

ALTSPACE VR EVENT

22nd April
2021

ARCHIVES & VIDEOGAMES

Background

Video games have a serious impact in society, and are globally recognized as a great tool to protect and enhance heritage, such as the hidden one from historical archives, and beneficial tool for education purposes, keyword: edutainment.

Video games are often built around existing knowledge, discoveries and history (quiz, simulations, citizen science, etc.), and the archives are depositories of such kind of knowledge. However, till now, no relation has been built between these two subsectors of the Cultural and Creative Industries.

Innovation - Archives and Videogames Virtual Meeting

This is where our project has brought significant innovation to archives: On April 22nd 2021, under the umbrella of our associate partner [Gamelab's flagship event](#) (an international fair specialised on the videogame industry, that welcomes over 1000 attendees and 500 companies and organizations yearly in Barcelona), the project hosted a virtual reality meeting to analyse cross-sectorial hybridisation and co-production opportunities between the 2 subsectors (Archives & Video games).

The event, held in AltSpaceVR platform, facilitated the encounter of 21 professionals from the archival world and six experts from the video game sector:

- [Maxime Durand](#)
- [Charles Cecil](#)
- [Andrew Reinhard](#)
- [Sam Barlow](#)
- [Xavier Carrillo](#)
- [Isabel Tallos](#)

The meeting featured two public presentations:

1. "Connecting EU citizens and digital natives with historical archives through contemporary digital experiences." [Paul Kenneally](#). Creative Digital Media Designer & Research Assistant at Munster Technological University.



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Video of the presentation: https://youtu.be/C_MrRXEvVZs

2. “How games can bring archives to life.” Ragnhild Hutchison. Managing director, [Tidvis](#).

Video of the presentation: <https://youtu.be/7AmF0eeN0Oc>

Conclusions of the meeting by the archival experts:

The European archives are a trustworthy and authentic source of materials that are ideal for recreating environments in video games. The archives keep a great treasure of maps, drawings, plans, photographs, engravings, among others, from the Middle Ages to the present day, which could serve as a basis to recreate historical settings in an authentic way, without resorting exclusively to the design of fictional spaces.

Due to the authenticity and uniqueness of archival documents, their inclusion in video games could represent a seal of quality or a way to position them in a range that goes beyond mere entertainment, adding a prestigious brand.

The stories behind the documents in the archives, lived by the people who preceded us in other times of the past, are worth telling and are objects of the best novels, series or, why not, video games. The stories behind the documents are worth diving into. Among these forgotten documents are the best stories about spies, witches, Knights Templar, naval battles, geographical discoveries, family sagas, betrayals, revenge ... Everything you can imagine has already been lived and is in the archives.

The archives seek to approach audiences that traditionally do not know their value, such as the young public and what better way to approach them than through the collective culture of video games, in such a way that the playful component can be combined with the learning.

Conclusions of the meeting by videogame experts:

Historical archives could be a good resource for game creators. Archives are all about stories, stories about people and about places and their connections and relationship with time.

So many games do the same thing. Archives are a vast resource that should be used to tell new stories or to inspire different ones. This will help archives get their content out to a wider audience and will give games studios new material with which to create narratives.

Creators also remarked that they would advise the archives to ease the access to their information. They believe that a people's history should be made available to all as Open Access. This can be done of course, through online databases and searching tools provided by archives, but could also take advantage of relationships with commercial and indie games developers, an exchange of funding, credit, intellectual labor, and visibility.

They think archives could also benefit from working with game companies in making European history more widely known.



To start collaboration between both fields, as Andrew Reinhard remarked, small projects are the best, because they are less expensive and can focus on one or two stories/themes. If these projects are successful, useful, accessible, and sustainable, more projects can follow year-to-year. The objective is making games an introduction to the archival material, turning some players into visitors, researchers, and hopefully donors.

As Reinhard also mentioned, what came out of the encounter was that:

1) archivists at the national level in Europe are taking games seriously as a way of telling history-/document-driven stories, using small games as a gateway to Linked Open Data.

2) high-level reps. from the games industry are listening to—and at times partnering with—cultural heritage institutions to mine content for digital interactive entertainment, creating an ecosystem of content-driven narratives while making new audiences for heritage orgs.

Video Summary of the event:

<https://youtu.be/rp6ljiwhAMw>



The event had a great press dissemination:

https://www.abc.es/cultura/arte/abci-desarrolladores-videojuegos-alian-grandes-archivos-y-museos-europa-gamelab-202104230033_noticia.html

https://www.eldiario.es/cultura/archivos-videojuegos-unidos-divulgacion-animacion-historia_1_7849863.html

<https://www.gamereactor.eu/gamelab-makes-games-and-archives-meet-in-a-100-vr-encounter/>

https://www.cope.es/actualidad/cultura/noticias/archivos-videojuegos-unidos-para-divulgacion-animacion-historia-20210422_1252879

<https://www.europapress.es/portaltic/videojuegos/noticia-creadores-archivos-nacionales-europeos-destacan-papel-videojuego-herramienta-difusion-cultura-20210423123636.html>

<https://es.vida-estilo.yahoo.com/style/archivos-videojuegos-unidos-divulgaci%C3%B3n-animaci%C3%B3n->



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<https://www.europapress.es/portaltic/videojuegos/noticia-gamelab-reunira-archivos-europeos-creadores-videojuegos-22-abril-realidad-virtual-20210416130921.html>



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