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Editorial | 第2号発刊の趣旨

RPG at a Distance — Online and Remote Forms of Analog Role-Playing | 遠隔 RPG — オンラインとリモートのアナログロールプレイング

JARPS Editors | RPG 学研究編集委員会

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1. Far Away but Still Close

Seeking to continue the global exchange about various forms of non-digital or analog role-playing games and hoping for great developments, do we release the 2021 issue of the *Japanese Journal of Analog Role-Playing Game Studies* (JARPS). After last year's special issue on emotional and psychological safety, the focus lies on the challenges raised by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Still, this issue equally concerns the emerging possibilities for the various (usually) analog (non-digital) role-playing practices.

The events of 2020 impacted all facets of social life and, in particular, those depending on personal interaction in a shared local space during times of social distancing and community lockdowns. TRPG and larp groups and players worldwide were challenged with interruptions and emergency cancellations of their face-to-face role-play activities, impacting the social well-being of individual players and the situation of small RPG businesses. First evaluations paint a disastrous picture in some areas. But 2020 also showed the potential of adapting analog formats for digital gameplay when local social gatherings were restricted. During the course of the year, we have seen not only adaptations of planned RPG events from the offline to the online realm but also a renewed interest in old forms of remote RPGs, such as classic letter larps, play-by-mail/play-by-post, or the usage of online community platforms and social media tools. Innovative forms and experimental designs for laogs (live-action online games) were created and tested, mixing and mashing blended play styles from text to video, and from the challenges of home-based play with children to care for, to international, immersing online sessions.

For this issue, we sought submissions that recount the gathered knowledge, experience, and best practice approaches of shifting and innovating analog game designs for remote play practicalities.

2. About this Issue

The first contribution to this issue is a theoretical article about immersion and embodiments in online larps that is thoroughly grounded in the design experiences of its authors, Hazel Dixon (Newcastle University) and Erin Marsh (independent). Including an overview of current developments in online larp and live-action online games (LAOG), their article explores the challenges and possibilities of creating online, immersive games where players operate remotely while the characters are in the same location. The authors ask how games can retain immersion and embodiment when there is dissonance between medium and activity. The article shows how designers can create meaningful, engaging games by using physical and digital artifacts, augmenting the environment, and generating creative ways to interact with those spaces.

From practice-based theory, we move on to a case report Terashima Teppei (Tokiwa University), Ishida Kimi (Yokohama National University), Nashiro Kunitaka (Hiroshima Jogakuin University), Seki Atsuhisa (Tokiwa University), and Miyazaki Masayuki (Tokiwa University). Based on the research team's prior experiences with game-type library guidance, they conducted an exploratory study of the online library guidance "Libardry Form" to understand the game's impact on library learning. The results indicate that it may improve the understanding of first-year students who have little experience using university libraries.

In her case report, Yamamoto Mahisa (independent) investigates the possibility of entertainment to be a part of peace education for adults. She wrote a *Call of Cthulhu TRPG* (CoC) scenario for her case study and discusses different formats of online play in her report. Yamamoto shows how letting players think about how their characters perceive social issues may help players rethink their views and contribute to raising awareness of a problem.

Following the case reports, Adrian Hermann (University of Bonn) and Gerrit Reininghaus



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(independent) provide an in-depth, original study into “character keepers.” Rather than simply functioning as digital equivalents of paper character records, keepers serve as shared sheets, allowing all players to refer to the information on all player characters simultaneously. They discuss the characteristics and pragmatics of character keeper use and highlight elements of a short history of this format.

This issue ends with two “short notes.” Evan Torner (University of Cincinnati) delivers insights into the history of the Golden Cobra Challenge and how the contest for indie games dealt with the necessity that everyone had to go online.

Lastly, the Japanese larp association CLOSS provides a brief overview of the many online larps Japanese designers created before and during the pandemic.

Future issues of the journal will concern other areas of researching and practicing non-digital role-playing games, but we still welcome more contributions dealing with questions of remote play. If you plan to apply TRPGs or larps in an educational or therapeutic setting, please consider writing about your project as a “Case Report.” If you encountered resourceful books on role-playing games, why don’t you review them and contribute to further the discussion on TRPGs and larp (“Book Review”)? Most welcome are theoretical papers exploring key ideas, such as immersion or bleed, and original studies, for example, about specific ways players interact with gaming elements, how particular genres re-shaped the field, or how organizers deal with transparency and accessibility. If you would like to be considered as a reviewer, please let us know.¹ We are looking forward to further exploring the field of non-digital role-playing games together with our authors and readers. We hope you find some of your questions about remote play answered in this issue, lead you to new ideas about role-playing, and that some of the techniques or tools will enrich your practice.

Furthermore, the journal invites guest editors for the next special issues in 2023 and 2024.

Each issue would cover a specific aspect of current role-playing game related research and practice, such as educational applications, player-character relations, or the human body in play. Potential guest editors are asked to submit their ideas for a possible issue via the regular submission system.

We are looking forward to many new discussions and insights about analog role-playing games.

¹ During the account creation process on this website, you can choose to be registered as a reviewer and inform the editors about your areas of expertise.