

## Ludoliteracy: The unfinished business of Media literacy

Aranda, Daniel<sup>1</sup>; Sánchez-Navarro<sup>2</sup>, Jordi  
and Martínez, Silvia<sup>3</sup>

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain

[darandaj@uoc.edu](mailto:darandaj@uoc.edu) , [smartinezmartinez1@uoc.edu](mailto:smartinezmartinez1@uoc.edu)

### Abstract

The proposal defends media education that takes into account the role of digital games as a fundamental part of current and future media literacy policies. The first part of the presentation presents the contributions in the field of game studies, psychology and sociology. The second part is dedicated to explaining the concept of ludoliteracy, which understands media literacy in digital games as: 1) the skill to play and the equal opportunities of access; (2) the skill to understand their meaning in relation to culture, economics and politics; and (3) the skill to create, exchange and participate in the cultural context of videogames and digital culture in general.

### Objectives

This proposal defends a media literacy that takes into account the role of digital games as a fundamental part of current and future media literacy policies among children and youth: Ludoliteracy.

Today, digital games transcend their traditional role as a part of a specific subculture, to become a genuine driver of a society and digital culture. However, there is a need for a rigorous and inclusive proposal of literacy that connects playful culture, digital competence and citizenship. Rigorous media literacy that defends the need for critical, analytical and productive competence regarding media cannot ignore but actively strengthen everything related to digital gaming and the practical ubiquity of digital games in our society.

Ludoliteracy pays attention on the technological, cultural, sociological and economic context of video games and digital games as a means of communication among children and youth. We understand digital gaming literacy as one of the essential prerequisites for active and full citizenship.

<sup>1</sup> Doctor en Comunicación Audiovisual (2006), profesor agregado de los Estudios de Ciencias de la Información y Comunicación de la UOC, investigador del grupo GAME de la misma universidad e Investigador principal del proyecto Cultura Lúdica. Es autor de *Game & Play. Diseña y analiza el juego, el jugador y el sistema lúdico* (2015). Su línea investigación actual se centra en el estudio de las formas de consumo, prácticas culturales y dinámicas sociales relacionadas con el ocio y el entretenimiento digital de jóvenes y adultos.

<sup>2</sup> Doctor en Comunicación Audiovisual, profesor de los Estudios de Ciencias de la Información y Comunicación de la UOC (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) e investigador del grupo GAME de la misma universidad y investigador principal del proyecto Cultura Lúdica. Su intereses de investigación actuales son las transformaciones de las formas narrativas en el cine contemporáneo, la innovación en el entretenimiento audiovisual, el ocio digital y los nexos entre la cultura lúdica y lo fantástico.

<sup>3</sup> Doctora europea en Comunicación por la Universidad CEU Cardenal Herrera i miembro del grupo de investigación GAME. Ha realizado estancias de investigación en el *Communication and Media Research Institute* de la *University of Westminster* y en el *Observatorio de Ciberjornalismo* del *Centro de Estudos das Tecnologias e Ciências da Comunicação* en la *Universidade do Porto*. Su línea investigación actual se centra en Periodismo digital, interactividad y participación de la audiencia, nuevos medios y plataformas de distribución.



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## Development

We advocate not for game-based learning initiatives but the understanding of the daily use according with the economical, social and cultural context, and, more important, coding practices and the awareness of pleasure and playful dynamics.

Ludoliteracy must be a part of the competences, skills and communicative and cultural literacy of our times if we want young and children citizens to have the necessary skill sets to understand, create, analyse and enjoy playful media, a language and an experience that completely permeates modern life.

We will first discuss the current status of the field of academic gaming, presenting the social and cultural analysis of play and games, exploring the pleasure of gaming, their value in the social sphere and their use and perception. Second, we will present the notion of ludoliteracy and make a case for its importance within media literacy. Finally, we present a model for ludoliteracy, and the main competencies and skills that should be considered within among children and youth.

## Conclusions and prospective

Most of the educational proposals that include the context of video games focus on the use of video games as an educational aid at the service of contents. This didactic use of digital games aims to enrich and diversify educational content, making it more attractive and close to the reality of the pupils, through a medium that motivates and fascinates them. Serious games or educational games have been a very fruitful field led by the theoretical body of digital game-based learning that focuses on the ways in which video games teach a set of new literacies, edutainment that use games as a motivational tool to make learning fun or serious games that are used to serve a useful extrinsic purpose, and gamification that uses game mechanics in non-game contexts.

Media literacy in digital games does not aim to use digital games as a didactic tool but rather as an object of study for its own sake. Understanding video games is valuable for its own sake as a necessary pedagogic prerequisite for all those interested in the educational use of digital games, serious game or game-based learning. In this manner, media literacy in digital games and digital gaming, ludoliteracy, aims to reflect on the technological, cultural, sociological and economic contexts of video games as media.

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## Questions and/or considerations for discussion

Ludoliteracy should necessarily include the main aspects of Media literacy. Game Literacy needs proposals oriented to a better understanding of digital games as objects of study: reading/access; reflection/critical analysis on the technological, cultural, sociological and economic context of video games as media; and production practices.



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We propose to establish and define the main competences and focuses that ludoliteracy should consider:

1. **Playing digital games.** Meaning not only the skill/competence of playing a digital game but also equal opportunities to access and play games, and knowledge of gaming resources and technologies. Inequality barriers in gaming refer to the opportunity of access to a diversity of platforms, genres (not only mainstream) and gaming technologies that allow population developing the competences needed to use a heterogeneous and complex communication technologies in their leisure but also in learning or disability contexts.  
Related competences and skills: understanding the principles of human-machine interaction, pattern recognition and understanding, understanding interfaces.
2. **Understanding digital games.** Understanding the social, economic, cultural and technological meanings of digital gaming, focusing on analytical/reflexive/critical skills that comprise among others, the following topics:
  - Digital gaming as an activity: pleasure, sociability, flow and engagement, identity, gender, game communities and cultures of production.
  - Digital games as simulated worlds, narrative structures, fictional worlds and genres.
  - Learning and gaming.
  - Games as cultural artifacts.
  - Critical and reflexive scope: deconstruction of economical, technological and cultural production of gaming.
 Related competences and skills: critical thinking, cultural skills.
3. **Producing digital games.** Refers to learning environments that provides players with many of the skills needed in today's digital cultures. The ability to be more creative in games is increasing, with games that allow players to create and share levels, to customize and personalize characters and levels and to take part in creative collaborative challenges. For example:
  - Coding
  - Co-produced media
  - Modding
  - User-generated content
 Related competences and skills: technical skills, creative skills, communicative skills.

We propose this ludoliteracy framework, bearing in mind that the Internet and social networking sites have contributed surprisingly to promote the growing social presence of digital games, a phenomenon that needs to be understood in the wider framework of relocation, mobilisation and dematerialization of the technological devices. Examples of this trend are the so-called casual games, (reproducible in any mobile device) or games in social networks, phenomena that are gradually widening the number, profile and diversity of video game players.

Today, digital games transcend their traditional role as a part of a specific subculture, to become a genuine driver of a society and digital culture. However, there is a need for a rigorous and inclusive proposal of literacy that connects playful culture, digital competence and citizenship. Rigorous media literacy that defends the need for critical, analytical and productive competence regarding media, cannot ignore and actively strengthen everything related to digital gaming and the practical ubiquity of digital games in our society.