

Demographic Information about Videogaming

Videogaming appeals to a much wider audience than just teens and has applications that go far beyond entertainment. This summary includes data from various sources and is intended to help librarians understand the scope of gaming in the U.S. today.

Market Growth of Videogames

Jessie Scanlon addressed the issue of videogaming growth in his article for *Business Week Online*. Scanlon says videogaming is a growth industry and that 2007 predictions called for the videogaming market to continue to expand at a rate of 9.1 percent over the next five years. There is a shift in thinking about games as a product to understanding them as a service. Videogames are the third fastest-growing segment of the entertainment and media market, following television distribution at 9.3 percent and Internet advertising at 13.4 percent. It is anticipated that new growth will come from the casual and nontraditional game market. Online games are the fastest-growing segment in the U.S.¹

Research by Parks Associates, a consulting firm specializing in emerging consumer technology product services, found in 2007 that online gaming is still more popular than visiting social network sites or watching short video clips. 34 percent of adults in the U.S. use the Internet to play games on a weekly basis, compared to 29 percent who watch short videos, or the 19 percent who visit social networking sites. Gaming has more mature and heterogeneous revenue models including web-based game advertising.²

A Nielsen Media Research report released in March 2007 indicates the number of households with videogame consoles expanded by 18.5 percent since 2004. Gaming consoles are used to deliver high digital movies and Internet Protocol TV (IPTV).³

Demographics on Who is Playing Videogames

According to the final report from the 2006 on the *Summit on Educational Games*:⁴

- Eight out of every ten students ages 6-17 has a videogame console at home; many have two or more.
- On average these youth play games about 50 minutes per day.
- 30 percent of these students go online to play games at least once a week.
- 83 percent of students ages 12-17 report they go online primarily from home.
- 50 percent of all people in the U.S. play computer and videogames.
- 75 percent of all heads of households play these games.
- Adult men spend 7.6 hours per week playing videogames.
- Adult women spend 7.4 hours per week playing videogames.

Erin Helmrich and Eli Neiburger cite figures in their 2005 article for *VOYA* that indicate gaming is an \$11 billion content business and a fundamental component of the teenage media appetite. They claim 95 percent of teen age boys and 40 percent of teen girls play videogames.⁵

¹Scanlon, Jessie. "Getting Serious About Gaming." *Business Week Online*. August 14, 2007.

²"Gaming Remains the Most Popular Online Entertainment Activity." August 16, 2007. Parks Associates.

³Gyimesi, Karen. *Nielsen Says Game Penetration in U.S. TV Households Grew 18 percent During the Past Two Years*. Nielsen Media Research. March 5, 2007.

⁴*Summit on Educational Games: Harnessing the Power of Video Games for Learning*. Federation of American Scientists. 2006. Washington DC.

Julie Scordato cites research in her article for *Public Libraries* that indicates the average age of game players is 33 and they have been playing for an average of 12 years. She said that 80 percent of parents who play electronic games indicate they play with their children.⁶

Bill Sannwald reported on the results of a 2009 Entertainment Software Association (ESA) survey on videogames. He said that the assumption that videogames are primarily of interest to children, especially boys, is not consistent with data on game purchasers. A 2008 ESA survey found that:⁷

- 70 percent of gamers are over age 18
- 33 percent of all households own videogame console
- 38 percent of game players are women

Data on the Types and Frequency of Games Played

Action and sports games dominate the videogaming genre; however, strategy, family, and children's games are most frequently played on computers. Puzzles, board games, show games, trivia, and card games are among the most popular types of on-line gaming activities. Helmrich and Neiburger said that 54 percent of all games sold in 2004 were rated "E" for "Everyone;" only 12 percent were rated "M" for "Mature."⁸

In July 2007 comScore, a leader in measuring the digital world, released results of an international study done on online gaming. The survey excluded gambling sites. Results indicated:⁹

- The number of visitors to gaming sites reached almost 217 million worldwide, a growth of 17 percent since 2006.
- On average, gamers visit sites about nine times a month.
- Yahoo! Games was the largest of the gaming providers and attracted 53 million visitors.
- MSN Games is the second largest reading 40 million.
- Puzzles and card games are the most popular game choices on both sites.

Demographic on the Non-Recreational Use of Videogames

In their book, *Got Game*, John Beck and Mitchell Wade explain that at least 100 Fortune 500 companies indicated they intend to use gaming to educate their employees by 2012.¹⁰

Demographics on Public Library Ownership of Videogames and Provision of Gaming Activities

Scot Nicholson's report, "The Role of Gaming in Libraries: Taking the Pulse," written at Syracuse University, summarizes the results of a public library survey he did. Nicholson conducted telephone interviews with 400 public libraries that served populations less than 10,000 to get an idea of how involved public libraries were with gaming events. Gaming was defined

⁵Helmrich, Erin and Neiburger, Eli. "Video Games as a Service: Hosting Tournaments at Your Library" *VOYA*. February 2005.

⁶Scordato, Julie. "Gaming as a Library Service." *Public Libraries*. Jan/Feb 2008 pp.67-73.

⁷Sannwald, Bill. *Videogames in the Modern Public Library: The Who, Why, and how of Providing Videogames for Library Patrons*. San Jose State University. n.d.

⁸Helmrich.

⁹Worldwide Online Gaming Community Reaches 217 Million People: Online Gaming Web Sites Average Nine Visits per Visitor Each Month. comScore. London, UK, July 10, 2007.

¹⁰Beck, John and Wade, Mitchell. *Got Game*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press. 2004.

very broadly to include board and card games as well as video and web-based games. He found that:¹¹

- 77 percent of these libraries supported gaming in some way.
- 82 percent of the responding libraries allowed patrons to play games on their computers.
- Larger libraries in the sample were slightly more likely to support gaming than were smaller libraries.
- Over 43 percent of the libraries surveyed hosted formal gaming programs.
- About 50 percent of the responding libraries offering traditional board or card game events.
- About 20 percent of the surveyed libraries circulate games of all types.
- Only 13 percent indicated they offered console games for their gaming activities.

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Worldwide Online Gaming Community Reaches 217 Million People: Online Gaming Web Sites Average Nine Visits per Visitor Each Month. comScore. London, UK, July 10, 2007.
www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=1521

¹¹Nicholson, Scot. *The Role of Gaming in Libraries: Taking the Pulse*. Syracuse University. Syracuse, N.Y. December 2007.