How American Library Put an End to the Low Recognition of Game in Library

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Abstract: Though we already have several successful instances on gaming in library of China, powerful subjective reasons prohibited the development of game services since publicity, librarians and parents taking games as monsters. Also, public have no awareness of the game's educational and social value. As a result, it is difficult to use game in entertainment, reading program and information literacy instruction. On the contrary, Libraries in US set up professional game librarians and consultants, and the game activities are in full swing. So it is quite necessary to analyze how they gradually overcome the prejudice and popularize game in library. And in this paper we will discuss the following factors: Service traditions, literacy, Library associations, and education of future librarian.

1 Introduction

The 44th China Statistical Report on Internet Development published by China Internet Network Information Center[1] shows the number of online game players has been growing for several years and is approaching 500 million in 2019, Which means gaming as an important part of culture that a 21st century librarian cannot ignore.

Library gaming program in the modern sense originated in the United States. The video game programs in the library started in 2003-2004, and the game service in the broad sense can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century[2]. In 2006, Nicholson's survey showed that 328 libraries in 400 were supporting games. Over the past decade, libraries of various types and sizes in the United States have made active efforts to the development of various game programs, with rich content and great influence. But in the last 10 years in China, the practice of game in library started but is still groping slowly, with a low proportion of libraries that provide game service.

There are multiple reasons for this phenomenon. As many scholars mentioned the shortage of the budget, the lack of staff, policy obstacles are part of the objective reasons. Since these circumstances existed from the beginning to present in American libraries, definitely none of them is basic reason. From the subjective perspectives, Hongyue[3] once pointed out that the bias to game in publicity and library itself is an important barrier, and the low recognition of game, lead to a lack of motivation on game service.

After literature review, we found that there were also biases in their early days, and there were also a period libraries and public had low recognition of game in United States. So, what factors played key roles in the process of eliminating prejudice? At present, there is no detailed analysis on the causes of this phenomenon. The author analyzes the key elements of eliminating prejudice in American Library games through literature research and network research so as to learn some lessons from them.

2 Analysis of key elements of eliminating prejudice

2.1 The tradition of related services and intrinsic value of library game

Game service was almost born with the prosperity of Libraries in the United States. There are many kinds

of game related services, which help improve the functions of Libraries in many aspects. Since the mid-19th century, chess, game rooms and board games had been provided by some public libraries to the citizens, playing the functions of entertainment and moral education. In response to many people's skeptical attitude about the game programs provided by the library, Nicholson[2] and many other scholars states that even if the game appeared many new types with the innovation of information technology, the library adopted a more digital and networked social way to use the game to achieve functions, librarians should not regard it as a new service.

The recognition of the value of entertainment content and multimedia materials, as well as the consistent preservation and circulation history are also important factors for the rapid acceptance of game programs. In the first half of the 20th century, academic libraries began to build special collections. In addition to focusing on rare books, manuscripts, archives and other documents, such as oral history, sound recording, video, map, poster, photo, coins and other types of resources began to be collected. Academic and public libraries add pop music and films on the basis of tapes and CDs into their collections. Some libraries are equipped with video rooms for citizens and students. So it is not surprising that in the 1920s, academic libraries built their game collections on the basis of personal donations. According to the investigation of Nicholson, computer games, consoles, board games, chess and card games, and handhelds are all in circulation in American libraries. Levine points out that the game, especially video games, facing doubts internal and external, which are the same as those recreational literature, CDs and chess when they just became library's regular services, while now patrons cannot imagine a library without these services. Just like overcoming prejudice and embracing music and movies, librarians also should embrace games.

2.2 Librarian's exploration of the relationship between games and literacy

The main reason why parents and librarians feel bad about video games is that the American media demonized game doing harm to psychological health of teenagers in order to create shocking stories. However, the early reports that connect juvenile delinquency and video games they have played are lack of scientific basis. On the contrary, data from a sample of 1254 teenagers in their 12 to 14-year-olds from the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School Mental Health and media center confirm that game didn't make youngsters danger.

Unlike those who believe that the game has no literacy and the game players are isolated, violent and uncivilized, most contemporary research pays more attention to the internal influence on the players in the process of participation in the game activities. In 2010, researchers spent 90 hours observing two institutions of Elizabeth Country Library to evaluate the impact of game programs on Teenagers' life and learning, and the results were surprisingly positive - teenagers acquired multiple literacy[4].

Moreover, the practice and study of using gaming to improve literacy in various ways of libraries deepen the understanding of the essence of games, which do favor to break the stereotype on games.

Games and Reading Literacy

It is not true that game player doesn't like reading print books. For example, Squire and Steinkuehler observed that about half of gamers would borrow a book based on their interests when they leave the library. Players of Age of Empires, Civilization and Rome: Total war almost everyone had a book about related history. So it is not surprising that some scholars support to pair game with book to promote the reading of print books. But the relationship between games and reading literacy is more than that. Suellen S. Adams believes that good games are good reading materials. Among many contemporary cultural products, video games use technical means to integrate narrative literature, art, music, camera language and other artistic means, enriching the human ability to tell stories and expanding the boundaries of imagination. In the process of the game, different from the traditional way of storytelling, players should have the ability to deal with a large number of complex information quickly, and unconsciously realize the cultivation of reading ability.

Game and multimedia literacy

Multimedia related literacy could also been developed in gaming. A project was organized by Constance Steinkuehler Elizabeth King in 2009 to promote students to get high scores in literacy education through their interests. The target population of the project is young boys who are evaluated as "dangerous" and fail in digital literacy class. With the help of boys' existing interest in games, they can strengthen their participation

in literacy courses. The results show that students perform well in many ways to research and collect online game related resources and integrate evaluation resources.

Games and Information Literacy

Librarians pay great attention on how game could improve information literacy. Many of them takes this view, good game is what information literacy education needs to learn from. Lynn van leer investigated the popular game world of Warcraft, and found that the game behavior process of players was surprisingly same with the information literacy standard of ACRL, and the game would let people to actively achieve them. Shiller proposes librarians to learn from portal game, to provide clear feedback by using the concept of "door" in information literacy teaching, and help students realize that their retrieval strategies are not sufficient for research tasks.

It started early that instruction librarians embedded games into information literacy classes. Felicia A. Smith used crossword puzzles to help students increase their interest and engagement. Soon, several university libraries designed online information literacy instruction games. The influential ones include Library craft and Get a Clue of Utah Valley University Library, Goblin Threats of Lycoming College and Biblibout[5] of University of Michigan.

Some researchers tried to replace the traditional classroom with information literacy education games. A comparative experiment in the library of Long Island University shows that students who play DoingResearch and Citation Tic Tac Toe games and students who participate in traditional instruction both made progress[6]. SPSS software analyzes the scores of 86 students quantitatively, and found that "Students who played the online games improved significantly more from pre-test to post-test than students who received a lecture in lieu of playing online games, suggesting that participating in games related to the instruction they received resulted in an improved ability to select appropriate keywords and ascertain citation formats". According to the characteristics of engineering freshman, Rose Library of James Madison University (JMU) designed Alternate Reality Game named "Mystery at the Library" for their orientation[7], which asked students searched in the library and online. Compared with students' scores of the traditional instruction around 3 points, the average score of the students after the instructional game is more than 4

points, among which the effect of literature citation is the most significant. These experiments illustrates the application of games in information literacy instruction can achieve outstanding educational results.

The implementation of the games attaches to the improvement of literacy, which is an essential reason for the library to repeatedly use the game, and also the key to directly change the attitude of librarians and parents towards gaming in library.

2.3 Guidance from library associations at all levels and supports from relevant organizations

The Library Associations represented by ALA, the branches of ALA and other organizations, have produced decisive external factors in the process of eliminating prejudice.

Value orientation in libraries

The American Library Association took the lead in attracting people's attention on gaming. In 2005, the American Library Association established "LibGaming" Google Group for Librarians' different positions on the phenomenon of "playing games in the library". All kinds of Libraries in the United States had a debate on whether libraries should provide game programs, which aroused wide attention from both inside and outside the library and had lashed the old thoughts. At the 2008 annual meeting of ALA, in order to let more librarians get more interactive and learn more about the role of large-scale real-life games, they provided a Big game, California dream, which can solve puzzles in teams.

Provide communication platform for library games

ALA hasn't stop providing communication platform for librarians who are interested in game services. In 2007, the ALA Committee certified Scott Nicolson's Games and Gaming Member Initiative Group, which is dedicated to studying the use of games in libraries, improving public awareness of games, and helping librarians who are interested but have no experience. This interest group was upgraded to gameRT in 2011, providing a platform for librarians interested in using games to gather and share. Its mission includes making people aware of the value of games in school, libraries and other learning communities, and the value of games in library outreach events and community participation programs.

Workshops and lectures in local library system

For those librarians who know nothing about game, some of the local library association organized the

librarian workshops to directly show the functions of the game and let the librarians face the highlights of the game directly. For instance, although game was a hot topic in 2007, many librarians were hesitant about introducing game into library, so "during the Nebraska Library Association/Nebraska Educational Media Association joint annual conference at the end of October 2007, the Nebraska Library Commission Network Services department set up and demonstrated three popular gaming systems that libraries across the country were beginning to incorporate into their programming". The librarians responded with great enthusiasm and asked for renting the game system after the meeting. Subsequently, in response to this enthusiasm, the committee held workshops to help librarian to start their own gaming program.

Similarly, at the same year, the School Library System of Genesee Valley Board of Cooperative Educational Services opened a training session and game design workshop for Librarians in the system[8]. The librarians who had no experience and interest in games realized the potential of success of board games in school library. After the workshop, almost all copies of games prepared for training were borrowed. The system started a game library project in 22 rural areas of western New York State. Soon later, the games adapted to the state curriculum were seamlessly embedded into the class, and the high-level games with high playable value are provided to the member libraries as educational resources.

2.4 Adding games to the library and information science courses

As a new service, librarians are facing all kinds of new problems in their work. These problems are not within the scope of traditional curriculum of Library and information science education, so some graduate school of information science started to add game culture, game technology and game service to the master's courses to help them get better employment. ISchool of University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, for example, provide courses about game to establish a good understanding of game for their graduate students[9].

Not only game become the teaching content for future librarians, but also some attempts to use game as a teaching method in MLIS class. Crystal Martin and Ryan Martinez had an online Game-based learning class to help students realize the value of games in library[10]. In their course, educational games were widely introduced, so that students could immerse themselves in the game community, focus on the application practice of games in the library and related literature, and finally independently plan a game activity as the final project. Students need figure out about how games can promote participation and interest in learning in the library, to help the future practitioners to make better use of the game service for the next generation, and guide the users' interest in learning in the library and other informal learning spaces.

In addition, some traditional courses, such as introduction to library, service to young adults and children and so on, also meet the needs of gaming, adding the discussion about game service, so that the future librarian will become the reserve force of game service. These courses accelerate the elimination of game prejudice.

3 Conclusion

In order to hit back the ideas opposed the development of game programs and believing of games are harmful, researchers and librarians never stop their steps on practice and research. Nowadays, to reverse their biases on game service is no longer the main contradiction they are facing, but their experience is still a timely rain for libraries in China with limited practice opportunities and heavy biases, and it is also a valuable experience for us to persuade peers and worried parents. Although the specific situation of China is different from that of American libraries, we can still suggest that the library association should properly offer some training and lectures to share successful cases, use social media to promote game service, and begin with simple, low-cost game events.

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