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# Foreword

Like many things in role-playing games (RPGs), this book began as an online discussion thread. In October 2012, sparked by Jon Peterson's (2012) voluminous history of the origins of *Dungeons & Dragons*, members of the DiGRA Role-Playing Studies Special Interest Group mailing list debated why academic and fan scholars of RPGs often talked past each other unawares, rather than building on each other's work.[1] Like game studies a decade ago, the discussion thread went, the study of RPGs was a dispersed network without a shared recognized 'canon' of texts and concepts. It needed a textbook that would bind people and texts and ideas together into an interdisciplinary field. Five years later, you hold this textbook in hand. Its authors include not just many participants of said academic discussion thread, but also Jon Peterson. We are no longer talking past each other.

From the first moment, we intended a truly integrative textbook: it would cover tabletop *and* computer *and* live-action *and* multiplayer online RPGs and recognize other forms as well. It would represent Australian tabletop and Nordic larp and Japanese computer RPGs and other cultural specifics. And it would integrate perspectives from sociology and psychology, economics and education, literary studies and game design, academics and fans and designers alike.

Achieving this goal required assembling an invisible college across the globe. In Atlanta, Georgia in August 2013, we convened a workshop at the international conference of the Digital Games Research Association (DiGRA), discussing and proposing topics a textbook of RPG Studies should cover, and ideas for organizing them.[2] The circle of co-authors expanded and contracted, and although each individual chapter now carries a list of authors at the top, this book is really co-authored by all. Over months of collaborative online discussion and drafting and commenting, the initial jumble of ideas became first a unified list of topics, then a table of contents, then short and then extended chapter outlines. Many chapters would then be drafted by whole author teams as no single person would hold an integrative view of the respective topic in their head. And every chapter went through three or more cycles of peer review and revision, gathering input and critique from the textbook team and outside experts. Draft by draft, revision by revision, we created our shared language and canon and map: a field of roleplaying game studies.

Our first and foremost thanks therefore go to our team of 39 authors who bared with us editors and each other through the better part of four years. We also thank our external reviewers for graciously donating their time, words, and insights.

And we thank our spouses and families for their patience and support. And pancakes.

Sebastian Deterding and José Zagal

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## Acknowledgments

## References

Peterson, Jon. 2012. *Playing at the World: A History of Simulating Wars, People, and Fantastic Adventure from Chess to Role-Playing Games*. Unreason Press.

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[1] http://mail.digra.org/pipermail/roleplaying/2012-October/thread.html, http://mail.digra.org/pipermail/roleplaying/2012-November/thread.html
[2] http://rpghandbook.tumblr.com/