

*Current trends of games and interaction research.* This is aimed at identifying the current trends in games and interaction research to see how the game community at CHI is made up and whether it is still the same as in the last year.

*Scope of games research at CHI.* As games research at CHI continues to grow, also through CHI PLAY, it is important to think if where game interaction research begins and how broad it goes. Can and should it include other areas as well? How can we identify those areas and tie them to SIGCHI's other communities?

*Expanding the scope outside of CHI.* Games has constituted itself as a strong academic community. From here, we would like to strengthen the field in general with better journals and strong scientific outlets for publishing games research. Also, to maintain our high academic standards, we need to educate new people coming into CHI about the publishing standards, common methodologies, and of course the reviewing process that is ever changing, but always focused on keeping its quality.

*Integrating other research communities.* SIGCHI is not the only organization with a games community. There are other interesting venues that would improve their quality and ours by collaborating with us. Outlets like ICA (International Communication Association) game

studies and Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA) have always been important for games research and will remain publishing venues that we could consider working with. In addition, we need to also discuss possible integrations or scholarship support for researchers working within the game developers conference (GDC) or other professional conference venues. Are strong part of the success of the games research at CHI have been the possible tie-ins to the games industry and relevance of the work for them.

*Industry collaborations.* In the past, we have successfully integrated industry speakers in both CHI and CHI PLAY gaming talks and panels. What is a good strategy to continue to involve these practitioners and developers? Also, is there a way to drive research within CHI that directly benefits game developers?

### Process/Schedule/Agenda

We will inform the games community members about the SIG goals beforehand to enable participation of the attendees in the organization of the SIG. As this SIG is central to the success of games and entertainment related activities in 2017 and beyond, the agenda is planned as follows:

Intro and Recap (10 minutes) of what was done this year in preparation community and the new subcommittee, and how we interfaced with the main conference planning. Gathering ideas and aspects on how to move forward with the community beyond 2016 (using whatever game-like support people feel comfortable with). The following topics will be discussed 15 min each:

- (1) Identification of items the community should focus on in 2018 (Next step action items);
- (2) Summary (3)

Identification of volunteers willing to lead community actions in 2018 and beyond (4) Summary of action items for next year(s). (5) Wrap-up with results and action items. We want to conclude the meeting with a plan of how to move forward with the community in the next years based on the input of everyone attending the SIG. We will provide an opportunity for everyone to get involved in SIG communications.

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