

Transcript

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Derek Bruff: [00:07] Welcome to “Leading Lines,” a podcast from Vanderbilt University. I’m your host, Derek Bruff, director of the Vanderbilt’s Center for Teaching. In this podcast we explore creative, intentional and effective uses of technology to enhance student learning, uses that point the way to the future of educational technology in college and university settings.

[00:24] In this episode, we feature an interview with Lynn Ramey, associate professor of French here at Vanderbilt. She is the author of multiple books and essays including most recently, *Black Legacies: Race and the European Middle Ages*.

[00:36] Lynn is currently engaged in several ambitious digital projects exploring the use of video games in 3D environments as a means to explore how societies and cultures have interacted in the past. She recently sat down with my colleague, Ole Molvig, who’s exploring similar issues in a virtual reality lab class.

[00:53] Ole is an assistant professor in the history of science and technology and a member of Vanderbilt’s Institute for Digital Learning.

[01:00] The two discussed the challenges of employing complex digital tools in the humanities, these tools’ promise for teaching, research and outreach, as well as Lynn’s path and experiences in the digital humanities.

[01:12] [music]

Ole Molvig: [01:16] Hello. On behalf of the Leading Lines podcast, I’m Ole Molvig. Today, I’m joined by my friend and colleague, Lynn Ramey, professor of medieval French literature.

Welcome, Lynn.

Lynn Ramey: [01:24] Hi.

Ole: [01:25] Before I give you the professional introduction, could you describe for our listeners one of the current projects that you're really excited about?

Lynn: [01:31] Sure. Right now, I'm working on a project with a colleague at the University of Sydney and also with some students. What we're doing is modeling the movement of people, objects and text through the medieval Mediterranean, particularly through Cyprus.

[01:47] The reason we're doing that, and when I say we're modeling it, we're modeling it using a game engine, the Unity game engine, because people know that there was a lot of transmission and cultural contact from East to West that took place during this period.

[02:01] The period we're looking at is right around 1000 to 1200. While people know this happened, it's very hard to prove exactly how something got from, say, Syria, some idea, some person, some object got from Syria to Spain or France.

[02:17] What we're doing is allowing this environment to let people make choices about different ways that things can be transmitted and see how these different vectors might have taken place.

Ole: [02:32] That sounds absolutely fascinating. We're going to get a chance to talk a bit more about some of the programs you talked about, Unity and others, and some of the storytelling choices they can give you.

[02:41] First is, I want to talk a bit about your bio here, the back of the bio page on your website is absolutely charming. It begins with an unexpected personal narrative, how you got to the position you are now. Would you mind sharing a bit of your background and personal bio? How you got to where you are now?

Lynn: [02:54] Sure. I went off to undergraduate as an engineer and when I got there I really... It's not that I didn't like math and science. I did. I just didn't like the environment. I think it was pretty much a typical woman-in-STEM story from back in the '80s where it was a very closed environment and it wasn't very welcoming.

[03:22] What I did love was taking French, which surprised me somewhat because I hadn't particularly liked it in high school. I picked it up again and started taking it. They had a study abroad program for engineers and that was the only study abroad program that Penn offered at that time for engineers.

[03:37] I really wanted to just get away and do it and so I did. That started this love for French and also for math and science. I decided that the direction I wanted to go with my career was really more math and science.

[03:50] [laughter]

Lynn: [03:52] More with French, but I did stick with the math and science for a while. That's how I got to the French part. I just started asking questions about how societies interact and how they... Basically, that was from going to the Peace Corps and seeing some really interesting interactions that I could have seen back home, now that I think about it, but I really didn't.

[04:20] Coming from the South, I could have seen all of these same racial political issues that I saw in Fiji and the Peace Corps, but I really didn't. It opened my eyes to a lot. When I eventually did go to graduate school in French, I decided to work on cultural interactions. That's what I've been working on and that's what almost all my projects are about.

Ole: [04:40] I noticed you've been publishing on your experiences between games in a more standard format. That's one way to get the information out there, but I am just curious, how do you categorize the Cyprus project?

[04:51] Is that a research project? Is it a teaching project? Is it a public outreach project or in which way does those categories fall apart when we're talking about the project [inaudible] ?

Lynn: [04:59] Yeah, I think they really do fall apart, as you said. When we're thinking about the Cyprus project in particular, there's a ton of research that goes into it, but that can be true for teaching too, that part. What visualization of anything helps you do is think up new ways of seeing the same old material that we've looked at before and hopefully lead to new research insights.

[05:24] I think it fits that model of digital humanities where you're visualizing things and then

something comes out of that visualization. We haven't done it yet so I can't say what's going to come out, but I'm suspecting that what we'll see are some interesting interactions between different cultures as we track these texts.

[05:44] As for public scholarship, that is a goal of that particular project. It's a part of a bigger global Middle Ages project that's meant to outreach, to let people know that there was a lot more interaction between societies during the Middle Ages than we imagined.

Ole: [06:02] Do you have some examples from that project or others that you think really capture how the digital environment is really able to let the end user experience that mode of contact or those objects, whatever that situation might be, better than a more traditional form of academic writing?

Lynn: [06:19] Yes, there's a project on the global Middle Age, it's globalmiddleages.org, and there's one project in particular that also...maybe I'm particularly drawn to it because it also uses the Unity 3D game engine and it's making a model of tolerance and interaction that happened in Plasencia, Spain.

[06:42] Roger Martinez has finished that project and it's up. You can play through it as long as the technology keeps up with it. I think for that one, it really does allow you to visualize the spaces that people were living in because he's particularly looking at a Jewish quarter in Plasencia and Plasencia is not a very large city.

[07:04] When you realize that everyone was living together and using the same merchants, the same really every aspect of village life, you start to see what it meant to live together in the middle ages for Christians, Jews and Muslims.

[07:22] That's one of the ways that we do that. I'm trying to think if there's some other really good examples. There's a textual project on there that's very, very nicely done using Scalar which is...It's a publishing format, but it allows you to put in all sorts of video and whatnot.

[07:46] That one, more than experiencing the world or the environment, it lets you see the manuscripts that it's talking about right next to the text and then easily link off into videos, if there are any, or a scholarly article. It just brings all of the materials together so that you're not...

[08:06] You're thinking about one concept at the same time. You can get back and forth pretty easily. Those are two different ways of doing it.

Ole: [08:16] I first got aware of your digital work through a project that you were applying for some funds for here, at Vanderbilt, for The Voyages of St. Brendan.

[08:26] Could you tell us a bit about the making of that...the description of what you've done, how you made it, what it involved, who it involved. As good as possible, what was the goal, what did you do and how did you do it.

Lynn: [08:37] Sure. For that project, which is still ongoing, but finishing up hopefully this year, that project is about, again, using a game engine to enter a medieval environment. In this case, I picked Anglo-Norman Britain.

[08:57] The idea is that people who would enter this world, St. Brendan's world, would be able to experience the culture and the language as if they were there, or as close as we can get to that, to get that sense of almost being there, which is something that you can't really have. I like to think of it like a study abroad in the Middle Ages because we can't do that, but what we can do is recreate the environment and enter into it.

[09:27] I really think that eventually, we'll get to this point with [inaudible] that you're doing really, that kind of thing, that it will actually feel like you're there and that that will bring enumerable insights into what culture was like back then, but also just help people be interested in something that was so far away.

Ole: [09:50] For those of us who don't have a PhD in the Medieval French Literature, tell us about St. Brendan and who he was, where and what the story involves.

Lynn: [09:57] Weirdly, he has no connection with Medieval France in a weird way, but what he did do...The connection with Medieval French is that he was the subject of the very first Anglo-Norman text that we have or what we think is the first, so very early 1000 and it was probably composed around 800.

[10:20] But Brendan himself was much earlier than that. He was an Irish monk and he became a saint before they had any canonization process. He was a popular saint.

[10:32] He's known for travel. He's a great figure because not only is there the story about him that was hugely popular in the middle ages and was translated into all different medieval languages, not to mention Latin, but he traveled, according to the story, he traveled around looking for earthly paradise.

[10:52] He went from island to island, and on each island there is an adventure, which works nicely for my video game because then at each stop there is a goal for the user.

[11:04] He traveled around these islands and eventually realized...He did get to paradise, but he wasn't allowed to enter. But it was one of those spiritual awakenings that allowed him to come back and be the abbot that he was meant to be.

[11:19] The story of St. Brendan continued to live in Europe for many, many hundreds of years. They really started to believe that he had found the New World. That legacy is what brought me to him originally because we were looking at medieval travel and medieval travel to the New World in particular.

[11:42] Someone even reconstructed Brendan's leather boat to see if he can make it from Ireland to Nova Scotia, and he did. It would have been conceivably possible that he did find the New World.

[11:55] We don't have any reason to think he did except for in the story, there are different landmarks that are mentioned like the Crystal Island that people imagine they might have been talking about glaciers. If you really want to, you can make an analogy for each island until he gets to paradise or the New World.

[12:11] It's just one of those stories that people know about, especially if you have interests in saints or travel. These sorts of things may bring back this story of St. Brendan.

Ole: [12:28] One of the features of this that I remember so clearly is the language that's used in the game. This is, if I'm not mistaken, old French that is no longer spoken version of...a dead language in essence. This is a way of re-enacting parts of that.

[12:44] How does that work in terms of how do you re-enact a dead language?

Lynn: [12:46] [laughs] Yes. That's actually really funny. One of my graduates is really

interested in that particular aspect of it. He's an actor as well. He enjoys not only writing out a conceivable script for the game, but also reading it in the proper pronunciation and intonation and all of that.

[13:06] Language is the main goal of that because what we had found was, and by we, I mean teachers of medieval French — we are a small group, but we're serious — what we have found is it's sometimes hard to get students interested in learning medieval French.

[13:23] They're fine with modern French, but part of it is that it's really...unlike Chaucer, which seems to be read aloud a lot in English classes, medieval French is not. Part of the problem is people don't know how to...they're not teaching how to pronounce it.

[13:39] One of the goals of this game is to teach proper pronunciation of old Anglo-Norman French so that particularly professors and people who are teaching the works can read them correctly and pass that knowledge along to students who can also get it from the game.

Ole: [13:58] You described this ultimately as an immersion experience of 1,000 years or a study abroad to another time, another place. How do you decide which elements are most authentic to represent? What is that historical research that goes into trying to represent as best as possible a re-enactment of the time that we don't have direct access to?

Lynn: [14:20] That's a really good question. There's some amount of luck involved in our choice because St. Brendan being... let me calculate this. It's at least 300 years before the first oral story, and the first oral story was another 2 or 300 years before the written story. He's so far removed from the written story that the written story isn't very...

[14:48] What we imagine is that, as people were hearing the written story, they did not imagine sixth-century Ireland. What they imagined was what was around them.

[14:56] We capitalized on that by using generic medieval things that we can find from the Unity Asset Store. That's how we do the environment. It's a fantasy environment as we think probably people at the time would have imagined it, not as it literally was.

[15:21] Now, if you wanted to do a reconstruction of a sixth-century Ireland or something like that, I would think you'd have to go to archaeological records.

[15:33] We can still make a 3D model of the leather boat. That's pretty easy because it exists, but for things as you say that don't exist, we have to go with the literary imagination and what's described. And a lot of times, not too much is described.

[15:48] We are doing a lot of textual analysis, but I would say less historical analysis in this particular one. The next project that I'm doing is going to be the opposite, more historical, more object-based and it's going to be more of a challenge to get the right assets into the game.

Ole: [16:07] You've mentioned assets and Unity 3D a number of times. I know that's one of the primary programs that you use. Can you describe a bit about the tools that you use, the pain points, learning curves?

[16:17] How do you get the expertise when you run into issues, if you run into issues? Tell us about the whole workflow in a more technical side, and feel free to get as technical as you like.

Lynn: [16:26] The game engine itself, basically, just presents you with a blank screen and then you fill it with the things and the scene that you want to make. For us, making the landscape, making the scene is fairly easy.

[16:41] I taught...working with my graduate students and undergraduate students, they can pick this up quickly so that's not really a technical hoop to jump through.

Ole: [16:51] By quickly, do you mean a couple of weeks, or you mean a semester, longer?

Lynn: [16:55] Definitely less than a couple of weeks. There are a lot of tutorials online for Unity and you run through one or two of those that might be even just an hour, and you're ready to try.

[17:07] What I usually find is that people who are comfortable with technology don't have an issue with this. By comfortable with technology, I mean basic things about the computer, but they also might have worked with Photoshop before. That's a big plus. It's similar to that.

[17:24] If they've ever worked with a 3D modeling program, that's a huge plus, but I haven't found a lot of students who've done that. We also...not this particular time, right now, I'm

working with students who are just working on the programming of the game and improving the look of it, but they're not making their own assets at this point.

[17:45] But I have had students do their own assets in the past. We use Blender for that. And students, again, if they're comfortable with Photoshop and willing to try, you're taking 2D drawing to 3D and it's not as bad as it sounds. I would say the learning curve on Blender is much higher than the learning curve on Unity itself, which is a little odd maybe, but it is true.

[18:12] Part of it I think may be the artistic component, but even so there's just a lot of different buttons and things that you need to know. The thing with the 3D-modeling programs, and there are several of the different ones that you could try, but we just use Blender because it's free.

[18:31] The thing with that is they don't necessarily label all the buttons, so it's something that you learn and you get to know as you work with the program. Learning curve on that I would say...I would think that if you were a student of graphic design, you would spend a whole semester as a serious course just learning to make reasonable objects in Blender. That's more complicated.

[18:58] However, I've had students who just loved it and did it on their own, so that's part of the thing where you just don't know.

Ole: [19:05] Unity and then Blender, both of which are free, at least, we have free versions of those. I'm also teaching a course at the moment where we're using Unity, Blender and some of these other types of programs.

[19:14] I'm finding, surprisingly, that the pain point I'm experiencing is not computer technical knowledge or even some of the scripting knowledge that's needed for interactions with the environment. I agree entirely Unity...to make the environment is surprisingly easy to make impressive environments relatively quickly.

[19:33] However, interacting with them and scripting that stuff, that seems to be one of the pain points that I'm encountering, but even more so is the artistry.

[19:38] The students are both less eager and less familiar with some of the more artistic creation and are more willing to learn the scripting possibilities like how do you interact with

the environment. Has that been relatively similar to your experience?

Lynn: [19:52] Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely. Last summer, I hired a couple of people outside of Vanderbilt, a couple of students...one was an art student, one was just really interested in art. They were able and more willing to branch out and make pretty things.

Ole: [20:10] Tell me a bit about the scale of how you do this. Roughly how many students do you have working on a given game or given scene at a given time, and who are they?

Lynn: [20:20] My experience even so is fairly limited, but I will tell you what I'm doing right now and what I did also a year-and-a-half ago during the summer. We had six students working on different aspects of the game. At that time we tried Dropbox. That was not very good. We did it, but it was not adequate.

[20:38] This time I again have six students and we're using SVN. I'm checking in with them today, but it seems to be going well. We'll see how that progresses. This works really well for Brendan because each student gets a different island.

[20:58] They can really feel like they own that. They think about it. They read the text very carefully. They interpret it because a lot of things aren't there.

[21:06] They use their creativity, imagination, whatever to make the island and make a language-learning module that goes with that particular spot. We get together in a group. We talk about how we want to set it up, what are we trying to accomplish, and then I try to give the students as much freedom to do what they want with it as I can.

Ole: [21:27] Are these graduate, undergraduate, or a mixture?

Lynn: [21:29] They are a mixture, but in this particular case I have five undergraduates and one graduate.

Ole: [21:35] I wanted to shift slightly to talk a bit about pedagogy. It seems like this Brendan example is a really good one of where you...I see pedagogy in playing the game. You're making a learning experience to immerse yourself in this other period, but also a pedagogy in creating the game. I was curious how you see the different goals in those two kind of environments in terms of where learning happens.

Lynn: [21:55] That's the thing I notice most about this whole process, is that the people who learn the most from it are the people who make it. You learn an incredible amount about the text, about the world, about the culture, about the history just by trying to visualize it and put it down in a way that hasn't been done.

[22:15] I would think it would be much like a film director or a film creator. You do a different level of historical analysis. They learn a huge amount, as do I, just thinking about, "Well, what did that mean?" or "How could that have looked if Brendan said mass on a whale? What would that look like? How would that fool people into thinking it was really an island?"

[22:40] There are some of those visual questions that you ask and I think people learn a lot from that, but then also just as we know as teachers, when you try to teach something, you learn it best.

[22:51] As students are trying to put together a way to learn a certain aspect of the language, they have to really think about it. "OK, what is that aspect of the language? How do I teach that? How is it different from other things?" They get some good experience.

Ole: [23:05] I've been finding somewhat similar...It feels like the day-to-day learning is in the technical components of how do you learn Unity, how do you learn some of those other computer technologies, but it's pretty clear that they are motivating them to do a really thorough historical research to get the details right.

[23:22] They're diving in at a level of enthusiasm that I don't necessarily see for a standard paper or research paper in some ways always. At least some students are doing so somewhat differently.

[23:31] I find that pretty exciting that there's a reinforcement between they're learning the technical material to better present the humanistic material, but they're learning the humanistic material better by really trying to maximize its technical potential. I find it really exciting.

Lynn: [23:45] Yeah, me too.

Ole: [23:46] You mentioned cinema. That's the next question I wanted to get to you is, why gaming? It seems like the idea of the cinema as recreating past environments has been with

us for quite some time. What is it particularly about gaming that gives, in your mind, a different or a better immersive experience?

Lynn: [24:05] Well, cinema can be immersive. Certainly as you're sitting in a theater you might lose yourself. I think that's a common sense that people get, that they're part of the movie, but you have no agency. You can't interact with what's going on. For me, that's a key part of making these games.

[24:23] It can't just be a 3D environment where people explore, although that is interesting. You have to be able to interact with the environment and change things and change the outcome. That's what really makes it a game and not just an immersive environment.

Ole: [24:39] As a historian, I've become pretty used to my students, primarily when we learn outside of the classroom about history, I would say cinema's probably the main method of which they feel they've experienced the past moments as opposed to textual or otherwise, I'm assuming that's somewhat similar for the literature as well.

[24:57] Those that are paying attention to gaming industry have continually hear has expanded past cinema. More dollars are in the gaming industry today than in Hollywood. How would you imagine the change of how students experience non-academic history, coming in primarily from games as opposed to coming from cinema, changing how they view their take on history or literature?

Lynn: [25:24] That's interesting.

Ole: [25:24] Have you noticed effects along those lines yet or...

Lynn: [25:28] One of the things I'm really surprised with is how few of my students are really into games, which I thought every young person was into games. Yes. No, at least at this point not everyone is into games, but when they are, they realize that there's a difference between the game that they're playing and the so-called real Middle Ages, say.

[25:54] I think with movies, there's more of an attempt to blur that line. Not always, there are certainly some that are meant to be funny and comedies and all of that. With video games students seem more aware that it's not how it really was. On the other hand, that's where I think the potential lies for academics to jump in because it really isn't.

[26:14] These games that are all about killing orcs and body wenches and this kind of thing, we could do a better job I think than the video game industry does. I'm not sure that we could do a better job than the movie industry. I'm very impressed with most of what the movie industry does. I know there's niggling little things that bother people about, "This is a historical..." or whatnot.

[26:35] The video game industry, with a few exceptions and one of them is the Assassin's Creed series, which I think is good, but most of the time it's not even an attempt to really make it like the Middle Ages.

Ole: [26:49] One of the things I'm interested in, a small number, but a number of games are increasingly promoting historical fidelity of some degree as one of the selling points of the game. I imagine that will potentially only increase. This is, to me, an area where humanists or non-gaming professionals might have a way of shaping some of the future of how these games are designed.

Lynn: [27:11] I hope so.

Ole: [27:11] Do you have any advice for other scholars or humanists to get involved? What's the level of expertise required? You mentioned you used to be a software engineer at some point. Is that a requirement to be able to get a job into these types of teaching environments?

Lynn: [27:22] No, absolutely not. I did learn a lot, C++, C, Pascal, a lot of programming languages back in the day, but I don't necessarily remember how to do that because I haven't used it, it's just like any other language you don't use. I don't remember it. I'd have to look it up. Seriously, the only advantage that I would have is that I'm not afraid of the technology.

[27:48] I think a lot of people are. It's really not that daunting. If you go through, say, the tutorials. I have some colleagues who just set their students loose on it. They don't even try to learn the technology. I think that's fine. Just say, "OK, students. I want to see what you can do to make an environment using this program," and see what they manage to do in groups.

[28:12] I probably wouldn't make a student do that individually. At least for this colleague, it worked out great. They have some amazing 3D immersive environments of medieval Africa. I think really you just have to be willing to say, "This is something that I don't fully master."

Even if you worked in a game company, you would not fully master every aspect of the game.

[28:36] This is where I think it's hard for humanists. You really have to see yourself more as a project director and not as a content master because I think we have complete control over our monographs and articles and things like that, and we don't know how sometimes to just let a little bit or a lot go, and that's what you have to do with this.

Ole: [28:58] A complete pivot here. We hear a lot about the crisis of the humanities. Do you feel the humanities needs saving? If so, is tech or STEM inclusion one of the solutions?

Lynn: [29:11] I don't think humanities in itself needs saving in the sense that it's still teaching and helping us think about the timeless questions that humanity has had forever and that we need to continue to think about. It's what makes us different from animals. I really don't think that the humanities are in crisis, but I think respect for the humanities might be a little bit down.

[29:35] Generally, the thinking is that people will have more respect for the humanities if it's connected with STEM. I don't know if that's true. It doesn't work for me because I think that there are all sorts of different humanists out there and that some of the most exciting work is digital and some of it is not. We really can't make it all go one way or another because we would lose so much.

[30:00] I do think, and it has been shown, from what I can tell, there are many more grant opportunities for digital work. I think that's basically a societal thought that STEM is more important than humanities. It's a way to catch onto that, but I'm not sure that it's giving us more than regular, traditional scholarship was giving us already. It's just a different thing.

Ole: [30:26] I liked how you phrased, "You don't need a level of expertise of any computer programmer, you just need to not to be afraid to get your hands dirty and learn these things."

[30:33] You mentioned way back in the beginning when you were talking about yourself as a young college student, the traditional story of a woman in STEM. Tell me about being a woman in digital humanities.

Lynn: [30:46] Yeah...

[30:47] [laughter]

Ole: [30:48] Is the story different?

Lynn: [30:50] Not really.

[30:50] [laughter]

Lynn: [30:52] No, not really. Yeah, I don't know. I think I see some of the same patterns. The good thing about digital humanities is that I think there's a focus on collaboration that wasn't necessarily there back in engineering days. I mean there was, but there was also exclusion. When we would do group projects, the guys didn't really want me to be on their team.

[31:20] It sounds like middle school or something, but it was true. I had trouble connecting with them because we had different interests and it was strange. Now, I think there's more of a collaborative experience. You can't help but notice that so many more women are in humanities, at least in French and the languages, than there are men.

[31:44] Yet, we're still turning out more digital humanists who were men or even if it were equal, that wouldn't be quite right. I don't know. I think there's an attempt. There's certainly an attempt to recognize this. There's plenty of different movements that are saying, "OK, we need to make sure that we don't replicate these women, minorities, that feeling of exclusion."

[32:07] I think it did reproduce itself and now maybe we're a lot faster at it, having lived through it before, maybe we're a lot faster at breaking it down, so I think that's a plus.

Ole: [32:20] That's one of the anxieties that I had in adding the digital component to my classes. I teach history of science and technology and I was already concerned that my classes were skewed male in terms of the undergraduate population, and how much effort did I want to put into something that would perhaps exacerbate that particular issue, this standard stereotype of who'd be interested in doing the virtual reality laboratory.

[32:42] I found that my students tend to be about 50 percent female and about 50 percent male in my very limited case study. When you teach undergraduates, are you finding the gender expectations to match what you'd expect or to be kind of surprising?

Lynn: [32:56] Yeah, I know what you're talking about and I had the same thought, but I was reading different studies on gaming and learning and gaming and it seems that, at least lately anyway, women are playing more games than men, but I think that they are different kinds of games.

[33:10] These first person shooters, I have had one or two women who have enjoyed doing them in the past and jumped right in, but usually it is guys that have a lot of experience with Halo or whatever. With Unity 3D, that's the environment that you're building in the sense that you're using an avatar that's giving you a first person perspective usually. Sometimes third person, but often first person.

[33:38] What does that mean? I think for me, it's not that the women don't want to do it because they do, every bit as much as the men, but they may not have had as much experience playing those sorts of games. Some of them have, so I would just say I focus not based on gender, but just for my own thoughts about how we should be moving forward with gaming in education.

[34:06] I try to remove the shooter aspect of it to make it less about the masculine warfare games that may have been particularly interesting to certain men — and some women — and make it more about the adventure games, King's Quest games, those types of games that I know both genders enjoy, usually.

[34:33] There's no way to say. Even if you were to take away the male-female divide, if there is such a thing in this, you still run into the technophobic or the people who just don't like games or were raised believing that they're a waste of time, or that they...There's still a lot of parents that won't let their kids have a game console or watch TV, so you do deal with that.

Ole: [34:58] We have a standard question here at this podcast that we ask all of our guests, the final question, which is what is your favorite analogue educational technology?

Lynn: [35:06] Oh, gosh, OK. Analogue, let's see. I think that students enjoy games even if they're not digital. I do play games with my students and there are quite a few that are medieval. Carcassonne is one, but these are board games that you can play, and then there's a whole...I don't know if you've worked with it at all, but I think it's called like Representing The Past. That's a cool thing.

Ole: [35:31] Have you run any of those modulars?

Lynn: [35:32] No, I mean I've looked into it, and I've thought about it, and I've watched other people do it. I belong to the mailing list, but I haven't tried it yet, but I think it's a great idea.

Ole: [35:42] I'm in the same boat and I work in [inaudible] Galileo and I've been trying to figure out if I can figure out a nice way to incorporate into some of the classroom teaching. Well Lynn, thank you so much for sharing your time.

[35:51] [music]

Lynn: [35:51] Sure.

Ole: [35:51] Appreciate it.

Lynn: [35:52] Yeah, that helps.

Derek: [35:53] That was Lynn Ramey, Associate Professor of French, here at Vanderbilt University. Thanks to Ole Molvig for that interview. I was struck by Lynn's comment that the people who learn the most from these historical games are the people who make them.

[36:06] Here at the Center for Teaching, we've been exploring the idea of students as producers — engaging students not only as consumers of information, but producers of knowledge. We've seen time and again how having students apply what they're learning to create something, particularly something intended for an authentic audience, motivates them toward deeper learning.

[36:24] I'll put a link in the show notes to a resource or two from our students as producers' work. I was also struck by Lynn's mention of the analogue game, Carcassonne. It's a favorite of mine. That makes two episodes in which board games have come up. Perhaps we'll do a whole episode someday on teaching and board games.

[36:39] If that sounds interesting, let us know. You can reach us through our website, leadinglinespod.com, and on Twitter, where our handle is @leadinglinespod.

[36:48] Leading Lines is produced by the Center for Teaching, the Vanderbilt Institute for

Digital Learning, the Office of Scholarly Communications, and the Associate Provost for Digital Learning. Look for new episodes the first and third Monday of each month. I'm your host, Derek Bruff. Thanks for listening.

[36:55] [music]