

game spaces but notes that globalization (where “race” has different meanings in different cultures) might complicate efforts. The book represents a point of critical consideration, a “save point” if you will, from which future work—both academic and within the game industry—can position itself.

—Steven Dashiell, *American University, Washington, D.C.*

Monster Kids: How Pokémon Taught a Generation to Catch Them All

Daniel Dockery

New York: Running Press, 2022. Introduction, epilogue, and acknowledgments. 208 pp. \$17.99, paper. ISBN: 9780762479504

Monster Kids: How Pokémon Taught a Generation to Catch Them All is a media history of the Pokémon franchise in twelve chapters. The author, Daniel Dockery, is a staff writer for the American anime streaming site Crunchyroll. Dockery focuses on the United States but seamlessly incorporates information about Japanese media and its cultural and economic background. Along with the myriad manifestations of the Pokémon franchise, Dockery also discusses thematically and commercially connected media such as Digimon, Yu-Gi-Oh!, Tamagotchi, and Cardcaptors.

Appropriately enough, Dockery opens *Monster Kids* with the childhood of Satoshi Tajiri, the creator of Pokémon. As a teenager, Tajiri published an amateur arcade game fanzine called *Game Freak*,

which would later become the name of the Pokémon video game development studio. After partnering with Nintendo, Tajiri and Game Freak brought on additional creative talent to fill out a roster of trainable monsters for the first pair of Pokémon games in 1996. This pair of games, *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Green*, became a sleeper success that was soon adapted into a manga, an anime, and another set of games. This evolution is concisely recounted in the book’s first chapter, which would serve as excellent stand-alone reading for someone interested in the early history of the Pokémon franchise in Japan.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the Kids’ WB and Fox Kids network television programming blocks were looking for their next big hit. This is where the true story of *Monster Kids* emerges as a study of the broader media ecology of the late 1990s and early 2000s. While the Kids’ WB won the rights to the *Pokémon* anime, Fox Kids acquired *Digimon*, another import from Japan. *Monster Kids* uses the Pokémon and Digimon franchises as twinned case studies to explain the business of children’s television programming and the various attempts of media companies to expand Japanese cartoons into localized franchises of toys, card games, movies, music videos, fast food tie-ins, and other marketing ventures of varying success.

The final chapter, “Catch and Release,” provides an excellent summary of the transformation of the Pokémon franchise after its initial boom. This summary, which touches on the changes in media fandom as Internet access became more widespread, is capped by a clear-sighted description of the legacy of imported Japanese cartoons in the brief but impactful

epilogue. Dockery concludes that the American cultural embrace of anime is not simply a fad, and that “none of these franchises show any sign of stopping” (p. 203).

Along with his personal experience as someone who grew up with Pokémon, Dockery draws information from various journalistic sources, primarily interviews printed in American newspapers, magazines, and websites. These sources are occasionally referenced by name in the text, but *Monster Kids* contains no footnotes, endnotes, or list of works cited, leaving it up to the reader to follow up on interesting leads. I did so on several occasions, and I was easily able to find Dockery’s sources through simple online searches.

Monster Kids is primarily concerned with media history at a corporate level and, for the most part, it eschews descriptions of media fandom at a more local and individual level. This is not a criticism, because the book’s tight focus ensures the successful delivery of its narrative. The gaps passed over by the broad reach of *Monster Kids* serve as an invitation for future research into other aspects of the Pokémon franchise, as well as a contextualizing source for more ethnographic and community-specific accounts of its reception and impact.

Based on the accessibility of the writing, the occasionally humorous turns of phrase, and the charmingly off-brand illustrations by José Elgueta, the target readership of *Monster Kids* presumably falls into a young adult demographic of teenagers, and I imagine that this book would be a welcome addition to any school library. In addition, the now-grown millennial generation of adults around the

same age as the author may form a significant secondary audience, and *Monster Kids* could easily be read for pleasure, especially by fans curious about the reasoning behind the decisions that went into localizing various Japanese source materials for an American market. *Monster Kids* is an excellent resource regarding a key decade of transition in global media ecosystems, and its accessibility as a reference work ensures that Dockery’s careful yet compelling study will entertain and enlighten readers of all ages.

—Kathryn Hemmann, *University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA*

Experimental Games: Critique, Play, and Design in the Age of Gamification

Patrick Jagoda

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. List of figures, prologue, acknowledgments, notes, ludography, and index. 320 pp. \$27.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226629971

In *Experimental Games: Critique, Play, and Design in the Age of Gamification*, Patrick Jagoda argues that experimental games “have the potential to create new ways of being, acting, and experimenting within (and perhaps beyond) our digital and networked present” (p. 39). Jagoda begins this work with an introduction that provides an economic history and political framework for understanding video games as experiments. At the nexus of his overview of games lies neoliberalism, the agent he proposes has shifted games out