
Program Idea: Learn, Quest, Play: Game Design with Kodu Game Lab

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Audience: Teens, Children Group Size: 10-15 Season: YALSA Teen Tech Week (March), ALA National Gaming Day (November) or any time of year

Researcher James Paul Gee has argued that gaming can profoundly impact literacy among 21st century learners. At Charlotte Mecklenburg's ImaginOn, the nation's only combination youth library and children's theater, librarians are putting this approach to work with their innovative Learn, Quest, Play program series. Using Kodu Game Lab, participants are able to craft their own game designs, experiment with digital

Supplies

Monitor (TV, laptop, or computer screen)

Xbox 360 or PC with OS: Windows 7, Windows Vista, Windows XP

Xbox controllers or mouse with keyboard

Purchase Kodu from Xbox Live (400 points, or \$5.00)

Preparation

Download and install Kodu on your Xbox console or PC

It can be helpful to create a short demo so participants can get a sense of how Kodu works

Kodu also includes some pre-built games you can use as demos

It's also helpful to bring information for installing Kodu on a computer if your program is running it from an Xbox (or vice versa)

Kodu Installation Instructions

Activities

1. Set up an area with your Xbox or computer and enough chairs for all registered attendees. (approx. 10-20 min)
2. Once participants arrive, begin the program by introducing the features of Kodu Game Lab (through a demo game or initially playing a created game). (approx. 10-15)
3. As you and your group progress through an introductory game, point out to participants what elements are editable (e.g. lighting, scoring). This gives players power over their environment. (i.e. if you envision something different-Kodu allows you to change it.)
4. Present players with a problem to solve within the game creator. For example, "Give the kodu the ability to move toward and eat the green apple (but not the red one) when it sees it."•
Note: It may be helpful to create a set of challenges for participants to accomplish within the game, or use reading material to help inspire participants' creativity.
5. Let each participant have a turn editing a sequence or element within the game.
6. Let participants continue experimenting and playing with their creations for the rest of the event. (approx. 30-60 min)
6. Finally, ask players to save the game so they can access it from home or the next time they're in the library. Clean up area and return materials (chairs, Xbox or computer equipment) where they belong. Thank your participants for trying something new! (approx. 5-10 min)

Extra Hints & Tips

Kelly Czarnecki from Charlotte Mecklenburg Library recommends: "Just do it. You don't have to be an expert in Kodu. Your players will help you!"

Kodu includes some pre-built games you can use as demonstrations. However, to get a better sense of how to play and to tailor games to the specific goals of your program, it's better to create your own game when starting out.

When running your first Kodu program, use the experience to learn more about the software and its capabilities. This is also a great opportunity to create some starter games and foster a community of Kodu users at your library.

Once you become more experienced, Kodu Game Lab is also a way to experiment with digital storytelling using the visual programming language to form "sentences" that progress action within the environment. Consider combining this activity with book discussions or lessons on narrative structure (i.e. rising action, climax, falling action, etc.).

When refining your program, there are many ways to direct participation, such as using reading materials as inspiration and directing game play as a reading response activity. Be creative and have fun!

Additional Resources

For more information on Digital Media and Learning: <http://www.macfound.org>

If you're really excited about the idea of game design in libraries, consider participating in or promoting [The National STEM Video Game Design Challenge](#), which is open for individual students, classrooms, and educators.

Also check out a great list of other game design tools and resources from the STEM challenge website: <http://www.stemchallenge.org/resources>

Online URL: <https://kb.demcosoftware.com/article.php?id=379>