ARCHAEOGAMING CON 2022

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN ARCHAEOLOGY AND GAMING

THIRD ANNUAL ARCHAEOGAMING CONFERENCE
JULY 29-31, 2022

WHAT IS ARCHAEOGAMING?

Very briefly, archaeogaming is the study of humans via games. Archaeology studies humans through material culture and games are quite certainly that. However, games can be so much more. They are human-created worlds, interactive stories, and they impact the real world in real ways. Real-world human ideas go into the creation of – and interaction with – games and game materials, and then that game world and its material interact with human ideas in the real world. This makes games an interesting kind of human artifact in that they are both archaeological sites and portable artifacts, and they can be studied as both at the same time.

WHAT CAN ARCHAEOGAMING STUDY?

Anything archaeology studies, so can archaeogaming, as it is all filtered through a man-made lens. Everything in a game or game world is intentional. It has a purpose, from the trash in a dignity Street Fighter game to the particular color of a pixel in a highly rendered character face. What can this intentionality tell us about the minds that created this game, wrote the story, designed the character, the city, the tools, the code, and so on.

Games are both social criticism and a time capsule. A game from the '90s predicting the grungy hardcore cyber world of the imagined year 2020 is both a peek into social constructs and the expectations of the '90s as well as a snapshot of world views and social ideologies. In this way, we can use games to help us understand what was important to the past, via the emphasis of certain themes in games during a time period.

Games can show us shifting social roles, growth, maintenance of economies, the spread of cultures across borders, and even the changing political beliefs of various groups of people. Games can synthesize the rise and fall of civilizations by mimicking global situations, pandemics, climate change, resource scarcity, and the effects of war. Games can also give us a glimpse of what peace and cooperation can look like by simulating real-life socialization, community, education, and sharing.

WHAT IS ARCHAEOGAMING CON, OR ARGACON?

In 2020, Sara Head, host of the Archaeological Fantasies Podcast, brought together a group of like-minded archaeogamers to create a one-of-a-kind event: a virtual gaming convention and archaeological conference to share "archaeogaming" based research with audiences on Twitch and YouTube.

The third annual ArchaeoGaming Conference (ArGaCon) will take place on July 29 through July 31, 2022. Presentations include discussions, seminars, interviews, live gameplay, and various other interactive formats.

Archaeology has both influenced and existed within games for many years. ArGaCon aims to broach this intersection and make the subject matter accessible to all. In doing so, archaeologists and gamers will be able to create an engaging and inclusive space where the two fields can coexist and learn from one another.

WHERE TO WATCH?

Twitch: twitch.tv/archaeogaming_collective

YouTube: youtube.com/channel/UCv-69nlRpU7JW9kWHDS6oow

Full Playlist: youtube.com/playlist?list=PLESsyyj2sEEd3b5ROKxmDzQ_Av6HLpxzi

CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS

The ArchaeoGaming Conference is Managed by a Team of Outstanding Volunteers

Founders

Sara Head

Bill Auchter

Krystiana Krupa

Organizers

Sara Head

Krystiana Krupa

Anna Coon

Program Committee

Sara Head

Krystiana Krupa

Anna Coon

Bryandra Owen

Rhianna Bennett

Moderators

Sara Head

Krystiana Krupa

Anna Coon

Bryandra Owen

Rhianna Bennett

Public Relations

Sara Head

Anna Coon

Rhianna Bennett

Graphic Designers

Sara Head

Anna Coon

Rhianna Bennett

Logo Designer

Anna Coon

SCHEDULE

All Times in Eastern Standard Time

FRIDAY, JULY 29

10:00 | **Opening Remarks from Sara Head**
Sara Head

11:00 | **Digital Storytelling Workshop using the Bitsy Game Engine**
Travis Corwin

12:00 | **Fangs, Blood Pools, and Dice: The "Small Things Forgotten" of the Late-'90s Vampire Craze**
Rebecca Gibson

2:00 | **The History of Tomb Raider: Representing Archaeology and Contributing to the Archaeological Record**
Bryandra Owen

4:00 | **You Awaken in a Strange Place: TTRPG Live Play**
Fiona Howart, David Whitworth, Mark Norman, and Sarah

6:00 | **Zelda: Breath of the Wild and Seeking Solution in the Past**
Emma Yasui

7:00 | **Archaeology of Horror: How Horror Video Games Contribute to ArchaeoGaming**
Bryandra Owen

8:00 | **Fright Night: Phasmophobia**

SCHEDULE

All Times in Eastern Standard Time

SATURDAY, JULY 30

10:00   **Death in a Virtual World: Representations of Mortuary Culture in Assassin's Creed Valhalla**
Ashleigh Morgan

11:00   **Prehistoric Storytelling: An Interview with the Developers of Roots of Pacha**
Anna Coon, Heather Christie, Timo Dadone, and Joni Dadone

1:00   **Publish (or Plunder?) or Perish: Professional Women Archaeologists in the Elder Scrolls Online**
Krystiana Krupa

2:00   **Minecraft as a Medium: Building Access to the Past One Block at a Time**
Heather Christie

3:00   **Crafting Digital Pasts at the Intersections of Minecraft and Archaeology**
Heather Christie and Pixlriffs

4:00   **Archaeologists Review the Uncharted Film**
Rhianna Bennett, Kate Minniti, Bill Farley, and Anna Coon

6:00   **Fright Night: Forewarned**

8:00   **Return to Goblin Town: An ArchaeoGaming D&D Campaign**
Daryl Basarte, Michael Zimmerman, Lisa Cipolla, Bryandra Owen, Anna Coon, Jacob Coffey, and Sara Head as Discussant

SCHEDULE

All Times in Eastern Standard Time

SUNDAY, JULY 31

10:00 **Online Communities and Archaeogaming: The Role of the ArchaeoGaming Collective and Save Ancient Studies Alliance (SASA)**
Michael Zimmerman, Anna Coon, Kate Minniti, Tine Rassalle, Evan Bowers, & Emily Browning

11:00 **The Role We Play: What Anthropological Expertise Can Offer Game Development**
Anna Coon, Heather Christie, Rhianna Bennett, and Sara Head

12:00 **Creating Archaeological Games with Twine**
Emily LeHegarat

1:00 **Alt-Ac Archaeogaming**
Lexie Henning

2:00 **Ark-aeology: A Simulated Survey of Archaeological Sites in Ark: Survival Evolved**
Rhianna Bennett

3:00 **Romancing the Stones: An Interview with the Lead Writer of C-14 Dating**
Sara Head, Anna Coon, and Kittea

4:00 **Launch of Mass Effect: Legendary Archaeology Series**
Rhianna Bennett and Anna Coon

5:00 **Paying Tribute to Commensality**
Megan Victor

6:00 **The Built Environment in Final Fantasy XIV**
Sarah Love

8:00 **An Archaeologist Plays Elden Ring**
Bill Farley

SESSION ABSTRACTS

In Order of Appearance

OPENING REMARKS FROM SARA HEAD

Greetings and opening remarks for the third annual archaeogaming conference.

Presenter: Sara Head

DIGITAL STORYTELLING WORKSHOP USING THE BITSY GAME

A digital storytelling workshop that presents a brief overview of digital storytelling and how it is applied in archaeology and prepares attendees to tell their own stories using the Bitsy 8-bit game generator.

Presenter: Travis Corwin

FANGS, BLOOD POOLS, AND DICE: THE "SMALL THINGS FORGOTTEN" OF THE LATE-'90S VAMPIRE CRAZE

Times change and gaming systems go out of style, but for the late-'90s, White Wolf's "Vampire: The Masquerade" was THE game to play. Join me as I sift through the "Small Things Forgotten" and perform an auto-archaeology of my teenage years, by looking at fangs, blood pools, and dice, among other things!

Presenter: Rebecca Gibson

THE HISTORY OF TOMB RAIDER: REPRESENTING ARCHAEOLOGY AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Tomb Raider and the series' protagonist, Lara Croft, are often one of the first things the general public thinks about when you bring up archaeology (alongside her peers Indiana Jones and Nathan Drake). In the subfield of archaeogaming it would be hard not to address Tomb Raider and Lara Croft as contributors to how archaeology is portrayed in a video game setting; however, with the series quickly approaching almost 30 years of existence as a pop cultural namesake, Lara Croft and her tomb raiding adventures are not just a representation of archaeology but are becoming a part of the archaeological record. This paper will discuss the role the Tomb Raider franchise and Lara Croft have played in the general public's understanding of archaeology as well as looking at how the games and character are a significant part of international gaming material culture.

Presenter: Bryandra Owen

YOU AWAKEN IN A STRAGE PLACE: TTRPG LIVE PLAY

You Awaken in a Strange Place is a fully improvised, one-shot TTRPG for 4(+) players that requires zero preparation. Follow the game's instructions to determine the setting, the characters, and all the details of world building on the fly! Get right into the good stuff of playing fun characters with your fun friends!

Presenters: Fiona Howart, David Whitworth, Mark Norman, and Sarah

ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD AND SEEKING SOLUTION IN THE PAST

'Listen closely as I tell you of this "legend" that occurred 10,000 years ago.' When the present seems dire, we often look to the past. Join an archaeologist on a deep dive into the use of Jomon Period aesthetics in Zelda: Breath of the Wild, and what this reveals about the relationship between past and present in Japan today.

Presenter: Emma Yasui

ARCHAEOLOGY OF HORROR: HOW HORROR VIDEO GAMES CONTRIBUTE TO ARCHAEOGAMING

The horror genre is not often thought about in relation to how archaeology is utilized or portrayed within its fictional framework. However, it is one of the most common genres of fiction to utilize archaeology in some form or another. This remains true for archaeogaming as well. From Naughty Dog's The Last of Us series to Supermassive Games' The Dark Pictures Anthology, video games are being used in various ways that have players engaging in archaeology even when they may not realize that's what they're doing. This paper will explore the dynamic archaeology plays in the horror genre of video games, and how games geared towards horror survival fans are actually contributing to the expansion of the archaeogaming subfield.

Presenter: Bryandra Owen

DEATH IN A VIRTUAL WORLD: REPRESENTATIONS OF MORTUARY CULTURE IN ASSASSIN'S CREED VALHALLA

An exploration of the mortuary culture within Assassin's Creed Valhalla, examining death scenes and depictions across cultures, tombstones and cemeteries in game.

Presenter: Ashleigh Morgan

PREHISTORIC STORYTELLING: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DEVELOPERS OF ROOTS OF PACHA

Have you ever wanted to be a part of a thriving stone age community? Roots of Pacha is a co-op farming and life simulation game set in the stone age, whereby connecting with nature – you'll develop new ideas to evolve, enrich your culture, expand upon relationships, and uncover secrets within the world around you. Join us for a special showcase of the game, as we interview the two lead game developers of Roots of Pacha!

Presenters: Anna Coon, Heather Christie, Timo Dadone, and Joni Dadone

PUBLISH (OR PLUNDER?) OR PERISH: PROFESSIONAL WOMEN ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

Comparison of men and women archaeologists in TESO's Antiquarian Circle, the in-game professional organization for archaeologists. Do the men publish more or less than the women? Are their publications valued differently in the game world? Is the men-dominant trend of the real world reflected in the game, or do the developers present a gender-equal field?

Presenter: Krystiana Krupa

MINECRAFT AS A MEDIUM: BUILDING ACCESS TO THE PAST ONE BLOCK AT A TIME

A discussion of the benefits (and potential hurdles) of using Minecraft as an immersive medium for archaeological and heritage-based communication, particularly with audiences that might not be able to access it otherwise.

Presenter: Heather Christie

CRAFTING DIGITAL PASTS AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF MINECRAFT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

How does approaching Minecraft from an archaeological perspective change the way we play the game? What can the liminal and temporary nature of Minecraft series, worlds and even game versions tell us about humanity more generally? In this panel discussion, ArchaeoPlays and Pixlriffs will explore some of the larger questions about the interplay of archaeology and Minecraft.

Presenters: Heather Christie and Pixlriffs

ARCHAEOLOGISTS REVIEW THE UNCHARTED FILM

Four archaeologists discuss the game series Uncharted and its 2022 film adaptation.

Presenters: Rhianna Bennett, Kate Minniti, Bill Farley, and Anna Coon

RETURN TO GOBLIN TOWN: AN ARCHAEOGAMING D&D CAMPAIGN

A special game session from the home brew campaign "Welcome to Goblin Town." The game will specifically highlight an archaeological or cultural artifact through the lens of Dungeons & Dragons. There may be an analysis of the game at the end.

Presenters: Daryl Basarte, Michael Zimmerman, Lisa Cipolla, Bryandra Owen, Anna Coon, and Jacob Coffey

ONLINE COMMUNITIES AND ARCHAEOGAMING: THE ROLE OF THE ARCHAEOGAMING COLLECTIVE AND THE SAVE ANCIENT STUDIES ALLIANCE (SASA)

Scholarly interest in archaeogaming has skyrocketed and has also seen the rise of a number of organizations dedicated to exploring and expanding the archaeology of games and gaming. This panel will discuss the key contributions of two organizations, the Archaeogaming Collective and the Save Ancient Studies Alliance.

Presenters: Michael Zimmerman, Anna Coon, Kate Minniti, Tine Rassalle, Evan Bowers, and Emily Browning

THE ROLE WE PLAY: WHAT ANTHROPOLOGICAL EXPERTISE CAN OFFER GAME DEVELOPMENT

In creating the games we love, game developers have the unique opportunity to introduce brand new worlds, featuring fictional societies and characters that can leave lasting impacts on us as gamers. They can also create games inspired by real-life societies and people from our own world. Earlier this year, Activision and Blizzard announced a new tool to help increase diversity within their games, called "King's Diversity Space Tool," but was faced with massive online criticism for introducing what appeared to be a hierarchy tier system between different gender identities, sexual orientations, ethnicities, cultural groups, body types and more. Join us, as we discuss the complexities of diversity and accurate representation, what it all means, and why more game developers and studios should consider hiring anthropologists and members of marginalized communities.

Presenters: Anna Coon, Heather Christie, Rhianna Bennett, and Sara Head

CREATING ARCHAEOLOGICAL GAMES WITH TWINE

A discussion on how to make your own archaeology text-based games from the perspective of a beginner, featuring a demonstration of UnbelievaBOWL: The 2,000 Year Story of a Quaich – a game made using Twine. In this presentation, I will discuss the game's archaeological theme, the process of making it, and the background research that went into it. During this presentation, I will also be creating a game from scratch to demonstrate just how easy and accessible it can be for people looking to create their own archaeological text-based games! Believe me when I say, it's not as hard as it sounds!

Presenter: Emily LeHegarat

ALT-AC ARCHAEOGAMING

Archaeogaming has become an extremely popular medium to share knowledge about the ancient world and engage with the wider public. However, the majority of archaeogamers either hail from within the academic community or have earned a high-level degree in one of the ancient disciplines. While we need these scholarly contributions, not having a graduate degree or working in academia has also been perceived as a barrier to being recognized as a valuable voice in the field. This talk will discuss why it's important to encourage non-academics and academics from other disciplines to get into archaeogaming. It will also cover a couple ways in which people in alternative academia (alt-ac) can make archaeogaming content.

Presenter: Lexie Henning

ARK-AEOLOGY: A SIMULATED SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN ARK: SURVIVAL EVOLVED

Ark: Survival Evolved puts players on a mysterious island against fierce predators, forcing players to kill or tame in order to survive. Scattered around the built environment are historical sites and hidden items that give you hints about the people that have come to this island before you. Join this game stream to watch an archaeologist conduct a survey of the archaeological sites as they attempt to reconstruct the past and face off against the many prehistoric species across the island.

Presenter: Rhianna Bennett

ROMANCING THE STONES: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LEAD WRITER OF C-14 DATING

We get to interview Kittea, one of the writers for the hit dating-sim: C-14 Dating, as we explore why C-14 dating is one of the best introductions to archaeology, and how Kittea used her own personal experiences at field school to create an interesting storyline that goes much deeper than dating the hot redhead in the lab...

Presenters: Sara Head, Anna Coon, and Kittea

LAUNCH OF MASS EFFECT: LEGENDARY ARCHAEOLOGY SERIES

Join archaeologists Rhianna Bennett and Anna Coon for the premiere of their new gaming series – a replay of Mass Effect: Legendary Edition. How important is archaeology in a sci-fi epic? Watch and find out!

Presenters: Rhianna Bennett and Anna Coon

PAYING TRIBUTE TO COMMENSALITY

An examination of the taverns and drinking spaces featured within TESO's representation of Tamriel with a focus toward commensality, trade and exchange, and the Tales of Tribute card game as a feature that builds upon the gaming population's extant sociability.

Presenter: Megan Victor

THE BUILD ENVIRONMENT IN FINAL FANTASY XIV

A discussion of the built environment and architectural elements of Final Fantasy XIV and a brief introduction into how archaeologists and historians read architectural characteristics to understand social movements and organization.

Presenter: Sarah Love

AN ARCHAEOLOGIST PLAYS ELDEN RING

FromSoftware games are famous for creating a rich sense of history and place. Tonight, we'll take a tour through a mid-game section of Elden Ring to explore the ways that the developers achieved this through the use of architecture, layered histories, and environmental storytelling.

Presenter: Bill Farley