Book Review

Markey, K., Leeder, C., and Kieh, S.Y. (2014). *Designing online information literacy games students want to play*. **Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. pp 279. ISBN 9780810891425. £39.95. Pbk.**

Laura Woods, Subject Librarian, University of Huddersfield.
Email: l.m.woods@hud.ac.uk.

The use of online games in teaching has been a hot topic in education and in libraries for at least the past decade. There is increasing understanding of how games can be used to support learning objectives in an engaging way.

As the authors of this new book note, the ideal scenario for information literacy (IL) teaching in further and higher education incorporates hands-on information-finding and evaluation, however many librarians find they are given little or no time to deliver this kind of training. It is also noted that players of video games may often search for secondary information to assist with their gaming, so games that incorporate and reward information seeking and evaluation skills as part of game play can be a highly successful way to teach these skills.

Designing online information literacy games students want to play is based around the development of BiblioBouts, a project funded by the US Institute of Museum and Library Studies, and delivered by researchers at the School of Information of the University of Michigan. The researchers designed an online game that allowed students to compete to find the best list of sources for their given research topic. The game is designed to run at the same time as an assignment, such as writing a paper: this makes the game something the students have to do to research their assignment, and makes clear the link between library research and grades received. As this latter point is something many students fail to grasp, two key design premises were that the game must contribute to course work the students were already doing, and that it must count towards their grades.

The book begins with an introductory chapter on how online games can benefit information literacy (IL) – a thorough and readable summary of existing research in this area. It goes on to outline all stages of development of the BiblioBouts game: from the initial needs assessment; the set-up and administration side; how the game was evaluated at various design stages, as well as during and after game play; and how the game ultimately benefitted the students who played it. It closes with chapters on best practice for game design, best practices for game administration and instruction, and a final chapter on the future of IL games.

It provides a useful, comprehensive overview of a successful project and gives lots of good pointers for other game designers and interested librarians to make use of in developing their own games. However, one point notable by its absence is the question of funding: the BiblioBouts project website states that funding for the project expired in 2012 and was not renewed, so the project is no longer supported, which raises questions about how sustainable projects like this are. One suspects that funding is a key barrier for many libraries and librarians interested in developing their own games, so it's a shame that this is not discussed by the authors, who may have had some valuable experience to share on this topic – although this may well be outside the scope of this book.

The case study format is a good way to discuss best practice in game design and evaluation, while tying them into concrete examples and sharing lessons learned along the way. I did wonder if the title of the book was somewhat misleading: *Designing Online Information Literacy Games Students Want to Play* implies it'll be about the general principles of game design, whereas the book is

actually about the design of just one game. Some chapters went into more detail than perhaps necessary of the ins-and-outs of the project, making it occasionally read more like a project report than a book on game design – more general advice might have been useful. The final three chapters, on best practices and the future of information literacy games, are probably the most useful for anyone interested in designing their own game.

Overall, this is a detailed outline of the process and pitfalls of developing BiblioBouts, and contains some good tips for those interested in designing or developing online information literacy games. It is probably most useful for those with some prior knowledge of the theory and principles of gamification for learning, to see how those principles have been applied in a successful project.