

Understanding the Paratextual Practices of “Let’s Plays”

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ABSTRACT

Let’s Plays (recordings of gameplay with commentary from the player or players) are a relatively new form of digital paratexts, using video games as a medium for creating new texts and meanings. In order to better understand their origins, it is necessary to examine them as products of paratextual practice. This research explores the Something Awful LP subforum (where LPs first appeared) in terms of the paratexts and paratextual practices they employ. By showing how LPs work as paratexts, and how their forms have changed within this community over time, games studies scholars and game designers can better understand how online player cultures form. This research will seek to explore the varied forms LP paratexts have evolved into, such as those that incorporate the audience’s input in gameplay decisions, and how involving the audience functions as a way of maintaining the cultural identity of the LP community.

BIO

Brian McKitrick is a 2nd year graduate researcher at the University of Melbourne. Originally from the United States, Brian completed his undergraduate and master’s degrees in Arts and Technology at the University of Texas in Dallas. His primary research interests include games studies and online communities, and is currently studying the Let’s Play community of the Something Awful forums.