

pleased Aristotle who was rather keen on utility in the context of pleasure and virtue. So, as the cat stirs and my watch tells me to stop reading and to get up and move, I note that play is not the only thing necessary for living well. Trujillo reminds us that the playful person understands this.

—Alison Harmer, *University of Gloucestershire, U.K.*

Playing the Archive: From the Opies to the Digital Playground

Andrew Burn, John Potter, Kate Cowan, and Julia Bishop, eds.

London: UCL Press, 2025. Contents, list of figures, list of contributors, preface, acknowledgments, bibliography, and index. 268 pp. \$40.00 paper.

ISBN: 9781800083752

Playing the Archive: From the Opies to the Digital Playground is an edited volume that focuses on the Opie Archive project in England. The authors, scholars mostly from University College London and the University of Sheffield, also include a contributor from the University of London and a representative from the Arts Council England. Specializations vary from folklore to media studies, from digital humanities to public engagement, lending different perspectives to the overall project. Geared more toward research-oriented readers and interdisciplinary in content, the book is also accessible to any readers—such as practitioners or advocates—interested in play research.

An introductory chapter describes the research project that brought the book into being. It introduces the archived works of

Iona and Peter Opie, distinguished play scholars documenting a life of joint play research from the 1950s to the 1980s. Peter Opie passed away in 1982, but Iona kept working, publishing books well into the 1990s. As a result, the Opie Archive constitutes an extensive project collaboratively maintained by the University of Sheffield, University College London, the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, the Folklore Society, and the British Library. The project *Playing the Archive: Memory, Community and Mixed Reality Play* had three purposes that this book covers. Abbreviated, the first was digitizing the archives; the second, developing innovative digital interfaces to interact with the archives; and the third, conducting new research of play in the same vein as the Opies' works.

Accordingly, the volume consists of four parts, though part 5 essentially offers a conclusion rather than a discrete section. Parts 1, 2, and 3 each have three chapters dedicated to the overarching theme. Part 1, "The People in the Archive," focuses on the digitization component of the project. More than simply scanning documents, it reviews working papers and handwritten notes and connects with previous research participants. It evaluates the Opies' body of work in a way that goes beyond the more popular books they wrote by looking at rough drafts, lesser known papers, research refinement, and correspondence. This section connects to part 2 by placing the reader inside the Opies' work and placing it against a modern-day background.

In part 2, "Capturing Play," chapters integrate innovative research methods as a way of connecting the Opies' research to contemporary play inquiry. This sec-

tion digs into methodology and the idea of research as play and play as research. This section more definitely crosses time and space as it grounds the Opie historical research against contemporary research, both in practice and content. Young readers are exposed to legacy media and given glimpses into the play of the past, while researchers can use the Opie's work to help interpret children's current play.

Part 2 naturally flows into part 3, "Play in Space and Time," which takes a more direct line into play spaces and memories of play. This part of the project uses a more ethnographic approach to research while grounding it within the framework of the overall project and the Opies' work. This section bridges the gap by specifically looking at connections between the past and present through generational divides, children speaking with adults about play in a research setting, and connecting "lines of play" in spaces over time. The ways in which play gets passed down, reshaped, and made new again are explored against the backdrop of technology and changing physical spaces. The flow to part 4, "Future Play," is also natural and logical. Part 4 closes out the book with a single short chapter that looks toward the future. This chapter provides something of a theoretical synthesis of ideas in preceding chapters and applies them to the future of play. Both the first and final chapters discuss the limitations of the research. The authors recognize that play has once again changed and there is opportunity for further research based on this project.

Playing the Archive, a well put-together volume with coherent and cohesive themes and style, is both easily digestible (with its concise writing) and demonstrates a clear

understanding and engagement with various histories, theories, and methods of play. Although it is certainly very localized to the United Kingdom, the description of the research methods and ideas are compelling for play scholars globally. The rigor of the background research and methodology provides a useful framework for any researcher or student in these fields, offering plentiful citations at the end of each chapter. For scholars who are in play-adjacent fields such as digital game studies, the volume also provides excellent insight into the Opies and their work while breathing fresh air into it. Being based on a research project with innovative methods and purpose, this book also neatly carves out a clear space for itself among play scholarship from multiple angles, including the history of play research and scholarship, research methodologies, and analytical frameworks.

—Allen Kempton, *Independent Scholar*,
Whitby, Ontario, Canada

The Well-Read Game: On Playing Thoughtfully

Tracy Fullerton and Matthew Farber
Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2025.
Acknowledgments, references, and
index. 244 pp. \$40.00 paper. ISBN
9780262552233

In *The Well-Read Game*, Tracy Fullerton and Matthew Farber propose a bold vision: Players should approach games not just as entertainment, but as texts to be read deeply and aesthetically. As they put it, to become literate in this way is to read one's own game play "closely, deeply, performa-