BOARD GAME TOOLKIT

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"CLASSIC" BOARD GAMES

Traditional American Board Games

<u>Common Examples:</u> *Clue*, *Sorry*, *Risk*, *Monopoly*, *Game of Life*, *Snakes and Ladders*

These games are often characterised as being competitive, lengthy, and use simple mechanics. One such mechanic is "roll and move", where a player rolls dice, moves that many spaces on a board, and does whatever action is on the board.

<u>Pros:</u>
- Games are light on rules;
- Games feel similar and familiar. Easy-to-learn mechanics, such as "roll and move" makes getting into a game quick and easy for new gamers.

<u>Cons:</u>
- Games tend to be long, often with no predetermined ending condition (victory points, set number of game turns, or depletion of game resources are common ending conditions);
- Often, games will include player elimination, which means some players will have to sit out future turns until the game is over;
- Lots of randomness and little strategy necessary to play.

<u>Why Include in a Library Collection?</u> A small number of these games are great to include in collections as people find these games very familiar and safe. They also make for decent gateway games to entice new gamers to peruse the collection or attract them to programming.

Abstract Strategy Games

We are probably all familiar with abstract strategy games, these include: *chess*, *checkers*, *backgammon*, *cribbage*, *dominoes*, *Scrabble*, and any card games using a standard 52-card deck.

These games are abstract - they rarely have any distinct authorship and have virtually no theme. That said, these games are classics - they are so instantly recognizable - and make for a great gateway to a library collection or program.

Games like chess and cribbage are reasonably easy to learn, but hard to master - which is probably why these games have persevered for as long as they have.

Why Include in a Library Collection? Libraries should consider including abstract strategy games for several reasons:
- These games can help create multi-generational play spaces within a library, and are well-suited for families and new players.
- Abstract strategy games are an inexpensive way to start a library game collection (unless, of course, you purchase fancy game sets).
- Since these games are so familiar to so many people, they can help attract patrons to library gaming events.

MODERN BOARD GAMES

Eurogames or Euro-Style Games

Common Examples: *Catan*, *Carcassonne*, *Puerto Rico*, *Agricola*, *Concordia*, *Castles of Burgundy*, *Power Grid*, *Viticulture*

Eurogames are one example of a modern board game. These games are characterised by having indirect player interaction (though this is not always the case), abstract components, low randomness, and requiring more player strategy than luck.

Game mechanics in Eurogames tend to be strong and commonly include: tile placement, auctions, trading or negotiating, set collection, area control, and worker placement. Themes tend to be somewhat weak - or "pasted on" - but commonly revolve around settlers/colonialism, mediaeval landscapes and castles, farming or building, developing tribes, etc.

Pros:
- Games vary in complexity, for instance, *Carcassonne* is a great beginner game while *Agricola* is more complex, but both offer deep strategic decisions which ensures games are highly replayable;
- These games tend to be easy to learn, but hard to master;
- No player elimination means players are always engaged and playing.

Cons:
- Eurogames often have weak themes and abstract game components, which can make immersion difficult;
- Player skill level differences may affect how games are played;
- There's not a lot of player interaction, which makes for a less immersive game (though some people love the concept of "multiplayer solitaire games", like *Castles of Burgundy*, *Patchwork*, or *New York Zoo*, which have players playing on their own boards with shared resources).

Why Include in a Collection? Eurogames provide deep gameplay that is highly variable from game-to-game - thanks to variable initial setups and the opportunity to try different strategies. These games are like a step-up from traditional American games in that they are often easy to learn, but tough to master. Additionally, there are enough tough time and resource constraints to add a feeling of tension and momentum, without prolonging the game.

Thematic Games

<u>Common Examples:</u> *Pandemic*, *Smash Up*, *Dune Imperium*, *Gloomhaven*, *War of the Ring*, *Mysterium*, *Elder Sign*, *Castle Panic*, *Flash Point: Fire Rescue*

Thematic games feature prominent themes that drive the overall game experience and often creates some form of a narrative - popular themes include: zombies or other post-apocalyptic scenarios, fantasy, and science fiction. These games focus heavily on immersion, and tend to develop gameplay mechanisms from the "top-down". Since many thematic games are developed this way, rules can easily become quite complex (though this is not always the case, there are some great simple, thematic games out there!). Unlike Eurogames, thematic games often have more player interaction - often pitting players against each other or having them work cooperatively against the game - and are more luck-based, in which players use cards and dice to provide some randomization/luck.

<u>Pros:</u>
- Themes can make for tense and immersive gameplay;
- Thematic games have immense storytelling potential that carries on even after the game is over.

<u>Cons:</u>
- Occasionally games can flop if the theme is not balanced accordingly with game mechanics;
- Heavily reliant on theme, so if a group is not interested in a particular theme, such as zombies, then the game may not be enjoyed to its fullest potential;
- Thematic games can be quite complicated and may not be best suited to a library collection.

<u>Why Include in a Library Collection?</u> Libraries should consider including thematic games in library collections for several reasons:
- Thematic games offer the potential for immersive gameplay and storytelling opportunities.
- The cooperative nature of many thematic games is a great tool for developing teamwork and communication skills among players.
- Reluctant players may be attracted to a game's theme, particularly if there's a well-known intellectual property associated with the game (e.g., *Harry Potter: Hogwarts Battle*, *Star Trek Panic*, *Jaws*).

RESOURCES

Books & Articles

Forsythe, C. (2021). Game on! Recreational play in the library: Reflections of a board game librarian. *Emerging Library & Information Perspectives, 4*(1), 143–156. https://doi.org/10.5206/elip.v4i1.13442

Mayer, B., & Harris, C. (2010). *Libraries got game: Aligned learning through modern board games.* American Library Association.

Nicholson, S. (2010). *Everyone plays at the library: Creating great gaming experiences for all ages.* Information Today Inc.

Library Resources

ALA Games & Gaming Round Table
Contains resources for librarians, including program and collection development recommendations.

League of Librarian Gamers
Is an inclusive environment for librarians and library-adjacent individuals to discuss and share resources.

Web Resources

Board Game Geek (BGG)
Online resource and community that consists of a large database of board and card games. Within this database, each game has its own entry with information about the game, including number of players, complexity levels, images, forums, and user reviews. BGG has also created its own classification system to describe and tag game mechanics and themes.

Meeple Mountain
Media outlet for game reviews, articles, and other high-quality board game content.

Meeple Like Us

Want to know how accessible a board game is? Meeple Like Us is a website devoted to producing board game reviews and game accessibility analyses aimed at mapping out the game accessibility landscape.

Videos

[Watch It Played](#)

A YouTube channel dedicated to teaching the rules of popular board games in an accessible way. This resource is great to not only learn game rules, but to also determine if a particular game may be a good fit for your library.

Online Board Game Platforms

[Board Game Arena](#)

Fantastic web-based platform that features a user-friendly interface, built-in rules, and scoring mechanisms. A free account is all that is needed (unless you want to get serious) and new games are added all the time.

[Tabletopia](#)

A sandbox-style web-based platform that is a little less user-friendly and requires that players have a thorough understanding of game rules. A free account is all that is needed to access basic games. Tabletopia is a great resource if you're interested in trying Kickstarter games.

[Boiteajeux](#)

Free web-based platform that hosts many popular Eurogames. Downside is that the interface is older, but Boiteajeux is a great way to play popular (and often out of print) Eurogames.

[Yucata](#)

Similar to Boiteajeux, Yucata is another free web-based platform with an older interface and a great assortment of Euro, classic, and thematic games.

BUILD YOUR OWN GATEWAY COLLECTION

This Build Your Own Gateway Collection tool is intended to help create a simple ten board game collection for your library of choice. Follow the prompts and record your collection on the following page.

Step 1. Party Games

Select two different party games from the following list.

❑ **The Resistance**
A card game of social deduction for 5-10 players.

❑ **Dixit**
A lighthearted storytelling game with voting for 3-6 players.

❑ **Can't Stop**
A push your luck game for 2-4 players.

❑ **Love Letter**
A little tactical card game of risk and deduction for 2-4 players.

❑ **Draftosaurus**
A clever dinosaur meeple drafting game for 2-5 players.

❑ **Abandon All Artichokes**
A reverse card drafting game that has players pruning artichokes from their hand of cards for 2-4 players.

Step 2. Light-Weight Games

Select three different light-weight games from the following list.

❑ **Kingdomino**
Tricky little domino game where players build the best kingdom for 2-4 players.

❑ **Azul**
Abstract tile placement and pattern building game for 2-4 players.

❑ **Jaipur**
Fast-paced two-player card game that blends risk and luck.

❑ **Splendor**
A competitive set collection and race game to be the first to reach 15 points for 2-4 players.

❑ **Carcassonne**
Simple, yet elegant, tile laying game of building up a medieval countryside for 2-5 players.

❑ **Ticket to Ride**
Complete contracts and build railroads routes across North America for 2-5 players.

❑ **Forbidden Island**
Cooperative game that has 2-4 players collecting artifacts before the island sinks.

❑ **Tokaido**
Zen-like game about travelling across Japan and enjoying the sights for 2-5 players.

❑ **Sushi Go**
Fast and fun card drafting game that has 2-5 players collecting the best combination of sushi dishes.

Step 3. Medium-Light Weight Games

Select two different medium-light weight games from the following list.

❑ <u>Pandemic</u>
Cooperative thematic game that has 2-4 players working together to cure infectious diseases.

❑ <u>Mysterium</u>
Cooperative game with limited communication that has 2-7 players working together to solve a murder.

❑ <u>Wingspan</u>
A gorgeous engine-building game that has 1-5 players collecting different bird species.

❑ <u>7 Wonders</u>
A competitive card drafting and set collection game set in the ancient world for 2-7 players.

❑ <u>Flash Point: Fire Rescue</u>
Cooperative thematic fire-fighting game for 2-6 players.

❑ <u>Small World</u>
A competitive area majority game similar to Risk with a fantastical theme for 2-5 players.

Step 4. Medium-Weight Games

For more complex gameplay, select one medium-weight game from the following list.

❑ <u>Power Grid</u>
An auction game about supplying cities with power for 2-6 players.

❑ <u>Castles of Burgundy</u>
A dice rolling and tile laying game of developing a vast estate for 2-4 players.

❑ <u>Stone Age</u>
2-4 players play as a tribe of stone age villagers fighting to survive.

❑ <u>Terraforming Mars</u>
1-5 players take on roles of CEOs racing to make Mars a habitable planet.

❑ <u>Lost Ruins of Arnak</u>
A deck-building game of exploration for 1-4 players.

❑ <u>Viticulture</u>
2-6 players compete to make the most successful winery.

Step 5. Record Your Collection

Abstract Games

1. Chess

2. Chinese Checkers

Party Games

3.

4.

Light-Weight Games

5.

6.

7.

Medium-Light Weight Games

8.

9.

Medium-Weight Game

10.