

# ***Twenty-Five Years of Digital Games Research in Poland***

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the history of Polish video game research. We will explore the last twenty-five years of scholarship, since the symbolic publication date of the first known peer-reviewed paper on video games (Ciarka 1991). Our interests will lie in all Polish research into video games, not just in game studies considered as a delineated field. By discussing these two perspectives, and by combining an analysis of publications with a sociohistorical inquiry, we hope to contribute to the conversation about the history and the present state of game studies (Sotamaa, Suominen 2013; Aarseth 2015; Bogost 2015; Melcer et al. 2015; Quandt et al. 2015).

The history of game research in Poland has not been discussed in English so far, apart from occasional conference talks. Even Polish papers (Surdyk 2009, 2014) are scarce and fragmentary. We will begin, therefore, by describing the main historical developments, such as the early emergence of interest in video games among media scholars in the 1990s, the hiatus in Polish researchers' international contacts in the 2000s, the institutionalization provided by the Games Research Association of Poland, or the recent growth of interest in the study of digital games. This part of the talk will include a timeline of academic conferences, organizations, periodicals, and educational programs.

Afterwards, we will demonstrate—in chronological breakdown—the numbers of various kinds of publications (both original and translated). Then we will discuss the results of a content analysis of titles, keywords, and abstracts of all located journal articles. We will also offer a thematic overview of books, chapters, and unpublished dissertations.

The talk will be based on several types of data. First, we will employ our insider knowledge as Polish game researchers. Second, we will use data from library catalogs, conference programs, university websites, the contents of academic periodicals, etc. Third, we will draw from our interviews with digital game research pioneers and their institutional mentors.

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We will carry out the study from the standpoints of a game historian (with a background in cultural studies and film studies) and a cultural sociologist (with a background in psychology and literary criticism). Drawing from Grieveson and Wasson's (2008) analysis of film studies and its many alternative lineages, we will take care to avoid excessive simplification. For instance, we will consider the role of different types of individual and institutional actors—e.g., game design centers and IT research centers, not just universities.

Poland has a big video game market and a number of Polish games have gained international recognition. Moreover, Polish game studies has a significant place in the emerging network of game researchers in the region. Last year's 2nd Central and Eastern European Game Studies conference was one of eight game studies conferences organized in Poland in 2015. The Polish case is interesting as material for the current debate on game studies, but it is also important in itself.

## **Keywords**

content analysis, game studies in Poland, history of game studies

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