SARAH AMAZING

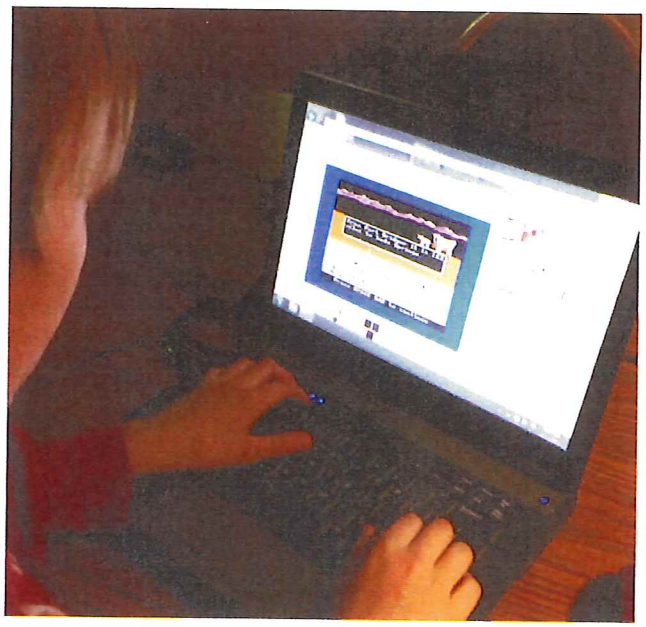
Level Up Your Gaming!

These days, gaming is an integral part of the teen services life. It's a great way to bring in new teens and keep them busy when they're hanging out, and a simple way to augment any special event. If your gaming has become a bit stale and you're still hauling out your old Rock Band equipment, perhaps it's time to freshen things up.

International Tabletop Day (*http://geekandsundry.com/search/tabletop+day/*), celebrated in the spring, is the perfect time to bring out the board and card games. The classics like Monopoly, Life, Jenga, Apples to Apples, and chess remain popular, as do collectible card games like Yu-Gi-Oh! and Magic: The Gathering. Shawn Walsh from Madison Public Library in Madison, Ohio, hosted a highly successful Magic: The Gathering tournament—they purchased twenty-seven themed decks, randomly assigned them to players, and allowed the winner to take their deck home. They enjoyed it so much that more tournaments are in the works.

Other card games like Munchkin, Exploding Kittens, Slash, We Didn't Playtest This at All, and Smash-up are easy to learn and allow for many players, especially if you purchase expansions. Teens who really love a game will take it upon themselves to recruit and teach new players, thus ensuring plenty of gameplay.

Cooperative games are another fun variation to try. Although more complicated, games such as Pandemic, Betrayal at House on the Hill, Forbidden Island, and Sentinels of the Multiverse require players to work together to beat the game, offering a unique and rewarding experience that's different each time it is played. They're often time-consuming, but the skills like teamwork, problem solving, and communication the games help build make them worthwhile.



TEEN PLAYS THE RETRO GAME OREGON TRAIL

Teens are learning about new tabletop games from web series such as Geek & Sundry's *Tabletop*, hosted by Wil Wheaton, and the Game Grumps' *Table Flip*. Before you purchase anything, ask your teens if there are any games they'd like to play. Check with your local game shop before you purchase anything. They often have games that they can donate, or they can order them for you at a greater discount.

Life-sized games make for great photo ops and plenty of hilarity. Hungry Hungry Humans puts teens in the role of the infamous hippos, collecting "marbles" in the craziest ten seconds you'll ever witness. All you need is a small basket, some balls, a few maintenance carts, and bike helmets. Christina Getrost from the Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library in Stow, Ohio, created a huge Monopoly game where the teens are the game pieces. It has proven so popular that it has become a near-annual event. Looking for something even easier? To play Human Battleship, all you need is a giant beach ball and a curtain of some sort to divide the room. Choose the teams, place them on either side, and play with usual Battleship rules.

Chessboxing (*http://www.wcbo.org/*) is a fascinating sport where players fight in alternative rounds of chess and boxing, combining, as they say on the official website, brain and brawn. Teen librarian David Senatore from the Miamisburg branch of the Dayton Metro Library hosted an event over the summer that was well-received, and the teens are looking forward to more chances to compete.

For those of you looking for a great STEAM-related video game, give the new Super Mario Maker for the Nintendo Wii U a try. Players create their own levels, share them on the searchable Course World, and then challenge others to play. The catch? A level must be beatable before it can be uploaded. Use this game to challenge them with a list of parameters within their creations, or simply see if they can beat the highest-rated levels. It's a fascinating mix of engineering and architecture, and some user-created levels are truly stunning.

If your teens are tired of modern games (or if you simply cannot watch another bout of Super Smash Bros.), host a Retro Game Night. You can do this by purchasing older games, often available through digital downloads, or ask your staff if you could borrow their old consoles and games. You might even get some consoles to keep. Nintendo is releasing a new mini version of the original NES in November that will come preloaded with forty of the original



HUNGRY HUNGRY HUMANS, THE LIFE-SIZED VERSION

games. If you'd like to really blow their minds, fire up the original Oregon Trail at Virtual Apple (*http://www.virtualapple.org/oregontraildisk.html*) in your computer lab. Remember, for most of our teens, the first console they remember is the Playstation 2. They've never played original Sonic, died of dysentery, or witnessed the horror that was the polygons of the first 3D games on the Nintendo 64 and Sega Dreamcast. Retro Game Night is not just fun, but incredibly educational for your library's gamers.

It's impossible to mention gaming these days without discussing Let's Plays. This incredibly popular web video genre is simply playing and recording video games for others to watch. Names like Pewdiepie, Markiplier, and CaptainSparklez are well-known among teens—ask yours who they watch and you'll also hear about Game Grumps, Achievement Hunter, Jesse Cox, StampyCat, DiamondMinecart, and many, many others. John Green's You tube gaming channel (aptly named hankgames—it's complicated) where he plays the latest installment of FIFA Soccer and talks on a random topic is so popular it now supports an actual English football team.

You'll find wide variety among Let's Players. Some specialize in speedruns, where players take advantage of glitches and their own expertise to play through as fast as possible, and games that usually take hours last a fraction of the time. Others play only retro games, some specialize in Minecraft, others mostly horror games; still others play whatever their fans send them, no matter how awful or ridiculous. It's a fascinating culture, and one that is still growing. While most of this is taking place on **You tube**, many are streaming on **Twitch.tv** (*http://www.twitch.tv/*), playing games to completion for hours to a live audience of followers and subscribers, and making a living doing so.

Thanks to Let's Plays, your teens are more knowledgeable about games than ever before. They're able to watch games being played that perhaps they don't have access to, and view an entire game before they purchase it, allowing them to spend their money in smarter ways. They will also have many opinions about which games your library should purchase—listen to what they have to say.

How can your library join in on the fun? Why not start your own Let's Play channel. You have everything you need: games and gamers. With the purchase of a few items, your teens can learn digital and audio editing, as well as copyright, fair use, and social media marketing. This is in the works at my library, especially since it fit so well with the 2016 CSLP theme.

The options for including gaming in your programming are greater than ever before. However you choose to update the gaming experience at your library, involve your teens. ■

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