(Social, Narrative, Action, Knowledge, Strategy) of the gaming experience, which will help any library build a solid gaming foundation while convincing hesitant board members and patrons that gaming does indeed align with the library's mission. Nicholson not only highlights the enjoyment factor of gaming but also the real educational, social, and developmental values that gaming has to offer.

In the chapter entitled "Knowledge Gaming Experiences," he describes games that rely on the external knowledge players bring to the table. This chapter breaks down each type of game (from environmental to big games) giving examples with price, number of players, and experience. He follows with similar chapters on strategy games, action games, narrative games, and social games. Each of these chapters is filled with indispensible knowledge for the librarian constantly challenged with finding new and valuable library programs.

The final section of this three-part book, "Putting It All Together," is my favorite. This is a step-by-step guide on how to put a program together. The first chapter in this section focuses on planning the program, from determining goals to facilitating the experience. The second chapter in the section highlights marketing and partnerships. This chapter helps those of us working in libraries during a budget crisis. There is also a smart section on gamers. For those who do not play games themselves and do not know game players, gamers can be hard to understand. Nicholson gives an accurate and relatable description.

The last two chapters, "Assessment and Justification" and "Keeping Up and Focusing On the Fun," are the perfect ending to this quick read. The chapter on

assessment gives examples of survey questions and measurements to evaluate games programs. Knowing what to ask and why you ask it can be the most difficult part of an evaluation, and the author has provided good guidelines to follow that will make evaluations a breeze. The last chapter emphasizes the importance of maintaining a game collection. Nicholson warns that games can become outdated quickly and that this can negatively affect your gaming programs. He offers examples of print resources and places to find reputable reviews to keep your collection on top of the trends.

Overall, this book reminds me of the joys of being a librarian. Not only do librarians offer new literary experiences, but they also can provide valuable gaming experiences that will keep patrons coming back for more. Reading *Everyone Plays at the Library* will excite you to start your own gaming programs and prepare you to accomplish it.

—Anna Slaughter, *Canton Public Library, Canton, OH*

The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses

Jesse Schell
Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, 2008. Endnotes, bibliography, index. 512 pp. $59.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780123694966

The opening pages of Jesse Schell's *The Art of Game Design* broadcast its purpose loudly, even before his prose begins. A detailed and well-organized table of con-

tents is no unusual thing, but the Table of Lenses that follows it is. Schell's textbook on game design is organized along two vectors: first, the components of the game design process more generally, and second, Schell's own advice in the form of "lenses"—concepts through which design decisions can be approached. For example, #30 The Lens of Fairness addresses the balancing of player skill levels, while the melding of aesthetics, mechanics, story, and technology compose #7 The Lens of the Elemental Tetrad. The components of design are also organized into a mind map that unfolds throughout the book, revealing the order and relationship of the process—from designer to experience, through game, and player. While comprehensive and unique, this structure has its downside. The book's length and detail prevent it from being a casual read, and its meandering organization makes it difficult to separate into the kind of sections or topics one might find on a college syllabus.

The Art of Game Design assumes that a development team has few constraints and is better suited for students in game design programs than industry professionals. The book opens with the goal of making you "the best game designer you can be"—Pollyannaish, but genuinely encouraging words from someone who loves to make games. Budding designers looking to create their first indie games festival masterpiece will no doubt find sound advice in the discussions of mechanics, balancing, and scope. Students will find answers that focus their limitless imagination into manageable projects. Given Schell's role as a professor at Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center, it is not

surprising that this textbook seems best suited for an introductory video games design course.

It is debatable, however, whether *The Art of Game Design* would be useful as a back-to-basics guide to a designer entrenched in the game industry. Though the book is not a guide to project management in the video games industry, the author clearly targets creative types in leadership positions who are able to address big-picture issues. It is easy enough for a producer to propose Lens #46 The Lens of Balance as a solution to a design problem, but it is still up to the programmers to implement the concept in code.

The Art of Game Design's promise to offer thorough guidance in every aspect of the design process is also a detriment to its overall usefulness. Too much advice is organized too haphazardly. The book follows a mind-map structure devised by Schell that illustrates the design process. Thirty bubbles, each representing a chapter in the text, compose this map. Despite the one hundred lenses enumerated in the opening pages, I cannot quite imagine a situation in which a design team would run into a problem and know how to quickly flip to its appropriate lens—they are buried in the book's more than 450 pages. The names of the lenses are not always helpful indices (e.g., #58 The Lens of Juiciness), and some lenses (e.g., #72 The Lens of Indirect Control) have numerous bullet points as part of their description. The lenses could be a useful tool, but in practice they are mired in verbiage.

Shifting attention from the form of the book to its content, Schell offers sound advice on every page. In its coverage of design, he runs the gamut from building

worlds, writing stories, creating compelling characters, choosing a visual aesthetic, types of puzzles, issues of balance, and even developing play communities. He details motivational considerations of players with examples like Marc LeBlanc's taxonomy of game pleasures, "interest curves," and the collusion of the game system and the player working together to enact the experience. The book addresses organizational decisions like the use of the spiral model of software development, rapid prototyping, and play testing. It even explains how to create a pitch to sell the game to a client—be it employer or college professor.

Yet, in covering such wide ground, Schell tackles some of the more difficult and contentious issues of game development less adeptly. His discussion of the play desires of boys and girls offers an obvious example. Schell's back-of-the-napkin suggestions about the play interests of males and females might be a handy reference in a general design textbook, but the issues are far more complicated than the text lets on and will probably put off the audience of video game studies scholars likely to pick up the book. *The Art of Game Design* is a guide to producing games with wide appeal, so do not expect to find any particularly challenging concepts hidden in its pages.

Schell incorporates his own experiences as a game designer, sympathizing with newcomers who will face the realities of making concessions while designing within constraints. His conversational tone and anecdotes strengthen the prose, but they sometimes feel out of place in the pages of a textbook. *The Art of Game Design* often reads like three different books—a series of professional anecdotes,

one hundred lenses for overcoming design obstacles, and thirty steps to producing a game—mashed together into an awkward, single work.

The *Art of Game Design* is a competent introductory textbook that, thanks to its conversational tone, offers a more inviting read than competing books like Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman's *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. But whereas the latter better conforms to the units and topics of a college syllabus, Schell's work demands to be read cover to cover—not because it compels readers to take in every word of every page, but because they would be lost if they attempted to skip around. Schell's book contains sound advice about sources of inspiration, characters and stories, world building, balance and pacing, player feedback, and the trajectory of the game as an experience, but it offers little practical advice on choosing appropriate mechanics and building functioning game systems from the ground up. Though easy to read and full of constructive advice, its convoluted organization prevents it from being a definitive contribution to canon of game design.

—Bobby Schweizer, *Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA*

Fun Inc.: Why Games Are the 21st Century's Most Serious Business

Tom Chatfield
London: Virgin Books, 2010. 288 pp.
$27.95 cloth. ISBN: 9730753519852

Despite the impression Tom Chatfield's title