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Designed by Jennifer McCann, courtesy of White Castle Management Company

Editorial Board: Judee Blohm, Liliane Lessard, & Brian Remer
What a wonderful celebration we had in Columbus with the 50th anniversary of NASAGA! The interactive keynotes set the tone for sharing and community building in our sessions, celebrating our first book, and social events. We gratefully thank Nikki Boeshansz and Jen McCann and their conference committee for a stellar event.

Planning for next year’s conference is well underway and we hope you can join us in Sarasota for some games for learning fun. Read about the site, program, registration rates, calls for proposals, and scholarship information in this issue, pages 7-16.

From the 2012 conference the board is committing to some new and renewed initiatives.

We are committing to supporting the academics in the group. NASAGA in the past was full of academics, but more recently our membership has been more heavily weighted with corporate and independent trainers and not as many professors. With three members of the board in academia, we are trying to reinvigorate our support of professors and teachers using games for learning. One way we are showing this commitment is the addition of peer-reviewed poster sessions in this year's conference. If you have something to share with like-minded people about your research and experiences, and don't want to facilitate a 90-minute session, please consider submitting a poster for the conference. (see page 11)

We are also committing to supporting the tech members of the group, including the good number of young members who joined us in Columbus and found a home. I still love the quote from one of them: “I thought that I was going to a conference, but it turned out that I was being welcomed into a family.” We had more people Tweeting the conference than in any of our previous conferences.

To help connecting outside of the conference, we have started monthly Tweet chats. Those are times where for an hour we are all online discussing via Twitter various topics about NASAGA, games for learning, and debriefing. Melissa Peterson will be hosting these sessions. Our first one was a great success and I hope you can join us for future #NASAGAchats. (see page 3)

Also related to technology, our executive director, Chris Saeger, has done a wonderful job of getting NASAGA's virtual presence populated with relevant content. Look for us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, in addition to our Ning site and join the discussions that are happening.

But while we are committing to increased technology, we as a board want to look back at some of the great simulations that made NASAGA what it was. We will feature at least one classic simulation or game, such as Star Power or BaFa BaFa, in future conferences, so that we share some of our history with the new members who don't have that large-scale face-to-face simulation background.

So, we are going to be reaching forward into the next 50 years of NASAGA, but will not lose our history with academics or classic simulations of old as we go.

Here's to 50 more years, and see you in Sarasota!

Greg Koeser
Board chair
365 Days of NASAGA—#NASAGAchat

Four days a year is not enough!

Every year, like so many of us, I begin to look forward to the next NASAGA conference as I am travelling home from the previous one. I reflect on all of the people I met, the things I learned, and the amazing conversations I had, and I wish that the conference had not ended. This year, my conversations during the banquet and following morning were all with people who were thinking similar things. No one wanted the conversations to end, and everyone wanted to figure out how to engage with NASAGA and each other in a more pervasive way. Many of us chatted until the last possible second, running directly from intense conversations to the check-out desk or for a cab to the airport.

With this in mind, I began working with Chris Saeger and Julia Feng to try to figure out what this year-round engagement could look like. We wanted to supplement our current community website with more engaging materials and schedule interactive events for NASAGAns. We wanted to extend our reach to social media venues where our members were already spending their time, like Facebook or Twitter, and use them to engage everyone with the content on the website and with each other. Most of all, we wanted to make NASAGA a year-round experience.

February 12th: Launch of a Twitter chat

On February 12th, we officially launched these efforts in a Twitter chat—#NASAGAchat. At 9 p.m. Eastern time, 11 members logged on to talk about identity, play, and NASAGA. We started by chatting about what games we had all been playing lately—Small World, Ingress, 7 Little Words, Agricola, Legendary, and Budget Hero are all worth checking out, if you are looking for recommendations from the chatters. And then we got down to the big questions about our identities as gamers and how this effects our worldviews, how we help others feel comfortable playing if they don’t self-identify as gamers, and how we define NASAGA and being a NASAGAn.

The answers to these questions were, of course, disparate. We, as gamers, were trying to quest our way through life, or saw the world with a more systems view, trying to figure out how things worked together, or declared ourselves the winners of life’s little battles. We tried to help people learn to play by creating safe spaces, some of us fostered competition and some determined to keep the competition out of it, so that the emphasis was on fun and not winning. In the end though, the answers all followed the common themes which unite us as a community. NASAGA is “a place for playful learning with friends you didn’t even know a minute ago,” “a place where people know what I’m talking about, and I can explore my ideas about games and learn from awesome people,” and “NASAGAns love games, see them everywhere, and play them constantly. For fun, for learning, for work, to change the world.”

The chat felt a lot like a tiny piece of the yearly conference to me. I was interacting with the rest of “my tribe”, reconnecting with people whom
I was looking forward to seeing again in October, and, most importantly, sharing ideas and new endeavors with people who understood exactly what I wanted to accomplish. I listened as others did the same, offering help or professing interest in another’s ideas, and setting up time later to work together on different projects. I could tell it was a successful emulation of NASAGA because more and more questions were posed, beyond what we had planned for, and the discussion continued well past the hour we had anticipated.

**Final question: What would you like NASAGA to be?**

Our final question was “What would you like NASAGA to be? How would you like to engage with the community?” The ideas poured forth—as you might expect:

- We all wanted to engage with NASAGA more regularly.
- Some suggested more social interaction, whether at games nights online, book clubs, or at regional and conference meet-ups throughout the year.
- Others wanted more professional support, for problems they are encountering in their own work, or professional development through real-world design challenges on the website.

We’re planning to explore these ideas further in the coming months, attempting to create a NASAGA that lasts beyond the amazing four days each year, into the other 361.

If these ideas are exciting to you, please join us at the next #NASAGAchat, which will be held regularly on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 9 p.m. Eastern time. We will be looking for volunteer facilitators and topic ideas from the community, so please let us know if you would like to get more involved!

If for no other reason, join us to experience a little piece of NASAGA before October—it will feel a lot like coming home.


Melissa Peterson  
Board member and chat facilitator  
[melissa.peterson@gamecognito.com](mailto:melissa.peterson@gamecognito.com)
Scholarship Winner Speaks:
Motivation, New Ideas? Got ‘Em Here!
By Dani Abrams

I was honored to receive a scholarship to attend the 2012 NASAGA Conference, an event I’ve kept on my radar for years. I always knew I would get a lot out of the conference, but didn’t realize just how many valuable conversations, new ideas, and important take-aways were in store for me!

My current work provides me with the amazing opportunity to focus on the development of resources and curricula, and the planning and facilitation of trainings. There is nothing I would prefer to spend workdays doing, and I always appreciate new activities to try, new ways to view things, and different pieces to spice up my work.

The timing of the 2012 NASAGA Conference couldn’t have been better! I have already used many activities I learned or ideas inspired during our exciting and full week in Columbus. Some highlights:

- At a week-long conference and workshop in early December, I planned and co-facilitated a number of sessions and was able to use new ideas and perspectives to facilitate group cohesion. From ideas gathered during John Chen’s GPS-Powered Team Building activity, the description of Brian Remer’s graduate presentation with yarn, and Brian’s Grandma’s Attic wrap-up with cheerleaders on chairs, I created a one-room hot air balloon ride scavenger hunt to guide the course of our discussions (conducted amidst other sessions throughout the week).

- A 10-day trip to Nairobi, Kenya, included extensive observations of trainers. The pre-conference program, How to Design and Facilitate Games, Activities and Simulations, was a good refresher on key elements of trainer observation, such as considering personal training styles and abilities. For the training-of-trainers, which I planned and facilitated with my colleague, I designed a thorough room set-up activity with a voting system for all participants, modeled after activities from Sarah Spengler’s session on Using Games in an Accelerated Learning Environment. (The flight also gave me time to read through *The NASAGA Training Activity Book*—fabulous!)

Get involved with NASAGA!

- Share conference information with 10 colleagues
- Post a comment or question on the website forum discussion or respond to a blog post
- Use the Facebook Like button to put NASAGA news on your Facebook
- Plug NASAGA when you introduce yourself, or do a presentation or training
Scholarship Winner Speaks: Motivation, New Ideas? Got ‘Em Here! continued

- I am now engaged in a new, large curriculum project. Chock full of over 30 activity plans on topics I have worked on for years, the project has given me the opportunity to reference *The NASAGA Training Activity Book* many times. In addition, I am further developing the board game on cultural adjustment I developed for the pre-conference certification program on design and facilitation, for which I received valuable feedback from others during our final debrief.

At the NASAGA conference, I had many meaningful conversations with very interesting people. I met a number of authors I have read and admired for years. And while I probably took away far more invaluable lessons and ideas than I contributed, I enjoyed sharing what I felt were new perspectives and ideas. I am grateful for the opportunity the scholarship and the conference offered me in terms of professional development and personal inspiration alike.

So, in my 6-word summary of the 2012 NASAGA Conference and experience…

Motivation, new ideas? Got ’em here!

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**About the author**

Dani M. Abrams is the Training and Curriculum Development Specialist of Refugee and Immigrant Integration at the Center for Applied Linguistics. She has developed cross-cultural training tools and curricula and facilitated trainings in many different countries and cultures for the past twelve years. Ms. Abrams can be reached at dabrams@cal.org.

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See the following pages for information on Conference 2013!

- Conference flyer (reproducible)—p. 7
- Program description—p. 8
- Calls for proposals/posters—p. 10
- Schedule—p. 13
- Registration fees—p. 14
- Scholarship information—p. 15
NEWS FLASH! Scientists in a variety of fields have confirmed what NASAGANS have known for half a century! Play is good for the mind, body, and soul; among other benefits, it enhances learning, fosters productivity, and lies at the heart of creativity.

At the NASAGA 2013 Conference, we will do what we do best and engage our passion for play by design. We will continue our tradition of sharing exciting games, simulations, and other playful activities that broaden our practice as trainers, educators, consultants, and game designers. We will also explore our challenges for the future: ways in which we can add play to technology-led learning environments, use technology-driven games as tools for learning, and continue to spread the word of play as a bridge to learning. 2013 will not only highlight a bridge from play to learning, but also a bridge between classic and modern, face-to-face and high tech training. It will be a bridge to a bright NASAGA future.

There is no better place to experience play and learning than sunny Sarasota. This gem of a small city by the bay boasts a robust cultural scene including its own ballet, opera, symphony, and other performing arts, fascinating history, and lots of places to visit. There are world class beaches, art museums, botanical gardens, and, of course, the beauty of the place itself, tucked in beside the sparkling Sarasota Bay with the graceful bridge connecting the city and the islands. Our hotel, the Sarasota Hyatt Regency, is on the bay with views from every window. Be sure and bring your bathing suit! October is warm and beautiful and the hotel’s outdoor pool is very inviting.

NASAGA 2013 will be slightly different from ones in the recent past. We will have a full schedule of concurrent sessions, including an academic research poster session on Saturday, October 26, with the banquet, silent auction, and entertainment on Saturday evening. The banquet will be held in a charming boat house, right on the water and open to the balmy breezes. We will have the traditional Wednesday evening opening reception in a lovely room that opens to the pool area—swimming allowed! We are also working on a choice of field trips to places of interest for NASAGANs on Friday afternoon.

Hope you can come!
www.nasaga.org
We’re working on a very exciting program for this conference. This year, for the first time (at least recently), we are inviting students and researchers to submit proposals for a peer-reviewed poster session to share their findings on theory and application of games and simulations for learning. This is a reach back to years ago when academicians came together at our annual conference to share their discoveries on theory and application of games and sims for learning. While we have evolved over the years into a community of primarily practitioners, theory still informs our practice, and it is fitting to integrate current research into our annual conference. The Call for Posters (see page 11) has gone out and can be accessed on our website.

Call for Proposals for 90-minute interactive concurrent sessions (see page 10) also has gone out and we’ve already received some very interesting proposals. We look forward to innovative and diverse sessions this year.

There are two full-day preconference sessions already confirmed.

**Games for Learning: Design, Theory and Facilitation:**  Thiagi, Raja Thiagarajan, and Brian Remer

This full-day workshop explores the basic concepts of the design and facilitation of face-to-face and online games for educational and training purposes. Whether high tech, low tech, or no tech, game designers must understand game design theory and the common elements of games, such as narrative, metaphor, competition, and mechanics. Any game can become a learning event when a leader helps players learn through effective facilitation and debriefing. Raja is an expert in designing on-line frame games and Brian is a highly creative designer of games and activities of all types. Together, they will lead participants in a diverse and engaging game design learning experience. Thiagi is the most creative, humorous, and effective facilitator on the planet today. Participants cannot help but develop their best facilitation skills under his delightful leadership.

**Certificate Option.** Participants who choose to add the certificate option to this workshop will tailor their conference experience in order to apply concepts learned during the preconference to a work-related game design or facilitation project of their own. They will (1) attend the preconference; (2) select 3-5 sessions throughout the conference that will help expand specific knowledge and skills; and (3) design and present a game or facilitation project at the end of the conference. Successful participants will receive a Certificate of Completion of Game Design and Facilitation.

**Altering Reality Through Play: Designing Alternate Reality Games (ARG) for Learning and Training:** Anastasia Salter

Anastasia’s ARG design session at last year’s conference was so well received that we have asked her to come back and do a full-day session at this year’s conference. Last year, some of us walked into her 90-minute session with no idea as to what an ARG was and walked away with the beginning of an exciting game design. Imagine what we can accomplish over a full day! Come with your situation and audience in mind and you’ll leave with,
at least, the ability to design and facilitate your own game. Some of you will leave with an actual full blown design!

We are planning two choices for Game Night. Judee Blohm and Sandy Fowler will lead participants in the classic simulation, BaFa BaFa. Originally planned to be a selection instrument for overseas posting by the military, this simulation instead has been one of the most successful preparations for international assignments of students, government, and business personnel for decades. It has also been used to raise awareness of one’s own reaction to differentness that persons may experience in any setting, such as doctors with patients. In this simulation, participants divide into two groups, each learning the values and behaviors of a different culture. Through a series of observations and interactions with each other, participants explore their observations and perceptions, feelings, and strategies for learning and adapting. It is a powerful shared experience that can be debriefed for various learning objectives.

In addition, we’re working on a “game jam” for that evening. Stay tuned for more details!

Friday is going to be a really fun and interesting day, as well. We are planning to begin the day with two three-hour sessions: one will be another classic game or simulation and the other will be an ARG or another type of contemporary game. These parallel sessions honor our commitment to celebrate traditional games along with experiencing the new.

We are planning a number of outdoor activity options on Friday afternoon so that participants may enjoy the wonderful town, great weather, and exquisite setting of Sarasota on the Bay, while still engaging in conference offerings. We are developing a field trip for science and other educators. We have in the works a geocaching excursion and we hope to also have some outdoor game activities.

This will be an amazing conference. It is fun to be organizing it and I am sure it will be really enjoyable and productive to attend it as well.

Kate Koski
Conference chair
Call for Proposals & Call for Posters

NASAGA CONFERENCE
Sarasota, Florida
October 23–26, 2013
Hyatt Regency

Call for Proposals

We are calling for proposals for 90-minute interactive, energetic, lively, and original concurrent sessions that explore ways in which we can add play to technology-led learning environments, use technology-driven games as tools for learning and, of course, use playful activities for face-to-face teaching, learning, and leading groups.

If you are interested in presenting, submit your conference proposal as a Word document on or before April 15, 2013. Be sure to include the following information on each proposal submitted.

Who Are You?*
Name (as you would like to see it in the program)
Email address
City, Country
Telephone number (for conversation about your proposal only, if necessary)
A brief 100-word bio
* Repeat the information for each co-presenter.

What’s Your Session?
Title
Make it informative and catchy. Limit to 40 characters, including spaces.
Session Description
In 100 words or fewer, describe your session. The descriptions help participants make an informed choice about the sessions they wish to attend.
Session Objectives
List two or three bulleted items to specify what participants will achieve, what they will be able to do as a result of attending your session.
Session Method
Identify whether your session will use demonstration, panel discussion, activity-and-debrief, etc. Keep it as interactive as possible.
Audio Visual Requirements
All rooms will have one flip chart. Specify any other items you will need.
Call for Proposals & Call for Posters, continued

**Time**
Concurrent sessions last 90 minutes.

**Who Should Attend Your Session?**

**Level**
Specify beginner, intermediate, or advanced.

**Job functions**
Such as trainer, facilitator, consultant, or researcher

**Format**
Send your proposal as a Word document to proposals@nasaga.org

**Deadline**
Please ensure your proposal reaches us on or before April 15, 2013.

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**Call for Posters**

**Games for Learning and Training: Research Poster Session at NASAGA 2013**

The North American Simulation and Gaming Association (NASAGA) is a community of practice for trainers, educators, game designers, and facilitators working on the design and implementation of serious games, simulations, and other experiential activities. For decades, NASAGA has been promoting professional networking, providing training and education, and advocating the use of experiential activities to industry and academia through its annual conference.

This year's conference will include a peer-reviewed poster session for researchers to share their findings with a broad community of trainers and educators. NASAGA invites proposals from researchers working on the theory and application of games and simulations for learning challenges, including but not limited to active learning methods to increase engagement, retention, and performance. We invite the submission of 300-500 word abstracts for poster presentations on all topics related to games and learning.

Suggested topics include:

- Process of educational game design

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Photo courtesy of Edmond Chang
http://faculty.washington.edu/changed/
Call for Proposals & Call for Posters, continued

- Simulations and training
- Challenges to educational games
- Best practices for assessing games-based learning
- Domain and skills-based game examples
- “Gamification” and learning
- Mapping learning outcomes to game mechanics
- Serious and persuasive games

As NASAGA supports work on learning through games and experiential activities using any media, we particularly encourage researchers interested in non-digital games and simulations to attend. We invite the submission of ongoing and in-progress research by faculty, graduate students, and independent researchers across disciplines.

Abstracts are due April 15th by email to proposals@nasaga.org. In addition to the 300-500 word abstract, all proposals must include the following information:

- Name (as you would like to see it in the program)
- Email address
- Name of academic institution, city, and country
- A brief 100-word bio

Repeat the information for each co-presenter.

All presenters will be notified of their status by May 15th. Posters will be on display all-day on Saturday, October 26th, with a scheduled session for lightning presentations (3-5 minute talks) of all featured research. A one-day registration will be available for presenters interested in attending Saturday only. Poster presenters are encouraged to bring a laptop to showcase electronic work or physical copies of games created or examined during research. Posters should not exceed 36” x 48”. Some posters will be featured in a special issue of SIMAGES, NASAGA’s on-line publication.

CALLING ALL GAMERS
## 2013 Conference Schedule

### Wednesday, October 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-12:00</td>
<td>Preconference Session A: Games for Learning: Design, Theory, Facilitation (with Certificate Option)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch on own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-4:30</td>
<td>Preconference sessions continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-6:15</td>
<td>Newcomers’ Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30-8:30</td>
<td>Welcome Reception - Poolside</td>
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### Thursday, October 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast (provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-12:00</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch on own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-3:00</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-5:00</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-7:30</td>
<td>EXPO and networking with cash bar and hors d’oeuvres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30-9:30</td>
<td>GAMES NIGHT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Classic simulation: BaFa BaFa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Open play game jam</td>
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</table>

### Friday, October 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast (provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-12:00</td>
<td>Session 1–Classic Simulation or Game</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Session 2–Recent Simulation or Game</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00-1:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch on own</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30-4:30</td>
<td>Option 1: Field trip</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Option 2: Outdoor gaming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Option 3: Informal game jam at hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30 on</td>
<td>Free time on own</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shuttle available to beach and downtown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Game jam at hotel</td>
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### Saturday, October 26

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast (provided)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-10:30</td>
<td>Keynote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:30</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions, including Poster Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:45 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch at hotel (provided)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-3:15</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:45-5:15</td>
<td>Concurrent Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Cash bar/Silent auction</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00-10:00</td>
<td>Dinner/Live auction/Conference Closure</td>
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## Registration Fees

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<tr>
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<th><strong>EARLY BIRD</strong></th>
<th><strong>REGULAR</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(TO AUGUST 15)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONFERENCE ONLY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday Evening Reception through Saturday Evening Banquet</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups* and Non-Profits**</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students*</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFERENCE &amp; PRECONFERENCE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday through Saturday Evening Banquet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>$700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups* and Non-Profits**</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students***</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>375</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CERTIFICATE OPTION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Includes Conference &amp; Preconference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td>$800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presenters</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups* and Non-Profits**</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students***</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>475</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ONE-DAY OPTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conference: Any one day</td>
<td>$125</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday with Banquet</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>200</td>
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</table>

* Group rate is available to groups of three or more from the same organization.
** Non-profit rate is available to full-time employees of not-for-profit organizations.
*** Student rate is available to full-time students currently enrolled in an educational institution. Proof of enrollment is required.
Scholarships & First-Time Attendee Incentive Awards

Deadline for Application: June 15, 2013

NASAGA is a network of professionals working on the design, implementation, and evaluation of games and simulations to improve learning results in education and training. Each year NASAGA holds an annual conference. The goal of the scholarships and first-time incentive awards is to allow more to participate in the annual conference by paying for the registration fee portion of their conference expenses.

Description
The scholarship covers the conference fees for Wednesday evening through Saturday night, October 22-26, 2013. Those receiving awards are responsible for their travel and accommodations at the conference hotel. They are also responsible for paying for a preconference workshop or certificate program on October 22nd, if they wish to attend one.

Eligibility
Anyone is eligible who is a first-time attendee. Priority, however, is given to:

- Students who study in the fields of education, educational technology, training, adult education, and related fields.
- Students presenting at the conference.
- Students or teachers who have designed games or simulations.
- Students or teachers who have a current project related to games or simulations.

Notification: All candidates will receive award decisions by July 30, 2013.

Application
Please provide the following information concisely in a Word document.

Part one: Contact Information
Provide us with the following contact information:

- Your name
- Mailing address
- Phone
- Email address
- Name of organization or work affiliation, if applicable
- Educational institution or school district, if applicable
- Address of educational institution or school, if applicable
- Field of study (education, educational technology, etc.) or teaching disciplines
- Degree (undergraduate, graduate, or other: please specify)
Scholarships & First-Time Attendee Incentive Awards, continued

- Student status (part-time or full-time), if applicable
- Indicate if you are interested in a full or partial incentive award. If partial, what would you like covered?

Part two: Interest
Please include a short essay describing your interest in simulations, games, or other interactive learning. For example: Have you used games/simulations for education/training purposes? Have you developed games/simulations or other interactive training methods? How do you plan to use games/simulations in your work? Limit your essay to 500 words.

Part three: Attachments
Please include the following:

1) If applicable, provide a proof of your status as a student in a recognized institution (including your status as part-time or full-time). This should be on the letterhead of your school. A scanned copy is acceptable.

2) Two references
Please provide two reference letters explaining why you are a good candidate to receive this scholarship. Include their contact information. The letters are expected to come from professors if you are a student or current co-workers or supervisors if you are not a student.

3) Resume
Include your resume.

Part four: Send
Send by e-mail to: Marla Allen at marlaallen@aol.com. If you have questions, contact Marla at 704.957.1400.

Part five: Telephone Interview
You may receive a phone call regarding your application.
You may have heard the term “Gamification” and wondered what it was all about, or have seen a few examples of it and decided it wasn’t of interest. You may also be surprised to learn that you are already an expert in Meaningful Gamification. The purpose of this brief article is to explain what gamification is, how Meaningful Gamification is different, and how you can take your skills as a trainer and apply them to Meaningful Gamification.

One definition of gamification (according to Sebastian Deterding) is the application of game design elements to a real-world setting. While the term is only a few years old, the concept has been around for much longer. In most modern applications of gamification, a system is created that tracks points for specific desired behaviors in the real world. Elements from role-playing games such as levels are used to make it easier to conceptualize the number of points that a player has. Leaderboards are used to compare players to each other and fuel a competitive spirit. Achievements are goals that may not align with the main goals of the game, yet encourage players to explore the game mechanisms in specific ways. Badges are ways that participants can display to others the things that they have accomplished.

The term that I have coined for this type of gamification is BLAP—Badges, Levels & Leaderboards, Achievements and Points. BLAP gamification is based upon the concept of providing rewards to change behavior. For an organization seeking short-term change, BLAP gamification can work, but if the rewards are taken away, then the behavior can also disappear. Most of the focus on gamification is on this reward-based gamification because it does have a short-term impact and is relatively easy to use. (Of course, you might also have the same impact if you offer free beer, pizza, or candy to change behavior, but “beerification” is harder to get past HR.)

My focus has been on thinking deeper than this. Game elements provide a much richer world of interactions than simply point systems. In fact, if you consider that a game is a form of play structured by rules and points, BLAP gamification focuses on the rules and points and leaves the play behind. Therefore, I have worked to create and develop theories and models to support Meaningful Gamification. The idea of Meaningful Gamification is that you use game design elements to help participants find deeper meaning in a real-world setting. Rewards are used infrequently, and are used as signposts to a player-created goal if used at all.

The concepts behind meaningful gamification are the same concepts that we use in creating engaging teaching and training experiences. Deci & Ryan’s Self-Determination Theory is at the heart of it, supported by theories of Situational Relevance, Universal Design for Learning, Player-Generated Content, and User-Centered Design. The concepts behind Play and Participatory Museums are useful in creating a gamification space that learners choose to engage with on their own terms. An underlying design concept behind meaningful gamification is that the needs of the user are placed before the needs of the organization. All of these things are concepts with which members of NASAGA have worked over the years.

I created a RECIPE for Meaningful Gamification as a framework to help designers think about how to use something other than point-based reward systems. The letters of RECIPE stand for:

- **Reflection**—Encourage participants to connect this activity to their own past and areas of interest.
Gaining your Meaningful Gamification Badge, continued

- **Exposition**–Using a story that makes sense for the activity can help participants engage more deeply.

- **Choice**–Giving participants the power to decide what they want to work on and how to approach it.

- **Information**–Ensuring the participants understand why they are doing what they are doing instead of just awarding points.

- **Play**–Creating a safe space where participants can choose to explore boundaries or not (a key concept of play is that it is optional).

- **Engagement**–Creating spaces where participants can engage with each other and bring in non-participants to make the experience richer.

None of these concepts are new to NASAGA, and, in fact, much of my thinking and writing about meaningful gamification comes from what I have learned through NASAGA. You may be wondering, “Well, Scott, why should I bother to use this gamification term for something I’ve been doing for much longer?” Many people dislike the gamification term; Jane Mcgonigal uses the term “Gameful Design” instead.

The problem with giving up on the term gamification and leaving it for the reward-based design is that those who are seeking a gamification system will have no chance of finding our more meaningful way of using game design elements. If we use and embrace the gamification term (and add another word in front of it to discriminate reward-based gamification from meaningful gamification), then we have the ability to draw attention to what we have been doing with games. If someone does a search on Google for gamification, and we have refused to use that word, then that person will not find our alternative.

To conclude, my goal in writing this short article is to make you aware of gamification and to encourage you to start using the term “Meaningful Gamification” for what you are doing. Help educate our clients and students that there are more game design elements out there than point systems that can be used to create long-term change. The more of us who present the alternatives to reward-based gamification, the better the chance that someone starting down a gamification path can find that game elements can be more than just points and badges; that they can be used to help create meaning as well.

If you’d like to learn more about the concepts I presented here, you can find articles I’ve written and videos I’ve created at [http://becauseplaymatters.com/pubs](http://becauseplaymatters.com/pubs). Finally, if you need some research about the problems behind reward-based systems, take a look at *Punished by Rewards* by Alfie Kohn or *Drive* by Daniel Pink.

**About the author**

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STEM Education: An Epic Battle
By Melissa Peterson

If you have paid attention to education news lately, you’ll see a lot of buzzwords flung around about the state of American schools. It seems that phrases like “education reform” and “No Child Left Behind” and STEM are in the news daily. In general, none of these articles are optimistic about the state of education in the United States today.

One of the big challenges confronting our education system is STEM education, or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math education. Last summer, Forbes reported on the findings of the National Assessment of Education Progress science exam, with the headline “Why Aren’t America’s Students Smart Enough to Handle Science?” They found that while our middle and high school students could perform and interpret some simple lab work, they could not design experiments to answer further questions about a topic. This may not seem that important, since it is clearly a higher level reasoning skill, until you realize that most students decide whether or not to pursue STEM careers during high school. In the United States, only a third of the students graduate from a STEM program in college, compared to over half the students in Japan and China. It also is important for students to have enough grounding in science to be able to assess the arguments of those making important science and technology policy decisions within our government. It is an integral part of what educators call 21st century skills, preparing our students for making decisions in the future.

Despite the inflammatory headline, the problem here is not the intelligence levels of the students. Nor is it due to bad teachers and schools, no matter what the most vocal reformers would like to tell you. The most likely culprit is the increased use over the last decade of standardized testing as a way to assess our teachers and schools. STEM education is, by its very nature, a process heavy task which requires students to use procedural memory and reasoning. Neither of these is easy to assess in the standardized environment which has been created in schools since the No Child Left Behind act was passed in 2002. It is hard to “teach to the test” for STEM. Schools are judged almost entirely on verbal and math scores, so science, technology and engineering, as well as practical applications of math, often fall to the side as less important for meeting the expectations set by the act. In fact, due to the similar neglect of music and arts programs in schools, a new acronym has been introduced recently—STEAM, which integrates the arts into the picture.

Some of you, by this point, are undoubtedly jumping up and down and yelling, “But, isn’t this what we do? Isn’t this where experiential learning really shines?” This is completely true, and since the National Science Standards were initially put in place in 1996, STEM education has become more hands-on and experiential. With a new set of standards currently in revision and poised for implementation in March of this year, one might think that we are headed down the right track. One of the main conceptual shifts being implemented in the Next Generation Science Standards is an emphasis on real-world science practice and core concepts that are useful in all four of the disciplines of STEM. This shift is expected to not only give students a greater grasp on the reasoning needed to do science, but to also emphasize technology and engineering as key integrative parts of STEM. In the past, most of the emphasis has been placed on science and math as separate entities, rather than related disciplines.
Clearly, real-world practice and an integrated curriculum are not going to be any easier to teach for a standardized test. So while experiential learning should remain the key way for students to learn STEM, the problem remains of finding the time to allow students to explore and learn when your school’s funding and your job are contingent on their scores on verbal and math tests rather than STEM performance. Fortunately, there are many teachers who are passionate about this sort of learning, and there are also many support structures and tools available for teachers or parents who want to promote STEM learning both in-school and outside of school.

When you look at the more traditional methods of hands-on exploratory STEM learning, sometimes known as “wet labs,” most schools have the facilities to do these sorts of activities. However, many science teachers were not taught these methods and, sometimes in the younger grades, the teachers are not necessarily trained to be science teachers at all. Informal institutions such as science museums, zoos, and aquariums try to fill this gap in a number of ways—they may partner with the school district to offer continuing education credits for teachers to learn to do hands-on STEM learning in the classroom, as well as offer laboratory programming for school groups who visit. Many of these institutions build their exhibits to be a space for exploratory learning, so the visit itself may provide students with the space to play with STEM and learn about it outside of didactic lectures and hurried demonstrations in school.

On top of informal science settings’ efforts however, there is a growing movement towards games and simulation-based interventions in STEM learning. The Pericles Group have been creating semester-long alternate reality role-playing games to engage students with biology, in Operation BIOME, and Latin, in Operation LAPIS. Students collaboratively work on narrative-based missions which are linked to skills and knowledge that are part of the curriculum. These games involve practical use of the curriculum, rather than rote memorization or gamification principles like badge collection, empowering students to learn reasoning skills as well as fact-based knowledge. Similarly, free games like EteRNA and FoldIt, which were developed to allow lay people to assist in biomedical research, can be used to allow students to play with more complex concepts related to biology and medical science, and some classroom teachers are using them to do so. Upcoming SimCity 2013 is already being positioned by Electronic Arts to encourage teachers to use the simulation game as an exploratory STEM space with students.

As these efforts to build STEM education tools and games become more prevalent, and STEM education becomes easier for teachers to implement within the current system, our students will benefit and the backward drift of their performance on important reasoning tasks should reverse. We can only hope that this will happen, as STEM and STEAM education are an integral part of human knowledge and we owe it to our students to adequately prepare them for what they will face.

For More Information

National Assessment of Education Progress Report:

No Child Left Behind’s effect on students:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/02/09/a-warning-to-college-profs-from-a-high-schoo
Role Play: What’s Not to Like?
By Skip Cole

The following article relates to both stated “fear” and “loathing” of role playing that Skip explored in his monthly newsletter “Sea Change News” in December. It is based on comments about role playing and a discussion he hosted on Facebook. We asked if he would like to share some ideas with NASAGAns. –Editors

What’s not to like? Turns out, quite a lot.

Don’t get me wrong. I love role play. And just by way of clarification here, ‘role play’ for me is anytime you are having multiple people playing the roles of other people: John playing the role of the Secretary General of the United Nations, for example. We have run them with people playing all sorts of different kinds of roles, and have used them as a tool to prepare people for their dealings with other human beings in highly complex situations.

Role play can provide real opportunities to help people grow and incorporate their learning directly into whom they are. No other tool I know of allows one to see so nearly through another person’s eyes.

But many of the people we encounter in the classroom do not immediately appreciate the idea of being in a role play. To be honest, I was kind of surprised to learn this. So I wanted to share what we have found with you. Below are some of the reasons why people don’t like role plays, or particular aspects of role plays, and some ideas that may help you out, if you find yourself trying to work with someone who really does not want to be in the game.

Ailment 1: Fear of Looking Foolish
For many people, a role play does not so much present a ‘learning opportunity’ as it presents an ‘opportunity to look foolish in front of others.’ Few people like that. So concerns over looking well in front of others can be a real issue...
Role Play: What’s Not to Like? continued

for some of the participants.

Potential Cures
Setting up a safe space for people to play in is essential. People need to know that everyone is allowed to explore out of the box thinking and that always entails taking some risk. Getting everyone to agree that they will be supportive of each other, and not judge each other based on actions taken while ‘in character,’ can go a long way to help diminish this fear.

There are a few other things that you may want to briefly point out before the role play begins. First, in the game it may be required for some players to do seemingly nonsensical things, because that is what the real-world character might actually do. So have the players agree not to judge each other based on actions taken in the game. Just roll with what happens and think about whether or not this is all realistic. The ‘thinking’ part is what we really want the players to do.

You may also point out that the reason we role play is to make our mistakes in a safe environment, instead of in the real world where the consequences may be grave. The fear of messing up in the real world may help players overcome the fear of messing up in a ‘game’ world. (This is, by the way, why the military does so much war-gaming. Much better to make mistakes on paper and in front of peers, than in front of an enemy intent on killing you.)

Ailment 2: Fear of the New
Sadly, role play is not a typical part of modern educational curriculum. Eventually, if the human race is to survive and not wipe itself out, many of us believe that it will have to become so. But right now we are still living in the ‘dark ages.’ We live in a time when people are allowed to try out dumb ideas and suffer the consequences in the real world. True, for many physical processes we do have simulations, but for things that really matter, like trying to get a large number of real world human beings to do something, the only thing we can do is to give it a go.

Potential Cures
You can ask your player to imagine that he or she is an actor (such as George Clooney or Meryl Streep) playing the role. It may also help them to think of the role play as a kind of a multi-sided form of debating. One nice thing about helping someone tackle something new is that it will only be completely new to them the first time. After this role play, they will have more experience in a form of training that is only going to grow in acceptance and usage.

Ailment 3: Fear of Wasting Time
Many people in our culture mistake busyness for productivity. During a role play, there may be long periods of time when the players are forced to just sit and think. (Oh-My-God, They are thinking!) This is a good thing. But in our world of hyper-connected, 24/7, always on access to instant information gratification, people may not like the slow reflective pace that role play can sometimes present.

Players who don’t engage, who are continuously looking at their cell phone or the clock, are sending the signal that

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1It was a part of ancient educational curriculum. Plato is quoted as saying “You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.” I agree.
they don’t value this exercise. Unfortunately, this attitude can be infectious.

**Potential Cure**

Pacing is very important to regulate in a role play. Things should never go boringly slow, or frustratingly fast, without a good reason. One really needs to be on the lookout for players who seem to be disengaging and find a way to bring them back in. It can be amazing how much effect one little message from control (the leader), such as “Character X [the one the dis-engaged player is supposed to be playing] is about to be fired” can have.

It’s also good to remind people that no matter how fast and efficient they may be, one always needs to make sure that one is playing the right game. And playing the right game means knowing what game everyone else thinks that they are playing. To get maximum effect, a player really needs to step into the role and push all distractions aside.

Confiscating cell phones can work too.

**Ailment 4: Refusal to Play a Role**

We have had occasions where someone refused to play the role assigned to them. Often this has been because they have strong feelings against either the person they will be playing in the role or the organization to which the fictional character belongs. I have heard something along the lines of “I hate that organization, and I refuse to play any member of it” more than once.2

**Potential Cures**

Understanding the root of these feelings is essential, and you may not have enough time to get to those feelings when the game is beginning. You may need to switch players or have a facilitator play one of the roles. Pre-assigning roles to players (and getting feedback from the players that they acknowledge and accept their role) can go a long way toward avoiding game-day surprises.

Some people fear that putting oneself in the role of another person will legitimize that other person’s perspective. (Not everyone is up to putting themselves into the shoes of a child molester or a camp guard at Dachau.) Feelings of fear and vulnerability may overcome the player if they feel they are being forced to play someone who they fundamentally disagree with.

If you do have time to work with them, you can explain that playing the role of someone else does not mean that you agree with that person. And also that successfully dealing with the ‘bad guys’ frequently requires an understanding of how they see the world, at least enough to be able to predict what they may do. But if you think you are pulling someone too far out of their comfort zone, you may want to thank them for listening to your arguments, then move them to some other task.

By the way, the organization hosting the role play may be very happy that you have helped uncovered these strong feelings. Knowing, for instance, that Person A detests Organization B, may be valuable information. If that is the case, Person A should **never** be sent to negotiate with Organization B.

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2For a more in depth exploration of this topic, check out our Facebook page ([http://www.facebook.com/groups/162549447105518/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/162549447105518/))
Ailment 5: Fear of Trauma
Okay, maybe most players don’t go into a role play worried that they may have an experience that will give them nightmares for years. I bring this up here because it is not a completely ridiculous fear. Some of the subjects who participated in Stanley Milgram’s role play experiments on obedience to authority were actually traumatized and hence those experiments can never be done again. (By the way, if you are unfamiliar with those experiments, please stop reading this humble article right now and read about them. They open a big window into how we humans really are.)

Additionally, since the incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is not negligible, one also has to be on the lookout for that. Some of your participants may be in a more vulnerable state than they let on.

Potential Cures
At the start of the role play, let people know that you really want them to walk away from this experience with something new, that you really want this to be a meaningful and potentially transformational experience for everyone concerned. But real transformations can be risky and confusing things. If things ever do start getting too intense for them, they should feel free to take a break, step out of character, and communicate to you how they are feeling.

This is not an exhaustive list. If you know more reasons why people may be adverse to role plays, or more ideas on how to deal with them, please share them.

Conclusion
People may have legitimate, and not so legitimate, reasons for not wanting to be in your role play. Looking at the smiling faces on the morning the game begins may tell you nothing: people almost always smile if you smile first. But beneath those smiles may be very turbulent and unhappy seas. Your job as a facilitator is to penetrate beyond the smiles and get to know the real people, and help each of them step their game up to the next level.

This is hard to do. I hope I have given you some good ideas to work with here.

About the author
Ronald “Skip” Cole, formerly a Senior Program Officer at the United States Institute of Peace, is the founder of Sea Change Simulations, LLC. His company exists to help bring role play back to the classroom and to keep it realistic and relevant in today’s highly networked world of instant communication. According to Skip, his company is the world’s only provider of an open source platform that enables ‘Technology Enhanced Role Plays’ or TERPs. Their platform enables everyone to easily create, conduct, play in, or share a TERP. Contact Skip at Skip@SeaChangeSimulations.com.

3A good starting point is here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milgram_experiment

Do you know a unique training resource NASAGAns might like to know about? Write a review for SIMAGES and send to Brian Remer brian@thefirefly.org
Ian Mahoney: Designing Games Since Elementary School

By Brian Remer

Ian Mahoney is a recent graduate of Marlboro College with a degree in Game Studies. He is an avid designer and player of games. He is particularly interested in the many different ways that games can be used and the wide variety of experiences they can create. Find the game Elements that he created on page 33. –Editors

SIMAGES: How did you become interested in designing games?

Ian Mahoney: I have been designing games since I was in elementary school. Every day at recess I would want to play a game of some sort or other, be it Tetherball, Tag, Pickle, Wall Ball, or a host of other games we played back then. For most of these games, I would be constantly modifying the rules to make the game more interesting or create a new experience. I invented Head-Ball, which was like Tetherball but you could only hit the ball with your head; Herd Tag, in which all of the players who were not 'it' had to stay together in one big group; or Vampire, which involved teams of vampires and hunters and had rules which seemed to change every day. Whenever I read books or watched movies, I was more interested in the games that the characters were playing than the overarching plot. In my senior year in high school, I started studying Game Theory. By the time I was in college, I'd found BoardGameGeek.com, where I read about all manner of exciting games, which I started purchasing and playing on my own.

SIMAGES: How would you describe the games you have designed? What categories do they fit into?

IM: All of the games I've designed in recent years have been board or card games. They all have a heavy strategic focus, rather than being based on luck. I also tend to design two-player games. I'm particularly interested in adapting existing games and systems into board games while keeping the core experience the same, so many of my games are simulations or adaptations of other systems.

SIMAGES: What is it you find so interesting about games that you designed your degree major around them?

IM: Games are the most versatile type of artistic expression that I've ever encountered. The experiences that games have the potential to create are simply more personal, more intense, and more complex than other types of art or entertainment. There are numerous reasons for this, but the most important one to me is that games allow the player to take ownership of the experience, rather than observing a static creation, like a book or a movie. Games are a form of experience through which people are active participants rather than passive participants. This alone made them very compelling to me.

SIMAGES: I’ve heard you talk about a “magic circle” of play. What does that mean and how does it work?

IM: Johan Huizinga, who wrote about games and play in his book Homo Ludens, said that play takes us out of the real world, it has a clear space in which it takes place (both physically and temporally), and it has rules (though they need not be explicit). Huizinga called the space where play happens the ‘magic circle,’ a term which is now...
commonly used in game studies to describe spaces of play and games.

An example of Huizinga's notion of play is religious ritual. Rituals have a very clear magic circle in which they take place, often having spaces and times specifically set aside for them, they are separate from day-to-day activities, and they have many rules associated with them, both implicit and explicit.

SIMAGES: We don’t typically think of these rituals as “play!”

IM: No but this concept of play is all around us. As another example, performance is also very much a kind of play, as Huizinga defines it. A theatrical performance is even called a play, and the actors are called players. The stage and the theater together form a magic circle. Even the separation of the audience from the stage is a kind of magic circle of its own. Though this boundary is less solid, it is still a boundary, as evidenced by the term 'breaking the fourth wall' to describe the actors speaking directly to the audience. There are rules at a theater as well, such as don't talk during the performance and turn off your cell phone.

Musical concerts also have a magic circle, transport the listeners beyond their ordinary lives, and have many implicit rules, though these rules are different at a classical orchestra than they are at a rock concert.

SIMAGES: This suggests that any situation can be play because there is always a set of social rules, a context for what is happening, physical and temporal boundaries, and so forth.

IM: One of the requirements Huizinga had for the magic circle is that it separates play from everyday life. That is to say that if you are simply going about your business, getting dressed, washing the dishes, walking the dog, you are not participating in play. A magic circle only exists if it pulls you out of that experience in some way. But the definition Huizinga lays out is not absolute and is very open to interpretation. You could very well use it to argue that we are always 'playing' in some way or other.

Another important thing to note about Huizinga's concept of play is that play can be serious. By calling religion and performance play, Huizinga is not lessening their importance, but describing the experiences they produce and the connections between them. Not all play is serious (far from it), but it can be serious and is often carried out in a very serious way. This notion of play does not even need to be connected to the idea of fun. Play can be fun, and the context of games is almost always supposed to be fun, but play is play whether it's fun or not.

SIMAGES: Can you say more about the relationship you see between games and play?

IM: Sure, in this concept of play, games are clearly a subset of play. Not everything that is play is a game, or we should start calling religion, music, and theater games, but every game involves play.

Games have a clear magic circle, rules, and they distract people from regular life. Even things that are a crucial part of life for some people can be play. A professional basketball player, for instance, is still 'playing' basketball when he competes in the NBA. It is very serious for him, but is also still very much play. The moment the game starts, each and every player is transported (metaphorically speaking) into another space in which the game is everything.
could be argued that the magic circle is even stronger in games that are more serious. A man playing a high-stakes poker game is likely much more immersed in the game than he would be if he were playing for peanuts.

There is another interpretation of play which contrasts the term more distinctly from a game. The idea of this interpretation is that play in the abstract is more about freedom and exploration than about rules. A child building something out of blocks is play by this definition, as is a student drawing patterns on a notebook, but neither of these things are games. In this interpretation, games are structured play. That is, if you take play and add rules and goals, then you get a game.

**SIMAGES:** That idea of exploration through play is important for learning, which is of interest to many NASAGA members. What thoughts do you have about designing games for learning?

**IM:** Designing educational games is a tricky thing to do well. On the one hand, games allow players to explore and learn in an immersive and exciting way. On the other hand, a good game should allow the player to partially create their own experience and it is hard to do that while also accomplishing a single specific goal. In my opinion, there are two major ways to design an educational game. One is to use the game simply as a structure or incentive to get across the education, such as making a quiz game. The other strategy is to create a game which teaches the player through the experience that the game creates, such as a game in which the player is an astronaut and has to experience firsthand what that is like. The former is much easier to make and is better at getting specific information across, but is rarely actually fun, thereby defeating the whole purpose of making it into a game in the first place. The latter requires a great deal of time and effort and tends to result in different players learning different things from the experience. There are good and bad examples of both, but the most important thing about games for education is that the game needs to be compelling. If people don't want to play it then they might as well get the information in a more straightforward manner.

**SIMAGES:** How do you go about designing a game–especially if you want to make sure it has a strong magic circle?

**IM:** I almost always start with an experience. I consider what experience I am trying to create with the game and what elements I can use to capture that experience. Sometimes this is easy, and sometimes it has to sift around in my head for a while before the right concepts fit together.

Once I have an idea of what I want the game to be, I want to start testing it right away. The primary process that I use is iterative and involves taking the simplest of the game's mechanics and beginning to test them long before the game itself is complete. This allows me to catch any problems with these core mechanics before adding in more complex elements. If you don't start testing a game early, then by the time you do start testing it the system may already be too complex to modify the core elements without drastically changing the rest of the system.

I like to think about a game as a toy with a goal. So, that's where I start when designing a game. I'll play with the system of the game and see if it's fun. A game is much better if the actions that I can do with the toy at its core are enjoyable.

**SIMAGES:** So to invent a game, you begin by playing.
IM: Yes. What is it the players do, how do they interact with the system, and is that fun? If the actions being carried out are enjoyable, even before a goal has been instituted, that's a good sign that the game will be enjoyable.

From there I think about elegance, which can be difficult to define in a game. Essentially, elegance is the depth of strategy and immersion in a game divided by the complexity of the rules and the length of the game. A game which is strategically deep and engaging, but very simple to explain and quick to play is an elegant game. A game which takes a really long time to explain and play, but doesn't have very much depth once you learn to play it, is a very inelegant game.

SIMAGES: What else do you consider while in the design process?

IM: Well, the idea of creating an experience is central to the role of creating a game. I would even go so far as to say that when one is designing a game, one is really trying to design an experience, and that the game is merely the medium through which that experience is created.

Strong visual images help players become immersed in a game but, since I’m not a visual artist, I concentrate on the mechanics and systems of the game. My goal is to try to create an experience with the mechanics alone and maybe some thematic naming of certain game elements.

SIMAGES: Games can fulfill many different functions such as fun, decision-making, socializing, educating, storytelling, creative expression, or simulating complex systems. What’s the most important game function for you?

IM: That depends entirely on the context in which I'm playing the game. Most of the time I play games just to have fun, but part of why I think that games are fun is the stories that they create, the decisions I have to make, the experiences that I have, and the chance to hang out with my friends. All of these functions tie so closely together that I can't isolate any one that's more important.

SIMAGES: We have a description of your game ELEMENTS later in this issue. This is a game that you’ve designed for the fun factor. Describe a game you’ve developed for educational purposes?

IM: While I was a student at Marlboro College, I designed a number of games in order to express information that I had learned. One example of this is a game I called Chronicles of Britain. In Chronicles of Britain, each player takes on the role of the ruler of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom. The goal of the game is to have your kingdom be remembered as the greatest of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. However, the mechanics of the game are designed to make the player think about what one of these rulers might have actually had to worry about. For one thing, the borders between kingdoms are quite vague, so you essentially have to bribe people to get them to be loyal to you. You also have to raise an army from scratch, which is difficult since most of the people in your kingdom just want to farm and be with their family. On top of that, there are people traveling across Britain converting the common folk to Christianity, leading to religious turmoil if you don't convert as well. All of this combined with famine, Viking raiders, and infighting amongst the kingdoms themselves gives you a lot to think about.
This game serves a couple of purposes in terms of education. On the one hand, it teaches about life in ancient Britain, but it also is a game about how history is taught. Classically, history has often been about wars. You learn the dates of various different battles, what generals were where, which army was bigger, etc. Games about history tend to follow this same pattern. So, Chronicles of Britain was my attempt at including history in a game in a way that was more about the experience and the life rather than the dates, numbers, and battles.

**SIMAGES**: What do you see in store for the future of game design?

**IM**: Games are always getting more and more exciting. Board games in particular have come a long way in recent years. Game designers are learning better ways of making games fun and compelling. Older games are very long and very luck based. Many board games designed today are fast paced and strategic, as well as being different every time you play them. I'm excited to see what new mechanics and ideas people can come up with. Hopefully, I'll be with them trying to design newer and more exciting ways of experiencing games.

*Ian Mahoney lives in Marlboro, Vermont, where he is an independent game designer and game-play consultant. Besides inventing his own games, he helps others refine the mechanics and playability of their own activities. Ian can be reached at busterblabs@yahoo.com.*
Trainer Toniya Singh attended the Game Design Certificate pre-conference workshop at the NASAGA conference in Columbus, Ohio. She generated an idea for a mixer/relationship-building activity during the workshop. Through follow-up correspondence and mentoring from course co-presenter Brian Remer, she completed the development of this version of Check. Mix. to share with SIMAGES readers. –Editors

Purpose
Check. Mix. is an opportunity for a newly forming group to reflect upon the implications of combining their talents into a cohesive team.

Path (time): 45 minutes

People (number and types of participants)
Any newly forming group or any intact group starting a new task such as a team beginning a new project, students starting a class, or a team leader wishing to integrate new members to the team.


Points (objectives)
By the end of the activity, participants will:

• Describe the intrinsic value of including diverse views, talents, and contributions in the work of a team.
• Describe the basic elements of communication that make working in teams productive.
• List at least three types of contributions they can expect from other team members.
• Identify a personal contribution they can make to the team or project.

Props
For each group of six to eight participants, gather the following items:

• 2 cups Cheerios or Chex cereal
• 1/4 cup pepitas (sunflower seeds) or peanuts
• 1/4 cup dried berries or dates (raisins, cranberries, other)
• 1/4 cup semisweet mini chocolate chips or M&Ms
• Instruction paper with the words “Preparation: Mix. Share. Munch.” written on it.
• 1 mixing or serving spoon
• 1 large mixing bowl (or a large, clean plastic bag, large enough to hold all of the ingredients when they are mixed)
• 6-8 small paper cups
Check. Mix., continued

- 6-8 re-sealable sandwich-size plastic bags (e.g., Zip Loc)
- 10-12 paper bags (lunch bags/gift bags/other)
- Pens or pencils for each participant
- Clipboards or other hard surface to facilitate writing for each participant (optional). (Note: Participants can be instructed to use each other’s backs as writing surfaces to add another element of ‘team work’ to this activity.)
- Flip chart and markers, or chalkboard and chalk

Preparation

- Measure individual edible items (do not pre-mix) into individual re-sealable plastic bags and place each individual plastic bag into its own paper lunch bag.
- Place the instruction paper and the mixing spoon in a paper lunch bag.*
- Place the mixing bowl (or large plastic bag) and 6-8 small paper cups in a paper lunch bag.*
  *For a group of eight, place these four non-edible items each in its own paper lunch bag so that there are a total of 8 paper lunch bags.

Procedure

1. Randomly distribute one paper lunch bag (with either edibles or non-edibles) per participant.
2. Distribute pens or pencils and optional clipboards.
3. Instruct participants to look in their bag but to keep the contents a secret. Explain that they will have five minutes to discover the contents of the bags of as many different people as they can. However, everyone must follow these basic rules.
   - You may only ask ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions.
   - You cannot ask more than five questions to the same person.
   - You may keep notes by writing on the outside of your bag but you may not show your notes to anyone.

Start the clock.

4. At the end of five minutes, ask participants to form a team with other people who have bags with contents that will complement their own. Again, there are a few basic rules:
   - You may not ask any questions about the contents of another person’s bag.
   - You may not share any of your notes with anyone.
   - A group can be any size greater than one person.
   - You’ll have three minutes to form teams.
5. Allow about three minutes for the formation of teams. Then invite each team to find a place to sit together.
Ask them to share the contents of each person’s bag within their team and follow any instructions. Also ask them to talk about the goals or strategies any of their members used to help form the group.

6. After about five minutes, give each team an opportunity to share with the whole group the collective contents of all the lunch bags of their team and to talk about their strategy to form their group.

Ponder (discussion)

• What were your initial thoughts and feelings while gathering information about the contents of other people’s bags?
• What strategies did you use (or observe other people using) while gathering information?
• What strategies did you use to form a team?
• What interesting things did you notice people doing either to gather information or form a team?
• How happy are you with the makeup of your team?
• Now that you know all the different ingredients that people had, what is a different team you might recommend?
• If this activity were a metaphor for the way teams form and interact, what would each of the different elements represent (e.g., keeping the contents of your bag secret, restrictions about asking questions, brief or vague instructions, having different combinations of ingredients, goals and strategies of the participants, etc.)?
• Think about the contents of your own bag. What are the various characteristics of that item (sweet, crunchy, inedible, etc.) and how might that item represent a quality, talent, attitude, or ability that you bring to a team?
• If you had the chance to do this activity again with the same rules, what would you do differently?
• If you were to modify this activity to make it more like what happens in teams, what would you do differently?
• What is an insight about team formation or your own participation in teams that you gained from this activity?
• What is something you will do differently the next time you are with one of the existing teams of which you are a member?
• What advice would you have for someone who wants to begin a new team?

Lions Share LLC, Toniya Singh’s company, is an Ohio-based training and consulting firm that offers custom training modules for large and small organizations throughout the U.S. who require customer-centric training for their workforce. Toniya can be reached at toniyasingh@gmail.com.
Elements: A Game of Strategy
By Ian Mahoney

In place of a puzzle, we give you in this issue a game designed by Ian Mahoney. See the interview with game-designer Mahoney on page 25. –Editors

Elements is a game of strategy for two players.

In order to play, you need two decks of playing cards and some tokens to use for pieces (such as Go stones, beads, etc.). From each deck of cards, remove all the aces, twos, threes, fours, and fives. Shuffle these cards to form a single deck. Set the remaining cards aside, they will not be needed. Your deck should consist of forty cards (two copies each of five ranks and four suits).

Setup

Deal out a 2X5 grid of face-up cards from the deck onto the middle of the table.

This grid of cards is the board. At one end of the board (but not on the board), place three of your tokens (your tokens should be easily distinguishable from your opponents, such as a different color or different type of token). Your opponent places his three tokens at the other end of the board. Deal eight cards from the deck to each player. Choose three cards from your hand and place them face down in front of you. Once you and your opponent have both chosen your cards, flip them face up. These three cards are called your 'movement cards'. Randomly choose a player to go first.

Play

Your goal in Elements is to get all three of your pieces to your opponent's end of the board. On your turn, you do three things in order.

1. Move pieces
2. Change cards
3. Draw new cards

1. Movement

How you are permitted to move pieces is based on the three movement cards you have face up in front of you. Each card has two elements that are important: rank and suit.

You may only move a piece onto a card that has an element which at least two of your movement cards also have. For instance, if you want to move a piece onto the ace of diamonds, then two of your movement cards must be aces or two of your movement cards must be diamonds. You may either move a piece straight forward, or diagonally forward, so there are always two cards that a given piece may be able to move to. You may not move a piece sideways or backwards.
Elements: A Game of Strategy, continued

If all three of your movement cards have an element in common, you may move one of your pieces two spaces forward, provided that both of the cards you are moving across display that element (e.g., if all three of your movement cards are hearts, you may move a piece forward twice in a single turn as long as both cards where it moves are also hearts).

You may move two different pieces on your turn as long as you move each of them based on a different type of element (e.g., if your movement cards are the ace of spades, the two of spades, and the two of diamonds, you may move one piece onto a spade and a different piece onto a two.).

You may move pieces onto cards which already have a piece on them, either yours or your opponents. If you move a piece onto a card which has a single enemy piece on it, remove that piece from the board and place it back off the board to your opponent's starting area. If you move a piece to the end of your opponent's side of the board, remove it from the board and set it aside by that end of the board, indicating that it has made it across.

2. Changing Cards

After you have completed movement, you must exchange cards. To do this, choose one of the cards on the board and place it in the discard pile. Then, take one of your movement cards and place it in the empty space on the board. Finally, play one of the cards from your hand face up in front of you as a new movement card.

3. Drawing New Cards

Once you have changed cards, you may choose to discard one of the cards from your hand. Draw cards from the deck until you once again have a hand of five cards. If the deck runs out, shuffle the discard pile to make a new deck.

Game End

The game ends once a player has successfully moved all three of his/her pieces across the board. That player is the winner.

Optional Rules

Board size

You may choose to play with a longer, shorter, or wider board. Be sure that there are still enough cards leftover to form the movement cards, hands, and deck.

Advanced Elements

If you want a slightly more complex game, use three decks of cards instead of two, still just aces through fives, but mark each deck with a different symbol (such as triangles, circles, and squares). You now have 60 unique cards and a new element that you may move by: Shape.

More pieces

You can play with more than three pieces if you want a longer game.

Blocking movement

You may not move a piece onto a space that has two or more of your opponent's pieces on it. This may make it difficult to move past the center of the board.

Blocking card changes: You may not remove a card from the board if there is a piece on it. This may limit strategic board changes during the mid-game.

Four players

If you wish to play with four players, you should add another twenty cards to the deck (of the same type of cards already in the deck). This requires that you have three decks of playing cards available. The board should be a 4X4 grid with the four corner cards removed. Each player will have a 4X2 track along which they are permitted to move. I'd advise playing on teams, as it is very difficult for one player to win otherwise.
Possible Answers to the Series Puzzle

In a series puzzle you are looking for a common word that will go with the series given. Each word in the series must make sense with a final word you supply. There may be more than one possible final word to a series.

1. Board, chance, online–games
2. Ifill-Raynolds, Rising Star, Emmy–award
3. Architectural, instructional, clothing–design
4. Street, sky, mind–maps
5. Experiential, rote, discovery–learning
6. Disaster, cross-cultural, flight–simulation
7. Chocolate, puzzle, shattered–pieces
8. Peg, white, game–board
9. Pet, technical, corporate–trainer
10. Leadership, facilitation, character–role
11. Mystery, physical, game–clue
12. Pool, game, ball–room
13. Cross, hidden, key–word
14. Name, playing, 4X6–cards
15. Personal, basketball, management–coach
16. Sociodrama, practice, demonstration–role plays