

Women in Gaming

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

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Abstract

Gaming has typically been considered a male hobby, but there is a large group of women in the gaming industry that aren't talked about or are largely ignored. Almost half of the gamers in the United States are females. This thesis compiles information and research in a website about females in the gaming industry, both those in games and those that play them. This is to showcase that the tech and gaming fields are not as male-dominated as one might assume and to help highlight the role women have had on the industry. My thesis is a website I coded that includes blog posts and other information about the status of women in gaming.

Acknowledgments

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Process Analysis Statements

For my honors thesis project, I decided to do a website focused on women in gaming. In my education as a Journalism Graphics major, I had learned a lot about front-end development and had decided it was something I wanted to spend more time on in my time at college. I enjoyed coding because it exercised a different side of my brain than I had received in my school curriculum. It allowed me to be creative, but it was mechanical and relied on making sure everything was organized properly so the website would work. It requires a lot of attention to minute details, so it's really fun to test myself even though it requires a lot of patience, time and effort.

I decided to do a website based on women in gaming because I had always loved gaming ever since I was a kid. I grew up playing the PlayStation 2 and Nintendo 64. Gaming was an outlet for me, and I spent hours of my childhood playing a variety of different games. As I got older, I slowly stopped playing games when I realized how unconventional it was for a female to be big into gaming. It was a hobby, not like art or cheerleading which other girls were into, and kids at school thought I was weird spending my time playing videogames. Around the time I was about to graduate from high school was when I really got back into gaming again. I got a PlayStation 4, and my passion for videogames for back, not that it ever really went away. I also eventually got a Nintendo Switch, and I decided to stop hiding my passion in college. I realized it was still a little unconventional to play videogames so much in college as a female. Other girls were in sororities, and I was in my room playing games online with my friends. I like other things too, but I enjoy playing videogames and that's okay.

I have a passion for gaming, and this project was a creation of me wanting to show others that it's okay for females to game, it's not something we have to hide. Female gamers are out

there, even though it was sometimes hard to find information on it, but I wanted to create a website where anyone out there like me could find more information about women in gaming to learn that they aren't alone. I also want to publicize the fact that women are working in the industry, and it is completely normal for a woman to like videogames or even want to work in the industry. They don't have to like games like *Call of Duty* or *Fortnite* to be considered a "true gamer," but it's perfectly fine if they want to.

I know not everyone may understand everything that I'm talking about when it comes to gaming, which is why I included a [glossary on my website](#) that explained some key terms I will talk about here and on the site. If you don't understand a term, please refer to the link above and hopefully you will be able to find your answer.

This is where the idea for my thesis stemmed and it turned into this larger project. The beginning of my project started off with some bumps, and I guess the entire project faced some bumps in the road up until the very end. At the beginning of the Spring semester, I came back with the full intention of beginning my thesis as soon as possible. Then, I found out my project advisor would not be returning to the university, which made some major panic set in. I feel as if this describes the mood for the entire project. My focus went away from thinking about my project and how I would do it to finding a new advisor that would take on my project last minute. Thankfully, I was able to find someone and return to focusing on my thesis project.

I had some troubles with getting started on the thesis project. I had a large scope but was unsure about where exactly to start anything off. Eventually, I decided to start off with some research even though I was doing a creative project. I reached out to an old professor of mine who taught gaming at Ball State and asked him for some resources. He sent a few recommendations my way, but the majority of my time was spent doing research on the internet.

It was actually quite difficult to find research on my specific topic. A lot of places didn't really focus on women in gaming, which was a further push to make me want to do this project in order to have a space for these topics. A lot of research I came across dealt with gambling or the same topics over and over, but after a lot of digging, I feel confident I found a great set of sources to help with my thesis.

The next steps began with me reading the resources I had compiled and trying to make sense of all of the information. These research articles were great at supporting some of the claims I had already seen myself. I read some information that infuriated me, but that was the point of this thesis, to talk about all of the information out there even if it's unsupportive or false. A big thing I wanted to talk about was how women were treated both inside and outside of the game, which is where a lot of effort went. Some players don't see female gamers as true gamers, not as good or just casual gamers, so they tend to get a lot of backlash. Reading some of these reports was unsettling, but I wanted my thesis to be as accurate as possible, which is why I tried to look it up so much.

From there I started writing out some of the blog posts on my website. As a journalism major, I felt as if writing blog posts would be the best bet for my thesis project. I've had assignments based on that in the past, and it's an interesting form of journalism to delve more into. My "Treatment of Women" section is where you can find these blog posts. I wrote them more like a features piece so I could bring in my experience from Byte, the entertainment magazine on campus. This meant writing them with a bit more personality and opinion, but also backing them up facts and research from other articles. This step took a lot of my time because I wanted to back up my points with multiple claims so the reader could see where I was coming from but also have the facts to make their own personal judgement. This portion also required

me to collect images and make headers for each blog post. I will talk about building the website later one, but each blog post required coding a specific page for each post. This requires a lot of linking to other parts of the website to make sure everything flows together and making sure everything on each post was consistent with one another. Keeping track of a lot of different pages to display each post was difficult and time consuming, but I'm happy with the final result. Each paragraph of each piece of writing had to be placed separately in the code so they would be show up as different paragraphs. That means coping and pasting paragraphs separately into the code to be divided with paragraph tags.

The next portion I worked on was the "Prominent Women in Gaming History." This site was a combination of research and the utilization of a book I had been recommended by my professor, "Women in Gaming: 100 Professionals of Play." This book was a truly amazing resource as the authors had interviewed and combined this book of 100 different women working at some aspect in the gaming industry. It was a big help for this thesis as I was able to incorporate other women in my research besides the ones who had made history by starting up the gaming world.

This portion of the website highlights some women who have previously worked in the history and are currently working in it. It was interesting to highlight different aspects of the gaming world outside of developers and authors. The main problem with this was narrowing the number of women to feature down to a reasonable amount. Even though I would love to include every woman working in the industry, I had to select a few key people to highlight so I wouldn't be working on this project for the next couple of years. I chose some historical women to include, but also a few others I thought were making good differences in the world. I wrote short bios about each since websites tend to not have large pieces of text, and I had to collect images

of everyone. This was difficult since some didn't have proper photos, so I had to take LinkedIn or Twitter profile pictures. I then linked to some information that may be beneficial to the reader about each woman. Some linked to Twitter feeds while others linked to portfolios or articles about them. It was difficult to be consistent since not everyone had the same resources. This portion of the website was fairly time consuming as it required photo editing and making sure every link worked properly. You might notice that each link opened up a new tab instead of refreshing the one of my website. This require some extra tagging in the code to make sure I did it properly.

The "Background/History" portion also took some time to collect all of the data necessary. This section stemmed from a want to include some basic facts about why this is an important topic to talk about. I wanted to show the reader that even though gaming is typically seen as a male hobby, almost half of the people that game are females. I knew I wanted to create a few graphs for this, and the template I had chosen already had the stat counter to work with. I thought the counter was an interesting aspect to include in my website, which is why I decided to keep it. I also wanted to include areas where females have the largest audience of gaming—mobile gaming. Although mobile gaming wasn't a main focus of my website, I thought including some stats like that would be beneficial. This section also highlights how few women are working in this industry, which is where a lot of problems may come from. Having so few in these areas, when women work in these areas in other industries, is rather troubling to see. I never found why there were so few women working in the industry, but I felt as if it was really important to highlight the growth over time. The glossary can also be found on this page, which is a graphic I made to highlight some key terms the reader may not understand. This was important to include because a lot of people may not understand the terms I am addressing

throughout my entire thesis. This section dealt a lot with compiling information and deciding the best way to present it to the reader. I went back and forth a bit with different formats, but I'm happy with what I decided.

After collecting my research and writing, I focused a lot on the brand of my website. Since this was my creative thesis with a specific purpose, I needed it to have a nice, flowing brand that anyone could navigate the site and understand where they were. I developed the color palette after going through a list of options. I wanted something girly, but not overly girly, which is where my choices came from. The main header for the site included all of the names of females in game design from one of the books I used for my sources, *Women in Gaming: 100 Professionals of Play*. I felt as if this was important to showcase these women, even if I didn't have the time to include them elsewhere on the site.

The logo was one of the next things I did. This was difficult because I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted the logo to be. I didn't want it to be too complex, but I wanted it to make sense. After some rough sketches, I decided on an idea and then spent a lot of trial and error making the final project. The logo ended up being a mix of pieces to include. I drew the face of the girl and then had the nose be the female gender symbol. I felt as if that needed something more to connect it to gaming, so I started looking at things. Instead of choosing a headset, I decided to choose a VR headset, which is something a player would use when playing Virtual Reality games. I didn't want everything to be too repetitive, so I narrowed "Women in Gaming" down to "W.i.G" to showcase on the logo. After some critiques from some graphic design friends, I ended up with the final project, which can be seen in all sorts of places on my website.

For the graphics on my website, I wanted them to be fairly simple to not take away from the information presented. That is why most of them are text headers or basic photo illustrations.

I strived to be consistent in everything I made, which is why I felt the simplicity and neutrality of the pieces worked for the best.

The website was quite difficult to code. I started with a Bootstrap 4 template called Neos that I updated to make my own. This included editing the CSS and HTML to change the code to fit what I wanted the website to look like. There was a lot on this template I liked, like the angles and some of the larger images, but there was a lot that I found unnecessary or didn't like for the purposes of my thesis. One of the first things I did was change the colors to match my color palette. This was actually a lot more work than I thought it would be. In some cases, the colors would be hidden in the JavaScript file instead of the usual CSS style file.

I also began changing the layout to fit how I wanted it. Some things I had to add to the site to get them the way I wanted, like some blog posts and text placement, but others required movement from a different page. This process required a lot of file management since I had to make sure each file was consistent and wasn't missing anything. When I needed to change the navigation bar, I had to change it on each separate file it was on. That meant changing small details on 11 different files to make sure they were cohesive with each other. This wasn't too bad until I forgot a key detail, like when I forgot to add the favicon until the very end. The favicon is the little image that appears in the tab next to the title of your website. Mine is my logo, and it got added in at the last minute because I forgot about it until I had almost uploaded the website.

Picture management was also difficult to keep track of since I had so many different images I wanted to include. The original website used a lot of the same files over and over, so I had to go through and change each one individually so no image on the site would repeat unless it was supposed to. There are 39 different images on the website that I had to save and edit

separately, which took a bit of time. I needed to make sure each image had a small file size, so it wouldn't take up too much storage when I uploaded it to my hosting.

I love coding, but it is such a time-consuming process. I tried to focus on the small details so my site would look seamless; I didn't want to have any errors on the site. One place where I actually spent some time on the smaller details was the specific blog pages, so if you go to the "Treatment of Women" section and click on one of the links. On the sidebar, there is an about the author section with a button that links to more info. If you click that button, it will take you back to the homepage but instead of going to the top of the page, it will bring you right to the about section. This required some specific tagging of containers in my code to match the classes and ids. This might not make much sense to someone who doesn't code, but it's a lot of tagging specific items and then referring to them later. I felt as if this would be good to include in order to show off some of my knowledge of coding.

My creative thesis took a lot of research, time and effort, and I hope this process analysis statement shed some light on how exactly I completed my thesis. It required a lot of work in stages and planning in order to achieve all of the goals I had for my thesis. This is one of the biggest projects I have ever undertaken, and I hope the results show the amount of work I put into this project.

Documentation of Sources

The sources to my website can be found via this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vSc97ODO9I9Fq04eocY5-](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vSc97ODO9I9Fq04eocY5-dBASgzkf9aEolfIojMPz8Y/edit?usp=sharing)

[dBASgzkf9aEolfIojMPz8Y/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vSc97ODO9I9Fq04eocY5-dBASgzkf9aEolfIojMPz8Y/edit?usp=sharing). They are also reposted below. Although AP Style is the standard source for my thesis, it does not have a proper way to document sources, so the following are in MLA format.

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Digital Supplements

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