

“Alternate Reality Games in Small Museums”

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ABSTRACT

Museums need to think creatively to attract and retain a young adult audience. One way museums are addressing this is by creating Alternate Reality Games (ARGs). Unfortunately, there is minimal research and application of ARGs in museums, especially small museum. This project documents the research, development, and implementation of an Alternate Reality Game at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas. I also surveyed the museum field in regards to their opinions on Alternate Reality Games. ARGs can be a great programming option for museum that have the resources to create one. However, in small museums ARGs are particularly challenging due to the lack of time, resources, and support.

"Alternate Reality Games in Small Museums"

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

An Alternate Reality Game, or ARG, is a game in which participants interact with the real world through a fictional one, usually using technology and the Internet, to complete tasks and often solves a problem or mystery. Alternate Reality Games are on the cutting edge in museums, with many people still having never heard of them. This shaped my decision to pursue Alternate Reality Games for my Master's project and to ultimately create an ARG for a museum.

Rationale

I first learned about Alternate Reality Games in March 2010 during a session at the Texas Association of Museums Annual Meeting called "Experiential Learning in the Museum: Using New Media to Create Multi-User Alternate Reality Games." Presented by Robert Bell and Vu Less of Enspire Education in Austin, I not only learned about ARGs and also participated in one during the session. In the summer of 2010, while visiting Washington D.C., I took part in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's ARG "Ghost of a Chance." This experience reinforced for me that ARGs are an enjoyable way to experience a museum and furthered my interest in creating one. As only a handful of museums and libraries have made ARGs, and more are starting to explore the idea, it was also a timely project.

Project Description

In addition to developing and running an ARG, I wanted to examine the feasibility of creating Alternate Reality Games in smaller museums, which lack the technological and human resources of larger institutions. Most of the Alternate Reality Games that have been generated in museums are at either large institutions or libraries that have extensive access to technology. ARGs have not been explored much as a means of programming in small museums, making this an important aspect to explore. Museum professionals often learn about great programming ideas at conferences and want to do them, but they do not know what it entails and how much work and resources are involved. I created an ARG at a small museum with limited resources to test its feasibility as a programming option for smaller institutions.

For the venue of my game, I chose the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas. I chose this museum because, out of my choices in Waco, I decided it had the best content to create a narrative for the game. The museum provides no technological resources to their visitors, which presented an interesting challenge to me since most ARGs rely heavily on technology. Technology such as computers, Internet access, and text messaging services, can be very expensive, depending on how much technology a museum wants to employ for their game, and many museums do not have the financial resources. Small museums also have limited time to develop programming, and Alternate Reality Games take a lot of time to create. All of these challenges were present at the Texas Ranger Museum, which served as an advantage to testing the feasibility of ARGs in small museums.

The Alternate Reality Game I created for the Texas Ranger Museum challenged players to prevent a plot to steal an item from the museum. Through the blog that launched the game, they learned about the plot to steal the item and were able to see the Facebook page of the person who was planning the heist. Once they arrived at the museum, they were led through a set of clues to figure out which object was being targeted for theft. If the players could figure out the object that was targeted, the museum could then prevent it from being stolen.

Methodology

I started this project by conducting a review of literature about Alternate Reality Games and their application in museums. I also conducted a survey of museum professionals to gather data on ARGs in small museums, because this is an area that is lacking in literature. After I completed the preliminary research, I created my Alternate Reality Game. The implementation then happened in two parts. First, the game was run with a group of preselected participants. Following their participation in the ARG, a focus group met in order to evaluate their experience. From their comments and suggestions, I made substantial changes that improved the game. Finally, the improved game was run with the public and further evaluated as part of the assessment of the viability of ARGs for small museums.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: Looking at Alternate Reality Games

What are Alternate Reality Games?

Defining Alternate Reality Games, called ARGs for short, is not an easy task.

The best introductory explanation comes from Brooke Thompson, a freelance ARG designer, who says, “Alternate Reality Gaming (ARG) is an experience that encourages players (you!) to interact with a fictional world using the real world to do it.”¹ An ARG follows a narrative in which the players follow clues, solve puzzles, and participate in events that are orchestrated by the game designer, or “puppetmaster.” Alternate Reality Games are not computer games or video games, though they may use electronic devices as a way of retrieving clues or solving puzzles. One person is not expected to figure everything out on their own; these games are meant to be collaborative, with some puzzles being so difficult that players must work together to figure them out.² Clues in Alternate Reality Games can be found anywhere, on- or off-line, and can come in many formats such as websites, e-mails, video clips, audio clips, or posters on a phone booth.³ ARGs are different than many online and role-playing games because “players function as themselves in a real-world environment,” they do not pretend to be another person

¹ Brooke Thompson, “Brooke Thompson: GiantMice.com”, 2010, <http://www.giantmice.com/>, (accessed September 11, 2010).

² Educause Learning Initiative, “7 Things You Should Know About Alternate Reality Games”, January 2009, <http://www.educause.edu/ELI/7ThingsYouShouldKnowAboutAlter/163614>, (accessed September 11, 2010).

³ Thompson, “Brooke Thompson: GiantMice.com.”

with different characteristics. Another important factor to ARGs is that players must suspend their disbelief and commit to the world they are playing in. They must fully embrace the new reality presented by the game and play the game as if it is real.⁴ Following is a discussion of some well-known ARGs to help clarify what is an Alternate Reality Game.

Development of Alternate Reality Games

“The Beast”

Although there were a few games that were played prior to 2001 that had many of components that would later be defined as part of an Alternate Reality Game, “The Beast” is considered to be the first Alternate Reality Game. It was created by Microsoft’s Game Group and played in 2001 as a promotion for and an extension of Steven Spielberg’s movie *A.I.*⁵ The game began by giving clues in the trailer for *A.I.* In the movie’s credits was a person named Jeanine Salla, listed as a Sentient Machine Therapist, and in the negative spaces of the phrase “Summer 2001” was a phone number. Participants who called the phone number or performed an Internet search for Jeanine Salla entered the game, or “fell down the

⁴ Educause Learning Initiative, “7 Things You Should Know About Alternate Reality Games.”

⁵ Sean Stewart, “The Beast,” *The A.I. Web Game*, <http://www.seanstewart.org/beast/intro/>, (accessed September 11, 2010).

rabbit hole" (in gamers' terms).⁶ In the words of Douglas Wolk, a player of the game:

You start down an enormous, convoluted path of cross-references, puzzles, and red herrings: a science-fiction murder mystery that involves e-mail, faxes, voice-mail messages, at least 15 distinct Web sites (each with its own purpose and design aesthetic), and 'rallies' for a fictitious anti-robot organization that were held in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago last weekend.⁷

Searching for Salla would take you to a website for Bangalore World University, in the year 2142, where Salla was employed. Players of the game discovered and became actively involved in a real-time story about engineer Evan Chan, who had been murdered.⁸ As the game progressed, the puzzles became too complicated for one player to solve on their own, and an online community was formed by the players, called Cloudmakers, as a place for players to convene to solve the puzzles and the central mystery of the death of Chan.⁹

Designers had three months for the initial design of "The Beast" and they continued to work and write as the game was played.¹⁰ The main designer and visionary of "The Beast" Jordan Weisman based his game on four assumptions:

1. The narrative would be broken into fragments, which the players would be required to reassemble.
2. The game would--of necessity--be fundamentally cooperative and collective, because of the nature of the internet.

⁶ Douglas Wolk, "Signs of Intelligent Life," *Slate Magazine*, May 15, 2001, <http://www.slate.com/id/106028/>, (accessed September 14, 2010).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ CPM Media LLC, "The Rise of ARGs," *Gamasutra*, 2003, http://www.gamasutra.com/features/20050509/hon_01.shtml, (accessed September 11, 2010).

⁹ Wolk, "Signs of Intelligent Life."

¹⁰ Stewart, "The Beast."

3. The game would be cooler if nobody knew who was doing it, or why.
4. The game would be cooler if it came at you, through as many different conduits as possible.¹¹

The game reacted to the collective action of the players; “The Beast” grew and changed depending on what the players did.¹² “The Beast” created a new genre of game, being the first Alternate Reality Game, and set the standard for the genre and all games created subsequently.

“ilovebees”

“ilovebees” is one of the most successful Alternate Reality Games. Created by 42 Entertainment, “ilovebees” was a promotional ARG for the upcoming release of the videogame *Halo 2* by Microsoft. The challenge for 42 Entertainment was to “create a campaign extending the IP [intellectual property] of the Halo brand in a clever way to attract mainstream press.” The main form that the game took was a “radio drama that was deconstructed and delivered to consumers over an unlikely medium: ringing payphones.” The game was played in the four months prior to the release of *Halo 2*.¹³

“ilovebees” was launched by giving the website www.ilovebees.com at the end of the *Halo 2* cinematic trailer and by members of the ARG community receiving via Fed-Ex jars of honey that contained cutout letters that when assembled gave the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² CPM Media LLC, “The Rise of ARGs.”

¹³ “ilovebees,” 42 Entertainment, <http://www.42entertainment.com/bees.html>, (accessed September 26, 2010).

same website. When players went to the website, they found what appeared to be a website for a beekeeper. The beekeeper's website had been hacked and contained strange non-bee and non-honey related material. There was also a countdown to "fully wide awake and physical" which would happen on August 24, 2004. Also contained on the site was a link to a blog that pleaded for the players' assistance with the hackers' activity. While there was much speculation about what would happen on August 24, in truth that was the day when the game began in earnest. On that day cryptic code words were released along with GPS coordinates and a time. The coordinates led the players to a payphone that would ring and need to be answered at the specified time.¹⁴ The player who answered the phone gave a code word found on the game's website in return for a radio clip. A total of 777 radio clips had to be retrieved from payphones in all 50 states and some international countries. It took players just under a month to retrieve all 777 clips. Once the players solved the game they were rewarded with an invitation to "Combat Training," an event held in four U.S. cities that allowed participants to play *Halo 2* before it was released.¹⁵

"ilovebees" had huge results for *Halo 2* and Microsoft. The game generated press coverage from many mainstream media outlets as well as nearly all important gaming publications. Three-quarters of a million people actively participated in

¹⁴ Arun Devidas, "Halo 2: Remember the Bees," *Xbox Feature at IGN*, <http://xbox.ign.com/articles/558/558097p1.html>, (accessed September 26, 2010).

¹⁵ Jonathan Prendergast, "Halo 2's 'I Love Bees' Alternate Reality Game," *ARGNet: Alternate Reality Gaming Network*, December 19, 2004, http://www.argn.com/2004/12/halo_2s_i_love_bees_alternate_reality_game/, (accessed September 26, 2010).

“ilovebees;” 2.5 million people were casual participants by tracking the experience online. *Halo 2* sold \$125 million in copies on the first day alone and has surpassed 7 million title sales of the game. “ilovebees” won a special award for innovation at the 2005 Game Developers Convention as well as winning a Webby Award.¹⁶ “ilovebees” is one of the most successful and best-known Alternate Reality Games because of the large number of people who participated.

Applications for Alternate Reality Games

Alternate Reality Games are broken down into five genres: promotional, grassroots, productized/commercial, single-player, and training/educational. Promotional Alternate Reality Games were the first ARGs to be developed, and when people refer to an ARG, they are usually referring to one that is promotional. At their core, promotional ARGs have the purpose of promoting a product. The types of products that have used Alternate Reality Games as promotion are: video games (“ilovebees” for *Halo 2*), movies (“The Beast” for *A.I.*), and television shows (“The Lost Experience” for *Lost*). However, other product types are experimenting with ARGs to create brand recognitions, such as Audi creating “Art of the Heist.” Promotional Alternate Reality Games are designed and funded to attract a large audience that can range anywhere between 10,000 to three million people. The product is not necessary to play the ARG, but there is often interaction with the

¹⁶ “ilovebees.”

product, such as players of "ilovebees" who played *Halo 2* before its release date.¹⁷

Promotional ARGs are centered on a specific product, they are created to attract large audiences, and they are well funded.

Grassroots Alternate Reality Games are the largest genre of ARGs. They appeared shortly after the conclusion of "The Beast," the first Alternate Reality Game, in an attempt to keep this newly created community flourishing. Grassroots ARGs are designed by an individual or group of individuals, as either fandom work or a work of fiction that stands alone. These ARGs are run by volunteers and have high volunteer/staff turnover with a higher risk for failure. These ARGs have a small budget (normally between \$150-\$2,000), invested by the creator, to create his or her game. However, they can be created for free, but quality requires some investment. Generally, grassroots ARGs attract smaller audiences than promotional ARGs, though there are exceptions with some grassroots games having a substantial following. Due to the nature of grassroots ARGs, they cover a wide range of content, and they allow designers to explore content delivery methods that have yet to be tried but that later games will pick up if they find that they were successful.

Grassroots Alternate Reality Games are flexible and diverse, and their creators have a variety of reasons for making these types of games.¹⁸

Productized Alternate Reality Games are created by a company as a money-making endeavor. These are designed to be commercial products. They are defined

¹⁷ 2006 *Alternate Reality Games Whitepaper* (International Game Developers Association, 2006), <http://archives.igda.org/arg/whitepaper.html>, (accessed September 11, 2010).

¹⁸ Ibid.

as having a product be part of the driving effort of the game or a critical element in solving the puzzles. The first productized ARG, "Majestic," was created around the same time as "The Beast," and was a failure that cost Electronic Arts the creator, between 5 and 7 million dollars.¹⁹ Today, productized ARGs are very rare because there has yet to be one that has achieved real financial success, so companies are hesitant to take the risk.²⁰

Single-player Alternate Reality Games are designed to be played and completed entirely by one person, and they are often promotional. These games are not bound by the time constraints that other ARGs are because they can be played whenever a person stumbles upon them. They are designed so that any one person can figure out the puzzles on their own, and the puzzles are set to react to more generic and predictable answers, thus the game does not change based on a puzzle answer like some ARGs do. However, because of the nature of ARGs, players still will collaborate to figure out puzzles and, once the first wave of players in single-player games have gone through, the answers to all of the puzzles are usually posted on the Internet. Single-player ARGs are a good place to start for people who are new to Alternate Reality Games.²¹

Educational/training Alternate Reality Games are a new and small category that is still trying to find its place as it grows in popularity. As technology is becoming more prominent in the workplace and educational institutions, ARGs are

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Michael Magee, "Productized ARGs," *Graffiti Comet*, October 22, 2009, <http://fictionalnarratives.wordpress.com/2009/10/22/productized/>, (accessed April 16, 2011).

²¹ 2006 *Alternate Reality Games Whitepaper*.

presenting a new way for people to learn while still having fun. These games encourage and welcome collaboration, a trait that is essential in both the workplace and school. Educational/training ARGs share most of the traits with single-player ARGs. This is a natural extension of the ARG genre and the more it is explored the more we will find out its full potential.²²

Alternate Reality Games in Museums

My first encounter with Alternate Reality Games was at the 2010 Texas Association of Museums Annual Meeting. I participated in a session called "Experiential Learning in the Museum: Using New Media to Create Multi-User Alternate Reality Games," which was presented by Robert Bell and Vu Less of Inspire Education, Austin. They taught us about what an ARG was by having us play one. We broke up into two teams to compete with one another. We were given a puzzle to decode to begin the game. We read blog posts, interacted with a person via Facebook, and used our smart phone. This was my introduction to ARGs as a programming option in museums, and because of this session, I decided to research ARGs for my Master's project.

One of the first major discussions of implementing gaming into museums was presented on December 2, 2008 when Jane McGonigal, an Alternate Reality Game expert from the Institute for the Future, presented "Gaming the Future of Museums," hosted by American Association of Museums' (AAM) Center for the Future of

²² Ibid.

Museums. According to McGonigal, 69% of households in the United States play computer and video games and 91% of youth under the age of 18 play these games. The average age of a gamer is 35, one in four players are over 50 years old, and 40% of people who game are female. Games are popular, McGonigal explains because games make people happy and feel more empowered than they think they can be in their everyday life. In order to be happy, humans crave:

1. Satisfying work to do
2. The experience of being good at something
3. Time spent with people we like
4. The chance to be a part of something bigger²³

McGonigal points out that museums already assist with the last two points on her list. The ability for an institution to offer people happiness will determine the institution's ability to prosper in the future. McGonigal states that happiness is the new capital and games are the best way to make people happy. Alternate Reality Games work well to make people happy. If museums "turn visitors into players, and crowds into super-collaborative communities" then McGonigal believes that museums will be places where people want to be. Museums will be places of importance if they can supply people with the ability to do the four things stated above. McGonigal ends by saying that "Museums can invent a better future—by making us happier and helping us collaborate to save the real world." She believes that gaming is the future for museums.²⁴

²³ Magee, "Productized ARGs."

²⁴ Jane McGonigal, "Gaming the Future of Museums - slides from a lecture by Jane McGonigal," <http://www.slideshare.net/avantgame/gaming-the-future-of-museums-a-lecture-by-jane-mcgonigal-presentation>, (accessed August 28, 2010).

The first museum to embrace this challenge was the Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), specifically the Luce Foundation Center for American Art. Actually, SAAM created their ARG before McGonigal delivered her lecture to AAM, so they were technically a precursor to the lecture. “Ghost of a Chance” was played from September 8 to October 25, 2008. SAAM’s goal was to attract the young audience that museums often have a hard time retaining. The premise of the game was that certain pieces of art in the museum had been haunted. The players had to figure out who the ghosts were, how they died, and banish them from the museum.²⁵

The game started when a body builder with clues tattooed onto his body showed up at a conference of ARG players. Some gamers photographed his tattoos and posted them to the Internet, where other gamers linked the images to the Luce Center at SAAM. The next stage consisted of two events that took place in the real world. For the first event, gamers were invited to go to a secret underground laboratory at the National Museum of Natural History where they examined the bodies of people who had been long dead (the ghosts haunting the museum) and figured out their cause of death. Another step took players on a tour of a historic Congressional Cemetery where the ghosts (actors) communicated with the players through Morse code. The messages were then posted online, analyzed, and decoded. For the final stage, players went to SAAM and embarked on six quests that took players through every floor of the museum to solve the haunting. While the

²⁵ Anika Gupta, “The End of the Game, a Mystery in Four Parts,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/The-End-Of-The-Game-A-Mystery-In-Four-Parts.html>, (accessed September 21, 2010).

designers meant for the players to solve the game, the main point was to get them to see and interact with the art.²⁶

“Ghost of a Chance” was created to reach out to visitors and promote contact with the exhibits in a way that had not previously been achieved. SAAM wanted to “engage their visitors at a deeper level, the museum hopes to show artwork in a new, more intense light, allowing for unprecedented interaction with their collections.” The head of the Luce Center, Georgina Bath Goodlander, said she “hope[d] people [would] discover things through the game that they [had] never seen before, and view the artwork in completely new ways.” Goodlander had the hopes that other museums would follow SAAM’s example and create Alternate Reality Games for their museums.²⁷

SAAM recently created a new Alternate Reality Game called “Pheon” that had its live event at the museum on September 18, 2010.²⁸ “Pheon” is a variation on Capture the Flag where the players are competing to obtain the game's virtual talisman known as the Pheon. They are doing this in an attempt to “restore balance to a virtual world called Terra Tectus.” At the onset of the game, players established their alliance to either the Staves or the Naves, the two groups competing for the Pheon, while also trying to prove humanity’s worth. The players then “complete[d] various missions focused on the museum's art collections, exhibitions, and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Holly Hunter, “The Smithsonian’s Got Game,” *ABC News*, August 1, 2008, <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=5490189&page=1>, (accessed September 18, 2010).

²⁸ Michael Anderson, “Play Capture the Flag With Armed Belly Dancers at the Smithsonian,” *Wired Magazine*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/09/play-capture-the-flag-with-armed-belly-dancers-at-the-smithsonian>, (accessed October 3, 2010).

programs to earn points and propel the game.”²⁹ Each group took part in three quests and received clues via text message and slips of paper hidden in the museum. The two groups competed against one another to compile points in order to win. “As the gamers scurried about the museum, they learned about several works of art, infiltrated the opposing team wearing disguises and showed off their dance skills to the belly dancers.” On September 18, the Staves barely won out over the Naves by successfully completing more tasks and accumulating more points.³⁰

The online version of “Pheon” launched on October 8, 2010. The online game uses Facebook as its home base so players can share photos and comments with one another. “As in the museum version, players will have a variety of tasks to complete, including developing secret handshakes and doing whatever their pet wanted them to do for one hour.” Players are more successful in the online “Pheon” if they complete tasks in the real world. Just like the museum version, players gain points for completing tasks and the points will continue to accumulate as the game runs through 2011.³¹

Other museums and libraries have created and hosted Alternate Reality Games. The Carroll County Public Libraries (Maryland) have developed and run two different Alternate Reality Games. Their games were created by teen volunteers for

²⁹ “Pheon,” <http://americanart.si.edu/multimedia/games/pheon.cfm>, (accessed March 18, 2011).

³⁰ Jess Righthand, “Pheon Launches at American Art Museum,” *Around the Mall*, September 21, 2010, <http://blogs.smithsonianmag.com/aroundthemall/2010/09/pheon-launches-at-american-art-museum/>, (accessed March 18, 2011).

³¹ Ibid.

the libraries' summer reading program and ran in the summer of 2009 and 2010.³²

The Braddock Library, part of the Carnegie system in Pittsburgh, also created and hosted multiple ARGs in which the players worked through puzzles via cell phone.³³ Trinity University's Coates Library created an orientation ARG for incoming freshman to familiarize them with the library and its resources.³⁴ The Peabody Essex Museum created a game in which they brought a dramatic story with music and a mystery into their galleries. There are a variety of storylines that can be followed throughout the galleries. Players can choose to go through one storyline or multiple storylines at once, depending on how much they want to play. Each of the individual storylines takes players through different areas of the museum and the storylines can be combined to include a more complete journey through the museum. The company who worked with the Peabody Essex Museum to create the game made it available and adaptable to other museums.³⁵ Other museums that are said to be developing Alternate Reality Games are the National Museum of Natural History, the National Zoo, and the Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings.³⁶ This

³² Heather Owings, "Building an ARG: alternate reality games challenge teens to use technology in new ways," *School Library Journal* 55, no. 12 (December 2009): 26(2).

³³ Andrea Bullard, "It's round two for Secret City, an interactive alternate-reality game at the Braddock Library," *Pittsburgh City Paper*, December 10, 2009, sec. Art, <http://www.pittsburghcitypaper.ws/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A72751>, (accessed October 7, 2010).

³⁴ Donald, Jeremy, "Blood on the Stacks II," <http://lib.trinity.edu/libinfo/newsletter/fall2007/newsletterBOTS.shtml>, (accessed November 5, 2010).

³⁵ Rivertree Productions, Inc., "The Vanshers Q & A," www.oddsbodkin.net/The_Vanishers_files/Vanishers%20Q%26A%20.pdf, (accessed November 5, 2010).

³⁶ Georgina Goodlander, "ARGs at other museums", September 27, 2010, <https://mail.google.com/mail/?shva=1#inbox/12b469e942a962e2>, (accessed October 19, 2010).

discussion is not exhaustive, but is a small look into how some libraries and museums are utilizing ARGs.

Why Should Museums Consider ARGs

Museums have long been a place of learning and education; however, education was not fully recognized as a function of museums until the publication of *Museums for a New Century* in 1984.³⁷ The report proclaimed learning as a vital part of museums and one that needs to be more fully explored to realize its potential. Education is now an imperative function of museums. In 1992, AAM published the landmark publication *Excellence and Equity* that stated, “there have been significant changes in the way the museum field and professionals in individual museums view the public responsibility of museums.”³⁸ This shift went from focusing on what museums want to present to their public to what the museum’s public wants from the museum. This was further enforced by museum scholar Stephen Weil’s emphasis that museums need to go “from being *about* something to being *for* somebody.”³⁹ This does not mean that we, as museum professionals, will change everything that we do, but we need to reach out to a broader audience. *Excellence*

³⁷ American Association of Museums. Commission on Museums for a New Century., *Museums for a new century: a report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1984).

³⁸ Ellen Cochran Hirzy and American Association of Museums., *Excellence and equity: education and the public dimension of museums*, [3rd]. (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2008).

³⁹ Stephen E Weil, *Making museums matter* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

and Equity further supports this idea by being a proponent of diversity in the audience of a museum and reaching out to a museum's entire community.⁴⁰

The audience that visits the Texas Ranger Museum is very specific with a majority of their visitors being older individuals, military, or law enforcement. Waco is home to Baylor University, a population of young students, who have most likely had no contact with the museum. The creation of an Alternate Reality Game at the Texas Ranger Museum is an attempt to draw in a younger audience of visitors that would not normally visit the museum therefore diversifying their audience and serving an audience untapped by the museum's current efforts.

An important aspect of today's museum visitor is their desire to be able to choose what they do and see, referred to as free-choice learning. Visitors enjoy being in charge of their own experience and choosing what to learn. Additionally, visitors prefer to interact with museums in ways that are comfortable for them. Keep in mind, "visitors greatly prefer interactive elements—and other means of participation—in exhibits."⁴¹ Also, most people do not expect museums to be social, interactive, and comfortable; however that is something they desire.⁴² Being social, interactive, and comfortable describes Alternate Reality Games for many young people. Alternate Reality Games give visitors a new and different way to interact with a museum's collection. They still examine artifacts and learn, but in a way that

⁴⁰ Hirzy and American Association of Museums., *Excellence and equity*.

⁴¹ George E Hein and Mary Alexander, *Museums, places of learning*, Professional practice series (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1998).

⁴² John H Falk and Lynn D Dierking, *The museum experience* (Washington, D.C.: Whalesback Books, 1992).

gives them a sense of accomplishment and completion of a task. ARGs present a different way for visitors to experience a museum and encounter its objects, all while enforcing the museums' educational mission.

Each visitor comes to a museum with a personal agenda, an idea of what they want to do and see. They have preconceived expectations of what their visit will be like. These expectations affect how the visitor approaches the museum and whether or not their experience with the museum is satisfactory. Marilyn Hood lays out six criteria that are assessment measures of reasons people choose leisure activities, including visits to museums:

1. Being with people, or social interaction;
2. Doing something worthwhile;
3. Feeling comfortable and at ease in one's surroundings;
4. Having a challenge of new experiences;
5. Having an opportunity to learn; and
6. Participating actively.⁴³

For those visitors who are looking for an experience that fulfills all six of the criteria, an Alternate Reality Game in a museum could fulfill that. ARGs allow visitors to interact with a museum in a way different than any other museum program. They have a mission to accomplish, usually as a team, and are empowered, thereby creating an enjoyable experience. Visitors see things they may have never looked at before and encounter the content in a way that is very personal to them. The museum will become a more comfortable environment for those who enjoy playing games, while for others, it will be a challenging new experience. ARGs are guided by what the museum staff creates, yet visitors will experience and encounter things in

⁴³ Ibid.

their own way. Not having complete control may be scary for some museum staff members, but it results in an enjoyable experience for the visitor.

Many museums are implementing more participatory means of interacting as a way to stay relevant and attract a younger and more diverse audience; some use technology while others find different ways for visitors to interact. According to Nina Simon, an expert in participatory museums, "by pursuing participatory techniques that align with institutional core values, it is possible to make your institution more relevant and essential to your communities than ever before."⁴⁴

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, is becoming more prevalent in our society, and it is a good way for museums to reach younger audiences. It is common for most museums to at the very least have a Facebook page, and this type of social media is one avenue that can be utilized for sections of an ARG. Another method of museum participation would be through an Alternate Reality Game. The Internet and all of the technology of today can be harnessed as ways to improve people's interactions with museums and enhance their overall experience. Clearly Freeman Tilden in his book *Interpreting Our Heritage*, which was originally published in 1957, was not imaging these technological resources. However, he does make an interesting comment about enhancing education, which is relevant to this project. Tilden said, "Whether one likes it or not, we are going to have more

⁴⁴ Nina Simon, "Preface: Why Participate?," in *The Participatory Museum*, <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/preface/>, (accessed April 4, 2011).

[gadgets]—and I should hope, better—mechanical devices aimed at multiplying the interpretive effort [of museums].”⁴⁵

There are many questions and obstacles that must be addressed when considering ARGs. Does the museum have the technological resources; does that matter? Can the museum spare the time and resources to create an ARG? Is there an audience for an ARG at the museum? Alternate Reality Games sound like a great way to bring in people, but a museum needs to make sure it is feasible for them first.

⁴⁵ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our heritage*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

CHAPTER THREE

Surveying the Field on Alternate Reality Games

What I Did

As part of my study on Alternate Reality Games, I decided to create a survey about ARGs and sent it out via e-mail to museum professionals to get their feedback on Alternate Reality Games. I sent out a six-question survey using two museum professional list servs: Museum-L⁴⁶ and AAMG-L.⁴⁷ A total of 124 people took part in the survey. I asked for people to participate whether they had heard of an Alternate Reality Game or not. The survey was created using Survey Monkey, an online survey creator which is easy to use. I decided to use Survey Monkey because I have had previous experience creating surveys through it. To create a survey, all one needs to do is input their questions and set up their answers; the website then generates the survey and creates a link for the particular survey that can be sent to anyone. The results of my survey follow.

⁴⁶ "MUSEUM-L@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM," <http://www.lsoft.com/scripts/wl.exe?SL1=MUSEUM-L&H=HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM>, (accessed May 10, 2011).

⁴⁷ "AAMG-L: Assoc of Academic Museums & Galleries," <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AAMG-L/>, (accessed May 10, 2011).

The Survey

Question One: How many full-time staff members do you have at your institution?

I asked this question so I could better gauge the size and the human resources of the museums that responded. The majority, 75.8% of respondents worked at a museum with ten or less full-time staff members. (See Fig. 1)

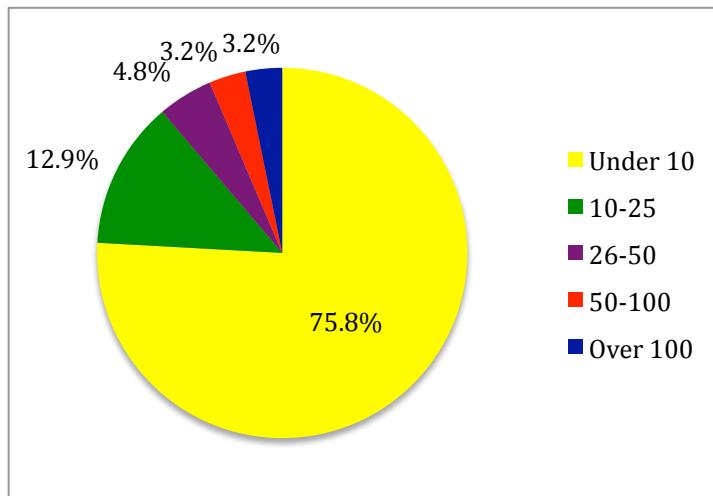


Figure 1: Full-Time Staff

Question Two: Have you heard of Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) before?

Of 124 respondents, sixty-three or 50.8% answered no and sixty-one answered yes, making an even split.

Question Three: Have you ever considered creating an ARG for your museum?

Question Four: What influenced this decision?

Questions three and four are related to one another. In response to creating an ARG for their own museum, 84.4% responded no, while 15.6%, a total of nineteen people, have considered creating an ARG for their museum. Two respondents

skipped this question. When asked what influenced their decision, the response options given were: time, technology, audience, and other. (See Fig. 2) Responses were evenly divided among the four choices. Twenty-five respondents skipped this question and fifty-two people responded in the other category. Of those respondents who answered other, twenty-two, used other as a way of saying that they do not know what ARGs are, so they have not considered them for their museum.

Eleven respondents cited cost was a contributing factor. Four respondents cited audience concerns such as lack of audience for an ARG, uncertainty about how it might be received, or lack of support from supervisors or administrators. Five respondents noted a lack of time or other priorities.

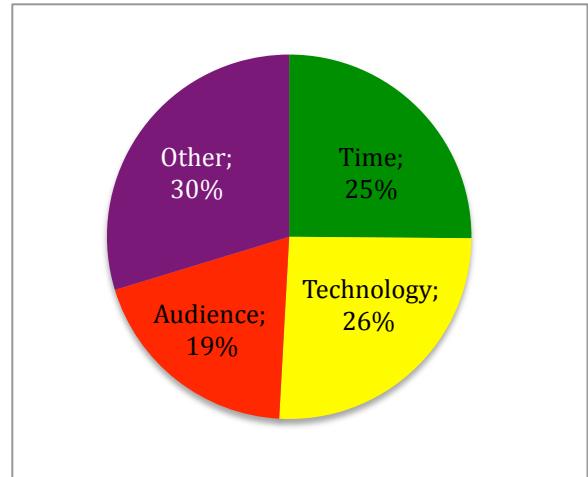


Figure 2: Factors Influencing ARG Creation

Question Five: What kinds of technology do visitors have access to in your museum?

The options given for response were: computers, wireless Internet, cell phone tours, none of the above, and other. (See Fig. 3) I received a total of 171 responses since respondents had the freedom to choose more than one option for this question. Sixty-one respondents, or 36%, responded none of the above. A variety of different responses were given in the other category including audio/visual components, iPod tours, audio tours, touch screens, and interactives.

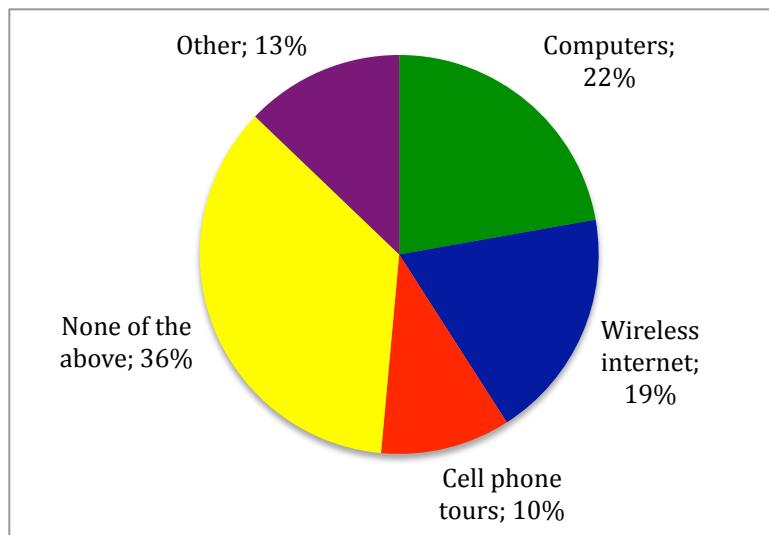


Figure 3: Technology Available in Museums

Question Six: Any other comments about ARGs, your museum's decision about ARGs, or your thoughts about ARGs would be greatly appreciated.

Forty-three survey participants left comments in this section. There were a lot of very interesting comments that represent a variety of viewpoints and conundrums. Roughly eleven people expressed their lack of knowledge of what an Alternate Reality Game is, while some also articulated an interest. I drew out some of the major challenges of ARGs in museums from the participants' responses. Lack of knowledge pertaining to Alternate Reality Games is the first barrier to ARG creation.

We are a small house museum that is a part of a much larger foundation with a educational and preservational mission; our primary audience is field trips of 1 - 8th graders, and I don't have a clear vision how ARG's would be benificial [sic] to our school programs. (But, I'm open to all good ideas and new lines of thinking!)

I'm not entirely sure what you mean by an ARG in this context, so I answered #4 based on how we have decided not to pursue technology-based games like SCVNGR at this point. Basically, as a county museum in a largely rural area (adjacent to a large-ish city), we don't currently have an audience who is interested or equipped to interact with the museum using technology. That said, I am a gamer in

my free time (both video & tabletop RPGs) and am excited about the possibility of combining museums and games, so I'd love to know exactly what you mean by ARG.

Other professionals are not sure how Alternate Reality Games can be used educationally or do not think they are a very effective programming option.

I just read the Wikipedia definition of ARGs and think this is an interesting idea to pursue. I wonder if it has applications as an educational tool or should only be considered as a development outreach.

I haven't seen ARG used in a truly effective manner in museums as of yet. Like so many interactive approaches that have been used or attempted in museums over the years, there is a very fine line between creating an engaging and meaningful experience (meaningful being the really important word in this type of thing), and an experience that is more like an arcade game or typical home computer game. Finding that sweet spot is really hard to do.

Another major barrier that museum professionals point out is the lack of time they have to create new programming options, especially when thinking about ARGs.

We barely have time to keep up with social media and our website. Of course we'd be thrilled to be able to work with someone on ARGs or other advanced technologies, but have no money to pay anyone nor much time to devote to it.

The museum I work at would likely be interested in developing an ARG, as our Education staff have demonstrated interest in new ways of engaging a wider audience. With limited staff overall and a rotating IT staff, this takes a lower priority to other web technologies that we can easily generate in-house.

We considered trying to create an ARG about our community's history as a collaborative project with other non-profits. Time, ability to coordinate, and lack of technology resources were among the stumbling blocks we faced.

We would like to have something like this in the museum (what if the bomb wasn't dropped on Japan, what if Germany got the bomb first,

etc), but we don't have the staff to do it internally or the budget to have it done externally.

Our museum does offer live action role-play experiences based on historical happenings that affected the occupants of the historic home, and they've been very popular. An ARG is something I'm very interested in exploring, but time constraints keep me from the pursuit.

Other museums either do not have the support of their directors for creating an ARG or the atmosphere of the museum does not support an ARG.

We looked into this quite extensively about a year ago and were summarily shut-down by our director (who was unfortunately very anti-tech but who is no longer here) and by the county IT department. We are still investigating it on a smaller scale.

While we always want to encourage visitors to imagine themselves immersed in the past, we are very careful not to place any unnecessary layers of technology or didactic display between the visitors and the original House and items on display. Instead, we rely on the atmosphere created naturally by the site to help people make an empathetic connection to those who lived before us.

From this survey, I have learned that there are a variety of bases of knowledge and opinions on Alternate Reality Games. Slightly over half of the people who participated in my survey had never heard of an Alternate Reality Game before, but they were intrigued enough by the topic to fill out the survey. Only 16% of the total respondents have thought about creating an Alternate Reality Game for their museum. No matter how diverse the experience or knowledge, the response from so many people in the field definitely shows interest.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Lone Star Caper

How To Create an ARG

Creating an Alternate Reality Game is not the easiest task because there is no specific formula or way to go about it. All ARGs are different, so when creating an ARG the designer needs to look at characteristics of ARGs. All Alternate Reality Games utilize some form of technology, follow a storyline, and have an end point that the players are trying to reach. Some games are fairly structured with a predetermined ending in mind, while others are changed and formed by the actions of the players. For a small museum with limited resources, it is best to have the ARG fairly structured with a predetermined ending.

Jane McGonigal, a leading expert in game development, lays out ten steps to follow in the process of creating an Alternate Reality Game. McGonigal gave these ten steps to Heather Owings when Owings was creating an Alternate Reality Game at the Carroll County (MD) Public Library:

1. Create a puppetmaster team to build the storyline, create a satisfying conclusion, and guide the game in the necessary direction.
2. Brainstorm your theme/story and name your game.
3. Pick the game “verbs.” These are what you are asking the players to do to win the game, such as: solve, collect, create, go to, write, find.
4. Make a media plan. What sites and technology will you use? (blogs, SMS, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Email, Websites, Flickr, YouTube, etc.)
5. Design your community. What collaboration sites and technologies will you use? (wikis, social network sites, discussion forums, comments, etc.)
6. Decide on a launch date. When does the game start? How long will it last?

7. Identify your team's strengths and pick design roles. Who will write the story, do research, direct the game, design the puzzles, act, etc.?
8. Make a game timeline outlining how the game starts, the succession of events, the important plot points or missions, the media schedule, and how it ends.
9. Create the content! This is where character profiles and sites are created, all the written content is created, videos are made, photos are taken, puzzle clues are created, etc.
10. Decide who to invite.⁴⁸

McGonigal also gave tips on how to make an ARG “awesome.” She says that designers need to make sure that players know exactly what to do. The game should help players show off their superpowers and abilities. The game should be very social, and game designers must remember that the players are the real stars of the game.⁴⁹

The above information is the extent of the guidance that I could find in regards to designing an Alternate Reality Game. A lot of the design process comes through trial and error. Success is usually unforeseeable, and the only way to find out how an ARG will do is to run the game; some ARGs have done very well, while others have suffered. I used McGonigal’s suggestions to design my ARG for the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum.

My game went through many changes throughout the design process. Once the preliminary game was designed, it was tested with a group of museum staff from the Texas Ranger Museum, the Mayborn Museum, and graduate students from Baylor University’s Department of Museum Studies. After the participants played

⁴⁸ Owings, “Building an ARG: alternate reality games challenge teens to use technology in new ways.”

⁴⁹ Jane McGonigal, “Make An Alternate Reality Game!”, 2007, <http://www.slideshare.net/avantgame/make-an-alternate-reality-game>, (accessed October 24, 2010).

the game, a one-hour discussion followed. Many of their suggestions were used to make changes to the game. The critique session will be discussed more fully later in this section. Three weeks later, the ARG was facilitated for the general public.

Choosing a Location

When choosing a location, I did not want to have to travel, so I chose a museum in Waco, Texas near Baylor University. Waco has a population of roughly 120,000 people.⁵⁰ The median household income is around \$30,000. 46.8% of the people in Waco are white, 29.1% are Hispanic, 21.3% are black, and 2.8% are of another race.⁵¹ Waco has three universities and colleges, the largest being Baylor University with a total enrollment of 14,900 students.⁵²

Of the many museums in Waco, I decided to approach the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum because I believed its exhibits and collection would be a good host to an ARG narrative. The Texas Ranger Museum has a two-part mission, "(1) To disseminate knowledge and inspire appreciation of the Texas Rangers, a legendary symbol of Texas and the American West; (2) To serve as the principal repository for artifacts and archives relating to the Texas Rangers."⁵³ Founded in

⁵⁰ "Demographics," *City of Waco, Texas*, 2007, <http://www.waco-texas.com/economic-development/demographics.asp>, (accessed March 27, 2011).

⁵¹ "Waco, Texas," Waco, Texas Profile, 2010, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Waco-Texas.html>, (accessed March 27, 2011).

⁵² "Baylor University Admissions," *Baylor University*, <http://www.baylor.edu/adm/>, (accessed March 27, 2011).

⁵³ "Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum: Mision and Goals," *The Official Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, Texas*, 2009, <http://www.texasranger.org/visitor/MissionGoals.htm>, (accessed March 27, 2011).

1835, "the Texas Rangers are the oldest law enforcement organization on the North American continent with statewide jurisdiction."⁵⁴

The museum is laid out into seven galleries with challenging traffic patterns so a map was essential to the players. (See Fig. 4) When visitors enter the museum, they walk first into the Garrison Gallery, which gives them an introduction to the Texas Rangers. They can then turn right to go into the Morris Gallery, which outlines the first century of the Texas Rangers, from 1823-1935. The following gallery, Brownfield, is an exhibit on the modern Ranger, from 1935 to the present.

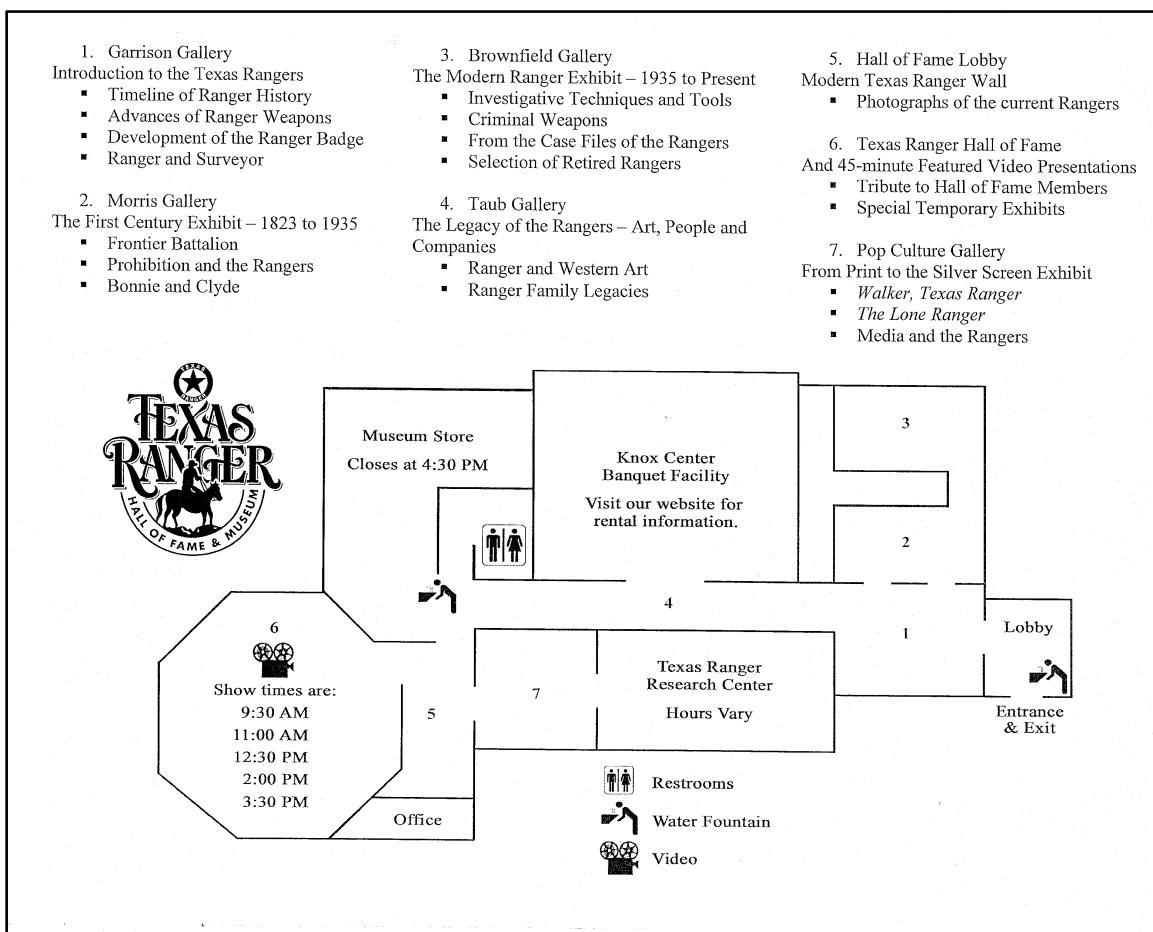


Figure 4: Map of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

⁵⁴ McGonigal, "Gaming the Future of Museums - slides from a lecture by Jane McGonigal."

The next area, which is a hallway, known as Taub, has exhibits on the legacy of the Rangers. Once through Taub, visitors can walk into one of three galleries. The first is the Hall of Fame lobby, which contains a wall of the current Texas Rangers. Another option is to walk into the Hall of Fame where inducted Rangers are highlighted. The Hall of Fame wraps around an area where visitors can watch a video about the Texas Rangers. The last gallery option looks at the Texas Rangers in popular culture.

The Texas Ranger Museum draws a rather specific audience, with 68,185 people attending in 2010. A majority of the people who visit the museum are older individuals. The museum also appeals to law enforcement and military personnel. All of this is evident by the fact that the museum gives discounts to seniors, military personnel, and law enforcement. The demographic of the museum's visitors presented a challenge to me because a majority of gamers are in their teens through thirties, a group of individuals not prevalent at the museum. This group has not been actively pursued as a new audience by the museum. However, staff was intrigued at the prospect of ARGs as a way to attract this younger audience.

Design of Preliminary Game

Due to the fact that I was the sole person in charge of designing this game, it worked a little differently than Jane McGonigal suggested. During the creation process, I went through many ideas before I came up with the final design of the game for the museum. The premise of a robbery was prevalent throughout my

brainstorming. At first, I looked closely at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art's ARG, "Ghost of a Chance." This caused me to want to have a series of events for my ARG. I wanted participants to go to a lecture about crime scene investigation and then go to the crime scene for the game and gather evidence. The evidence the players gathered would then influence the clues and information that the players in the museum would later receive. The players at the museum would then have to synthesize the evidence to figure out who the perpetrator was and hand it over to the authorities. After talking with my advisor, I realized this was far too complicated for one individual game creator and that I needed to have my ARG as one event that took place at the museum.

My second iteration started with an object that had been stolen from the museum. In this version, players would analyze the crime scene, lift and examine fingerprints, and decode a ransom note. The players would have to figure out what was taken, where the object was now, and who took it, using clues left throughout the museum. However, staff at the museum was concerned that such a premise would lead people to think an object was actually stolen from the museum. Also, they wanted the clues to be more relevant to the content of the museum.

The third iteration resulted in the game that would be used for the trial run. I revised the ARG so that every clue related to each other and to the narrative of the game. Once I had a well-developed narrative, the ARG was ready for its trial run. (To see the worksheets associated with the preliminary game/3rd iteration, see Appendix A.)

The pregame was facilitated through a blog. The link to the blog was sent out to the people participating in the trial run. The first blog posting said "Homeland Security discovered this e-mail message during a routine search. They flagged it as suspicious. We need your help in figuring out what it means." The e-mail message was ciphered and the players were supposed to decode it to figure out the premise of the game. The decoded e-mail message stated:

Dear Mr. B

I think it would be to your benefit to look into the Phantom Killer and Company B because of their correlation to your current interest. I should be able to procure the item you are interested in. I will have it for you in two weeks.

-Mr. Q

Additionally, a note was found on the floor of the museum that gave the staff cause to suspect an impending break-in. Fingerprints were lifted off the note. The museum then sent out a request for statements of any suspicious behavior seen around the museum.

When the participants arrived at the museum, they were given a worksheet to help them work their way through the game and a map to help guide them through the museum. The worksheet was divided into two sections: the first was to figure out information about the perpetrator, and the second was to figure out what item was being targeted for theft from the museum. In the first section, the participants needed to figure out which fingerprint belonged to the perpetrator. Next, they would read witness statements and come up with a profile of the suspect. After the participants completed the first section they moved to the next section, which contained clues that led them through the museum in order to figure out the object that was being targeted for theft. Participants started with an initial clue, and

once they figured out the answer to that clue, they would go to the display case in the museum that contained the answer where they would find their next clue. The following paragraph contains the clues used to lead participants through the museum.

Clue one stated, "In the original email intercepted by Homeland Security, there was a serial killer discussed. Find the case file on this killer." Once the players figured out that the answer was the Phantom Killer, they would then go to the Brownfield Gallery where there was an exhibit case with information on the Phantom Killer to get their next clue. The second clue read, "The Ranger who led the investigation on the Phantom Killer consulted on a radio show in Hollywood after he retired. Find the program he worked with." The Ranger was M.T. Gonzaullas, and he worked on the radio program *Tales of the Texas Rangers*. When players went to the Pop Culture Gallery to find the case with *Tales of the Texas Rangers*, they found their next clue. The third clue stated, "Figure out where this Ranger's first assignment was, and then find the display that discusses this area." Players were then encouraged to either look this up on their smart phone or look in a copy of the Handbook of Texas that was placed by the exhibit case. When they looked up Gonzaullas, they would figure out that his first assignment was in the oil fields of East Texas. This led them to the Morris Gallery where there was an exhibit case that discussed the Texas oil boom. Players would then have to fill out a crossword puzzle using the labels in the cases in the exhibit gallery to figure out the next clue. Clue four stated, "The Texas Rangers began using this type of weapon against organized crime in Texas oil boom towns. Find it." The weapon they began using

was the submachine gun, so the players would then go and find the submachine gun in Garrison Gallery. The final clue instructed players to, “Find this Ranger in the Hall of Fame and take a photo of what you suspect is being targeted for theft. Then take a picture or draw a picture of the item being targeted for theft and take it back to headquarters.” At this point, the game was over.

Evaluative Feedback Used to Improve ARG

Immediately after the trial run of the ARG, I asked the players to participate in a focus group. (To see the full transcript of the meeting, see Appendix C). Players represented a range of ages and experience. Five participants were staff members from the Texas Ranger Museum, five participants were graduate students from Baylor University’s Department of Museum Studies, and three participants were on the staff of the Mayborn Museum Complex, also at Baylor. Seven players were in their twenties, three in their thirties, and two players were over forty years old. The diversity of players provided varied feedback, much of it falling along generational lines. The session started off with staff from the Ranger Museum talking about their experiences and thoughts, with their overall feeling being that their museum audience would not respond well. As one staff member said,

Well I have to say that we sort of did a run through a couple of weeks ago, and I’m at least 15 years older than your target audience. I was a little confused, but my friend walked me through. I guess I’m just not used to the idea of playing a game partly online and when you looked at the blog and the cipher I wasn’t sure. Do I need to Google search for the next part of the clues. It was unclear to me what maybe makes sense to y’all, in your 20s. It doesn’t make sense to us who are older. It makes sense to y’all, its how you like to play games I guess. The rest of us in our 30s don’t quite get it. And again with the audience, I know

we've talked about different audiences. There is absolutely nothing wrong with selecting one audience to go after. Just because a majority of our visitors are 40s, 50s, 60s and up, I'm not discouraging it at all, we can absolutely pick an audience and go after the audience, that would be great to get a younger crew.⁵⁵

This conflict reinforces how audience specific ARGs are and that new ideas are often met with resistance. A discussion then began about the museum's audience and how the ARG would not appeal to them. They were then reminded that the ARG was not designed to appeal to the current audience of the Texas Ranger Museum and that it is difficult to design an activity that appeals to multiple audiences at once. The ARG was created to bring a new group of people to the museum. The staff of the Texas Ranger Museum, most of whom are not in the ARG target audience, were unfamiliar with ARGs, and they had difficulty with the format of the game. Many staff members wanted the game to go more sequentially and logically, with much more guidance on exactly what the players needed to do to get to the end. As the discussion progressed, some of the students from Baylor began expressing their opinions on how the game should run. One student clarified,

What might seem confusing, jumping around from gallery to gallery, I think is also aimed to help people see things they might not normally see and see them in a different pattern. I don't think it is supposed to be like a normal museum visit where you go naturally through the galleries. I think the point is to take you different places.⁵⁶

This helped clear up some of the confusion that the Ranger staff was having with the format of the game. Once the students explained the validity of ARGs, the discussion switched to suggesting improvements to the game. The discussion ended with a lot

⁵⁵ Interview with focus group, February 25, 2011.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

of good suggestions on how the ARG could be bettered and general support for me to precede with the ARG.⁵⁷

The feedback received resulted in major changes. For example, one major concern at the onset was the mention of Homeland Security and the panic it might cause among the public. We had discussed this matter previously, and it was very important to the museum to not give any cause for the public to panic or be concerned. In response to that concern, I changed the text of the blog posting from "Homeland Security" to "the staff at the Texas Ranger Museum."

Focus group participants suggested I create a stronger narrative for the game. Participants found the premise weak and confusing. One participant suggested,

I think all it needs really is narrative with it, to describe what is the goal. We have a lot of clues, but what is the story you are trying to tell me. If you tell me what story I am trying to be told, then I kind of know ahead of time what to look for. If you tell me we are going to tell you about a famous Texas Ranger and give a little bit of history, and little clues like that, it makes it flow a lot smoother.⁵⁸

In response, I reworked the back-story quite substantially to make it stronger. I also revised some of the clues to improve clarity, because some of the participants were unsure of what to do at certain stages. We discussed the fact that the players needed some sort of reward for finishing the game. A good suggestion, which I used, had players upon completion of the game, upload a picture of themselves with the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

targeted item to the museum's Facebook page, giving players a form of social recognition. When discussing recognition one participant stated,

I think that we have kind of a lame scavenger hunt [at our museum], and you get a pencil, but it's because most of the people who do it are 8 years old and they really want a pencil. It's different motivation and different reward that you need to figure out for that audience. From what I've been told, it's more about you claiming a space, or that you declare that you have done this, or you write it on the wall. That's more of the reward as opposed to some sort of pencil.⁵⁹

Also, several participants believed the coded message was too long, so I divided the message into two shorter coded messages. Finally, one participant suggested setting up a Facebook account for the thief, which I also did.

The focus group session was very helpful and a lot of good information came out of it to influence the version that would be played by the general public. In many ways, the focus group functioned as the team suggested by McGonigal that I was previously lacking. Due to the fact that ARGs rely on a trial-and-error system of improvement, the test participants were an essential part of the ARG's development process. Without trying the game in advance, there is no way to know how it will run and if there are any places where participants get stuck. This helps to work out the kinks and make the best ARG possible for the general public. One participant put this very succinctly when they said,

It's always why you do these run-throughs. It's because you think it's real clear because you've been studying this and you've been doing it. And watching other people be confused, you realize very apparently what needs to be refined. That's why you do this. You obviously

⁵⁹ Ibid.

learned a lot. And it's better for some of us to struggle, then a visitor doing this.⁶⁰

Implemented Version of Lone Star Caper

The game and back-story was introduced to the public via the blog created for the game. I started using Wordpress to create my blog, but I could not get it to do certain things I wanted it to easily, such as upload pictures. So, I switched to Google's blogging software, Blogspot. Blogspot ended up being much easier for me to use and it was easy to customize and post images. The blog can be found at <http://lonestarcaper.blogspot.com> (To see the worksheets associated with the final ARG, see Appendix B). A series of posts were made setting up the plotline.

March 4, Strange E-Mail: The staff of the Texas Ranger Museum received this cryptic e-mail message yesterday. Since they have no experts in cryptography, they need your help is deciphering it.

March 8, Another Strange E-Mail: The museum just received another message. Post the deciphered message on the blog. It looks like they used a different cipher method this time.

March 11, Extra Help: Have you deciphered the message yet. If so, post it on the blog. If you haven't yet, this website may be helpful.
<http://www.wikihow.com/Create-Secret-Codes-and-Ciphers>

March 13, Hired Help: Since we still did not know what the coded E-mail messages said, we decided to hire someone to help us out. That was a great decision on our part. The specialist helped us to decode the messages as well as trace where the E-mails came from. The specialist told us that the messages are coming from a person named **Bryan Smith**(link to Facebook page), who is a fan of the Texas Ranger Museum on Facebook.

Both of the messages were deciphered by the specialist. The first E-mail message used a keyboard shift cipher and it says "You

⁶⁰ Ibid.

have some very interesting objects in your museum. You might want to be careful, or something may just disappear."

The second message used a Caesar cipher and says "You discuss some very interesting people in your museum. I especially like Frank Hamer and M. T. Gonzaullas."

March 15, Take Action: If Bryan Smith is really going to steal something from the museum, we need to stop him. We need your help in preventing this. Please come to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame on Saturday March 19th between 1-4pm to help us prevent this crime. The Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame is located at 100 Texas Ranger Trail, Waco, TX 76706 off Interstate 35 on Exit 335-B.

March 18, Stop Him Saturday: Reminder, we need your help preventing the theft of one of the museum's priceless artifacts. Come to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame tomorrow from 1-4pm to help us.

Simultaneously, I posted messages on the Facebook page that I created for Bryan Smith, the man who sent the e-mails to the museum and planned to rob it.

February 25, I think I found a new interest.

March 4, I went to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame today and they have some really cool stuff.

March 6, Frank Hamer and M.T. Gonzaullas are the coolest Rangers!!

March 9, Check this out!

<http://www.archive.org/details/TalesOfTheTexasRangers>

March 11, I want their stuff.

March 14, I'm going to take it, and no one can stop me. It's on, Sunday night.

March 16, Busy planning, I only get one chance, so I have to get it right the first time.

March 18, Only 48 hours left, then it will be mine.

Once players arrived at the museum, they were given a handout that would guide them through the museum and help figure out what was going to be stolen, in order for the museum to be able to protect the item. The handout contained the first clue to follow for Hamer and Gonzaullas. The handout also had places to fill out information about each of these two Texas Rangers. The clues would lead the

participants through the museum where they should determine that the mastermind was after Gonzaullas' submachine gun. The clues follow.

First, participants would explore information about Frank Hamer to see if his objects were being targeted, since Bryan Smith had interest in both Hamer and Gonzaullas. On the worksheet, players were given their first clue that stated, "The Hamer family is a legacy within the Texas Rangers. Find the exhibit case that discusses the family's legacy." This exhibit case was located in Taub Hall. Once the players found the Hamer Family case, they got the clue, "Frank Hamer's retirement activities consisted of helping catch this very famous crime couple. Find the case about this couple." Hamer aided in the capture of Bonnie and Clyde, so players then had to go find the case on them in Morris Gallery. Once they found Bonnie and Clyde, they were given the clue, "Frank Hamer's career spanned from the last days of the Wild West well into the automobile age, and as criminals changed, he adapted. Find the case on Frank Hamer to figure out his years of service and see if his artifacts are safe." Players were then to go find the case on Frank Hamer in the Hall of Fame. When players reached the Hamer case, they would find a label saying that this case had extra security and the items in Hamer's case are safe.

Once players ruled out Hamer, Gonzaullas must be the person of interest. The first clue given for Gonzaullas was, "One of the major cases that M.T. Gonzaullas worked on involved a serial killer in Texarkana. What was the killer called? Find the case that discusses this killer." The players would find the Phantom Killer in Brownfield Gallery to get their next clue. Clue two said, "Gonzaullas' retirement activity was consulting on a radio show in Hollywood. Find the program he worked

with.” Then the players would find the case with *Tales of the Texas Rangers* in the Pop Culture Gallery. Here they were told, “Look online (or in the book) to figure out where Gonzaullas’ first assignment was as a Ranger. Then find the exhibit case that discusses this time/area.” Participants would figure out that he started in the oil fields, so they would then go to that case in Morris Gallery. On the case was a label that told them to fill out the crossword to figure out their next clue. The clue on the crossword said, “The Texas Rangers began using this type of weapon against organized crime in Texas oil boom towns. Find it.” Participants would then find the submachine gun in Garrison Gallery. Here they would find their final clue that said, “M. T. Gonzaullas was a rather important Texas Ranger. Find the case on him that tells you his nickname and why he got it.” When the players found Gonzaullas’ case in the Hall of Fame, they came across a label that stated, “Take a picture of yourself with the item you suspect is being targeted for theft and upload it to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame’s Facebook page and/or draw a picture of the weapon and sign it, then take it to headquarters.” At this point the participant had figured out the targeted item and finished the game.

Running the Lone Star Caper

In order to advertise my ARG, I posted about the game and gave the blog link on a variety of Facebook pages related to Baylor University and Waco including the Texas Ranger Museum, Baylor University, Waco Young Professionals, 365 Things to Do in Waco, Baylor University Department of Museum Studies, and Wacoboard Win Everyday. I did this almost every time I added a new post to the blog. Also, I sent a

message to some of the Facebook groups I had been posting on and asked them to promote my event, and a few of them did. I also wrote the blog URL in chalk on the sidewalks near the middle of the Baylor University campus two days before the event. Writing in sidewalk chalk is a common form of advertising used by groups at Baylor University. Additionally, the Texas Ranger Museum sent an e-mail out to their membership. I was trying to attract a more tech-savvy group of individuals, so I thought Facebook would be a good way to find them. However, none of my advertising efforts proved effective. The only people who attended the Lone Star Caper were people I knew and had asked personally to come. I was disappointed. I had hoped that some of my advertising would have actually worked. There were a total of thirteen people who participated in the ARG, eight of whom I knew personally, while the other five were walk-in visitors recruited when they entered the museum. When visitors entered the museum, the ticket seller told them about the opportunity to play the game. Interested people would then walk over to me, and I explained the game to them. Trying to explain an Alternate Reality Game was difficult, but I did my best and recruited five participants in this manner.

Out of all of the participants, only one group finished the game and figured out the correct object. This was a group of five Baylor University Museum Studies students, three of whom were involved in the trial run. Out of the rest of the participants, four people did not finish, one person said they could not find a few answers, one said they could not find anything, and three others gave the wrong answer for the object being targeted. Despite the fact that many people did not

complete the entire game, almost everyone said on their evaluation form that they had an enjoyable experience.

On a ranking scale of one to five, five being the best, participants were asked to rate their experience playing the game. Six people ranked their experience a five, six people ranked their experience a four, and one person ranked their experience a three. Eight participants owned a smart cell phone, and six of them said that their phone enhanced their experience playing the game. Out of the other two people who owned smart phones, one said they did not use their phone, and the other said that it had no effect. The fact that some participants did not own a smart phone seemed not to have an effect on their experience playing the game. Excluding the three people who participated in the trial run of the game, two participants said they have played Alternate Reality Games before, two people had heard of them, and five people had never heard of them before. A majority of the participants, eight, were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Two of the participants were under eighteen, two were between twenty-six and thirty-nine, and one was between forty and fifty-five. Seven of the participants were male and six were female. Excluding my trial group participants, whose first visit was during the trial run, only two people had been to the Texas Ranger Museum before.

There are quite a few things I learned from creating and running the Lone Star Caper. The audience for Alternate Reality Games is very specific and unless museums can figure out how to catch their attention, museums will have difficulty attracting participants, especially people who understand how ARGs work. Just because some people can figure out and follow the clues does not mean that

everyone will be able to. Additionally, people are not willing to ask for help, no matter how stuck they get. It is possible to have a great idea of how things will go, but when people do not act how they are expected to, the creators of the game have to improvise. Overall, the game did not go nearly as well as I had hoped. I think I created a great game, but I did not find the proper audience for the game. The typical audience of the Texas Ranger Museum is older adults who are not as engaged with technology or do not necessarily see the connection between museums and technology. It is also possible that younger audiences were completely unfamiliar with the Texas Ranger Museum and did not feel comfortable just showing up for the game. All things considered, the museum was not the best venue choice for an ARG. I think an Alternate Reality Game would do much better in an environment where technology is a prevalent part of the museum and widely used by visitors.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

There are many things that can be learned from my research into and creation of an Alternate Reality Game. First, Alternate Reality Games are not an easy program to create. A lot of creativity is required, along with a team of people who possess a variety of skills. Much time goes into producing an Alternate Reality Game, and there is no guarantee that it will be an immediate success, because ARGs are generally trial-and-error.

Another important facet of ARG creation is making sure that there is an audience for it. ARGs take a commitment from the players to complete the game as well as a commitment to the premise and an understanding of what is expected. Alternate Reality Games take a special group of people to play them, and a museum needs to figure out how to attract this group of individuals to play their game. This is not an easy task, and most traditional museums may not possess the audience for an ARG. Before a museum considers creating an ARG, they need to make sure that they have an audience who would be interested in playing; otherwise the efforts might not prove worthwhile. The typical audience of the Texas Ranger Museum consists of older individuals, a group of people that do not usually contain avid or experienced gamers. This is probably true for many museums, as the Texas Ranger Museum is just one example.

Knowing that the Texas Ranger Museum's current audience was not ideal for an ARG, I had hoped to attract students from Baylor University to play.

Unfortunately, all of my forms of advertising failed to reach this potential new audience. The only people who came to museum to play my game are people I personally recruited. I think this is the biggest challenge when creating an Alternate Reality Game or any programming, recruiting a captive audience. It probably would have been wise for me to partner with a student organization from Baylor in order to have a more substantial participant base. This does run slightly counter to the fundamental nature of ARGs, but one must decide if they want to be true to ARGs or have people to participate. When advertising my game, I tried to stay more true to an ARG, and I did not have many people participate. If the Texas Ranger Museum or any traditional museum wants to try hosting an ARG, they need to make sure they have a pre-recruited group of participants.

Out of the thirteen participants I had, only one group of five people, three of whom had participated in my trial run, completed the game. An interesting point to contemplate, however, is that people generally enjoyed their experience, even if they did not complete the game. It does not seem to matter if the participants play the game correctly, just that they play. The players still have a mission to complete and a different way to interact with the museum, which for them, resulted in a positive experience. This reinforces the idea that people prefer being able to control their experience and interacting with the museum.

I had to deal with the lack of technology at the Texas Ranger Museum, which might be true in many museums. As a result, I had to reconcile what I knew about ARGs as being very tech-focused with not having any technology resources available. I tackled this task by creating high-tech options for people who had smart

phones and could use the technology as well as having no-tech options for those participants who did not. Participants with smart phones could look things up online, while people without were given books or paper copies to use. The lack of technology in a museum is something that can be dealt with, but it does add another layer of complication to the project. The approach I used could be implemented in museums without technology.

Through my survey of museum professionals on their opinions and knowledge of Alternate Reality Games, I learned that not many museum professionals are considering using ARGs for their museum, and a lot of the surveyed participants lacked understanding and knowledge of ARGs. This lack of knowledge reinforces how cutting edge ARGs are in museum programming. The survey also showed that the feasibility of creating an ARG for many small museums is not possible. Small museums have very few staff members, if any, and too much to do. They do not have the time, resources, knowledge, or support to even consider Alternate Reality Games. It is probably best for institutions without the time, resources, knowledge, and support to forgo ARGs as a programming option, because it is not very practical for them.

From the survey I administered, the responses show that it takes a very specific formula for a museum to create an ARG: a museum needs the right audience, resources (human, financial, and time), support from their museum (boards and directors), the proper technology, the right atmosphere, and a willingness to try. Limited resources and the demands of providing basic mission-based and traditional programs challenge most museums.

However, Alternate Reality Games are a great programming option for some museums, especially those museums that actually have the time and resources to create one and have an interested audience. Many things must be considered before a museum decides to undertake creating an ARG. First, the museum must have the time, knowledge, staff support, and drive needed to create the game. Second, they must be able to attract an audience that has interest in playing. And third, they must not be afraid to fail. Alternate Reality Games never go quite the way the facilitator expects them to, because that is their nature. ARGs adapt and change and are affected by the way the players choose to play them. However, ARGs can be a great way for visitors to experience a museum, but one must weigh numerous pros and cons before deciding to tackle this cutting edge program.

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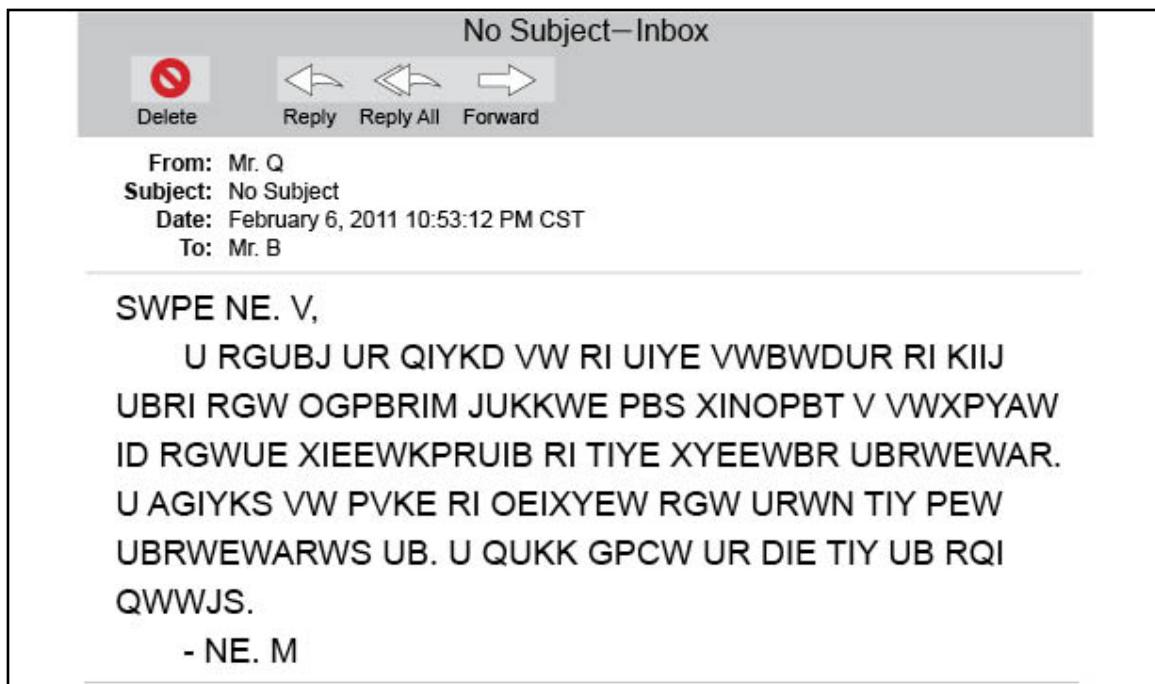
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APPENDIX A

Trial Run Game Sheets

E-mail Message



Note

Minimal security
plexi case in wall
low traffic
two entries
Night best
leave from back
fast highway access

Handout



Team Name: _____

Homeland Security discovered an email message during a routine search that they flagged it as suspicious. Some fellow citizens decoded it. It said: "Dear Mr. B. I think it would be to your benefit to look into the Phantom Killer and Company B because of their correlation to your current interest. I should be able to procure the item you are interested in. I will have it for you in two weeks. -Mr. Q"

We need your help foiling this plot!

Analyze the Evidence

The museum janitor found a suspicious note on the ground while he was cleaning one day. He held onto it because of the bizarre content. Once the museum learned about the email, they figured the two were related. Fingerprints have been lifted and we need your help in identification.

Find the display case in the museum related to fingerprinting.

Fingerprints

Profile of Perpetrator

Find the Object

In the original email intercepted by homeland security, there was a serial killer discussed. Find the case file on this killer.

-- Look for labels throughout the museum that will lead you through.

-- Use the internet to your advantage, if you have access.

-- If you get stuck at any point, you can come back to headquarters for additional clues.

Fingerprinting

The following fingerprints were lifted off of the note found by the museum janitor.



Which fingerprint is unaccounted for? This could be the fingerprint of our suspect. Write it on your handout. Use the information on fingerprinting in the display case to help you out.



Fingerprint images from: <http://www.istockphoto.com/stock-photo-2123036-perfect-thumb-fingerprint.php> <http://www.idcardworld.com.au/images/Fingerprint2.jpg> <http://gohidgo.org/images/fingerprinting.gif> http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2007/03/inst_measures_u/



Witness Statements

Name: Miranda Schwartz	Date:
------------------------	-------

Statement:

I work the front desk at the Ranger Museum. After I heard about all of the things going on, I remembered seeing this guy who looked rather shady. He was wearing a hooded-sweatshirt with the hood up and stared at the ground. I think he was white and at least six feet tall.

Name: Bryan Cook	Date:
------------------	-------

Statement:

I was visiting the Texas Ranger Museum last Tuesday and there was this rude guy who bumped into me and did not say anything. The guy was shifty looking and fairly skinny. He also kind of looked like a thug.

Name: Milo Suarez	Date:
Statement: I was in the parking lot picking up cans to recycle and I saw a scary looking black man. He stared at me and I decided I should go around the side of the building so he couldn't see me. When I came back he was gone and a car was speeding out of the parking lot.	

Name: Fred Winslow	Date:
Statement: I am the janitor at the Texas Ranger Museum and I am the person who found the suspicious note on the floor. I saw a man drop the piece of paper on his way out of the museum. When I went to pick it up, I saw its content and handed it over to my boss. I did not see the man's face, but he looked around 6 feet tall, rather skinny in stature. He was wearing a hood, but I think he may have been bald.	

Name: Georgina Reginaldi	Date:
Statement: I was taking my daily walk near the Ranger Museum around lunchtime and accidentally dropped my cane on the sidewalk. A nice young man in a white sweatshirt and torn jeans picked it up and handed it to me. After he helped me, he ran off. It was rather odd.	

APPENDIX B

Lone Star Caper Game Sheets

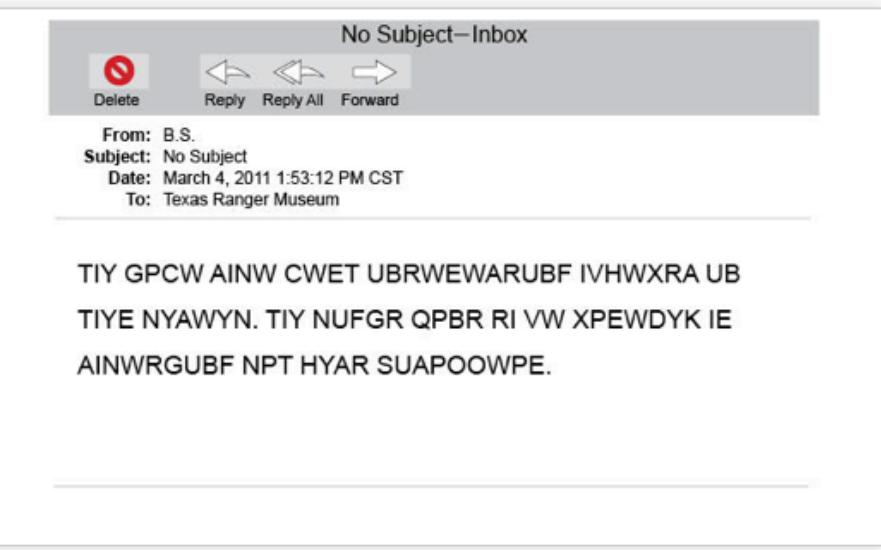
Blog

FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2011

STRANGE EMAIL

The staff of the Texas Ranger Museum received this cryptic e-mail message yesterday. Since they have no experts in cryptography, they need your help is deciphering it.

No Subject–Inbox

A screenshot of an email client interface. The window title is "No Subject–Inbox". The toolbar includes "Delete", "Reply", "Reply All", and "Forward". The message details are:
From: B.S.
Subject: No Subject
Date: March 4, 2011 1:53:12 PM CST
To: Texas Ranger Museum
The message body contains the following text:
TIY GPCW AINW CWET UBRWEWARUBF IVHWXRA UB
TIYE NYAWYN. TIY NUFGR QPBR RI VW XPEWDYK IE
AINWRGUBF NPT HYAR SUAPOOWPE.

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 10:10 PM 2 COMMENTS 

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2011

ANOTHER STRANGE EMAIL

No Subject—Inbox

Delete Reply Reply All Forward

From: B.S.
Subject: No Subject
Date: March 7, 2011 3:42:51 PM CST
To: Texas Ranger Museum

WMS BGQASQQ QMKC TCPW GLRCPCQRGLE NCMNJC
GL WMSP KSQCSK. G CQNCAGYJJM JGIC DPYLI FYKCP
YLB K.R. EMLXYSJJYQ.

THE MUSEUM JUST RECEIVED ANOTHER MESSAGE. POST THE DECRYPTED MESSAGE ON THE BLOG. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY USED A DIFFERENT CIPHER METHOD THIS TIME.

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 9:02 AM 0 COMMENTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2011

EXTRA HELP

HAVE YOU DECRYPTED THE MESSAGE YET? IF SO, POST IT ON THE BLOG. IF YOU HAVEN'T YET, THIS WEBSITE MAY BE HELPFUL. [HTTP://WWW.WIKIHOW.COM/CREATE-SECRET-CODES-AND-CIPHERS](http://www.wikihow.com/Create-Secret-Codes-and-Ciphers)

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 10:54 AM 0 COMMENTS

SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 2011

Hired Help

SINCE WE STILL DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE CODED E-MAIL MESSAGES SAID, WE DECIDED TO HIRE SOMEONE TO HELP US OUT. THAT WAS A GREAT DECISION ON OUR PART. THE SPECIALIST HELPED US TO DECODE THE MESSAGES AS WELL AS TRACE WHERE THE E-MAILS CAME FROM. THE SPECIALIST TOLD US THAT THE MESSAGES ARE COMING FROM A PERSON NAMED BRYAN SMITH, WHO IS A FAN OF THE TEXAS RANGER MUSEUM ON FACEBOOK.

BOTH OF THE MESSAGES WERE DECRYPTED BY THE SPECIALIST. THE FIRST E-MAIL MESSAGE USED A KEYBOARD SHIFT CIPHER AND IT SAYS "YOU HAVE SOME VERY INTERESTING OBJECTS IN YOUR MUSEUM. YOU MIGHT WANT TO BE CAREFUL, OR SOMETHING MAY JUST DISAPPEAR."

THE SECOND MESSAGE USED A CAESAR CIPHER AND SAYS "YOU DISCUSS SOME VERY INTERESTING PEOPLE IN YOUR MUSEUM. I ESPECIALLY LIKE FRANK HAMER AND M. T. GONZAULAS."

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 3:56 PM 0 COMMENTS 

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2011

Take Action

IF BRYAN SMITH IS REALLY GOING TO STEAL SOMETHING FROM THE MUSEUM, WE NEED TO STOP HIM. WE NEED YOUR HELP IN PREVENTING THIS. PLEASE COME TO THE TEXAS RANGER MUSEUM AND HALL OF FAME ON SATURDAY MARCH 19TH BETWEEN 1-4PM TO HELP US PREVENT THIS CRIME. THE TEXAS RANGER MUSEUM AND HALL OF FAME IS LOCATED AT 100 TEXAS RANGER TRAIL, WACO, TX 76706 OFF INTERSTATE 35 ON EXIT 335-B.

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 8:52 AM 1 COMMENTS 

LONE STAR CAPER

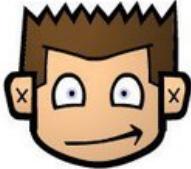
FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2011

STOP HIM SATURDAY!

REMINDER, WE NEED YOUR HELP PREVENTING THE THEFT OF ONE OF THE MUSEUM'S PRICELESS ARTIFACTS. COME TO THE TEXAS RANGER MUSEUM AND HALL OF FAME TOMORROW FROM 1-4PM TO HELP US.

POSTED BY ADMINISTRATOR AT 11:22AM 0 COMMENTS   

Facebook Page

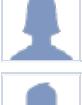


Bryan Smith
Lives in Waco, Texas [Add your current work information](#) [Add your education](#)
[information](#) [Edit Profile](#)

Share: [Status](#) [Photo](#) [Link](#) [Video](#)

[Wall](#)
[Info](#)
[Photos](#)
[Notes](#)
[Friends](#)

Find Friends

 [Best Friends](#)
 [Coworkers](#)
 [Classmates](#)

Friends (1)
 [Brent Taylor](#)
North Texas

[Add a Badge to Your Site](#)

Bryan Smith
Only 48 hours left, then it will be mine.
March 18 at 11:23am · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
Busy planning, I only get one chance, so I have to get it right the first time.
March 16 at 9:35pm · Like · Comment

Brent Taylor
I wouldn't recommend messing with the Texas Rangers – those guys don't mess around.
March 15 at 2:50pm · Like · Comment · See Friendship

Bryan Smith
I'm going to take it, and no one can stop me. It's on, Sunday night.
March 14 at 10:08am · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
I want their stuff.
March 11 at 9:00am · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
Check this out! <http://www.archive.org/details/TalesOfTheTexasRangers>
March 9 at 7:06am · Like · Comment

RECENT ACTIVITY
Bryan and Brent Taylor are now friends. · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
Frank Hamer and M.T. Gonzaullas are the coolest rangers.
March 6 at 8:42am · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
I went to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame today and they have some really cool stuff.
March 4 at 9:27pm · Like · Comment

Bryan Smith
I think I found a new interest.
February 25 at 3:57pm · Like · Comment

Handout

A man named Bryan Smith is planning on stealing one of the Ranger Museum's artifacts tomorrow and we need to figure out what it is, so we can prevent the theft. If you missed out on the back-story visit lonestarcaper.blogspot.com or ask for a paper copy.

Bryan Smith talked about two Texas Rangers in his Facebook posts. So the artifact he is planning to steal must be associated with one of these Rangers.

Francis Augustus "Frank" Hamer

Years of Service:

Retirement Activity:

The Hamer family is a legacy within the Texas Rangers. Find the exhibit case that discusses the family's legacy.

Manuel T. "Gonzauillas

Years of Service: 1920-1950

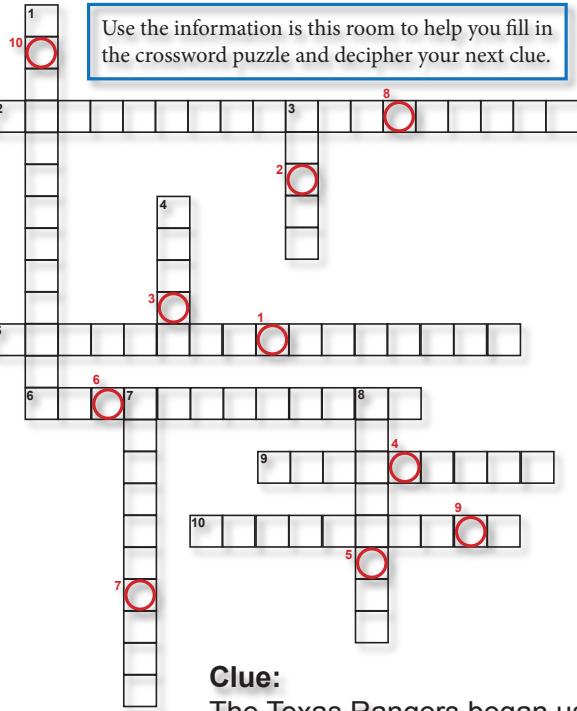
One of the major cases that Gonzauillas worked on involved a serial killer in Texarkana. What was the killer called? Find the case that discusses this killer.

Retirement Activity:

- Look for labels throughout the museum that will lead you through.
- Use the Internet to your advantage, if you have access.
- If you get stuck at any point, come back to headquarters for additional clues.



Crossword



Clue:

The Texas Rangers began using this of famous with gangsters in Texas oil boom towns in the 1920s. Find it.



Down:

1. In 1837, Ranger companies could employ members of "friendly" tribes, such as Choctaw, Cherokee, Shawnee, and Delaware, as scouts and spies. They were known as _____.
3. This person broke out of the Waco jail on March 11, 1930, using a pistol Bonnie smuggled to him.
4. Rangers of the Frontier Battalion established semi-permanent _____ as company headquarters.
7. A series of clashes between Anglo and Mexican Texans in South Texas during the late 1850s became known as the _____.
8. The Frontier Regiment was formed to meet the need for frontier protection after the start of the _____.

Across:

2. The organization of citizen soldiers had its roots with Paul Revere and the men at Lexington and Concord in 1775. Texas had used these as early as the 1830s.
5. On July 1, 1870, the State created the _____ to maintain law and order in the interior of the state while the Rangers continued to protect the frontier.
6. The Texas Legislature created this _____ of Rangers in 1874 to tame the lawlessness along the Mexican border.
9. Martial law was imposed in _____ during the dock worker's strike in 1920 and in Denison during a railroad strike in 1922.
10. After passage of the National Prohibition Act (1919), Rangers had to contend with smugglers bringing illegal liquor into Texas from Mexico. These smugglers were often called _____.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lone Star Caper Evaluation

1. Rate your experience playing the game today, 5 being the best.
 1 2 3 4 5

2. Did you have access to a smart phone while playing the game?
 Yes No

3. How did this affect your gaming experience?

- Enhanced
 Detracted
 Had no effect

Comments:

4. How did you learn about the game?
 Facebook Email from Ranger Museum
 Chalking at Baylor Other: _____
5. Have you ever heard of or played an Alternate Reality Game before today?
 Heard of
 Played
 No
6. What is your age?
 18-25
 26-39
 40-55
 56 or older
7. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female
8. Is this your first visit to the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame?
 Yes No

If you have any further questions or comments feel free to contact Heather Mauger at heather_mauger@baylor.edu or (614) 348-6673

APPENDIX C

Transcript of Focus Group Meeting

For the sake of anonymity, only I am identified in the transcript. Each new paragraph indicates a change in who is speaking.

Heather: Do we want to start with general comments or do you want me to start with questions?

I'll start. I'm the weekend manager here so I all of the time have customers come up and ask a bunch of questions. I think it is a good idea but there is really not that much directions on it. Some people don't have the phone to go to the Internet and stuff. So I know me and my crew will be asked a lot of questions about that. So there needs to be a little bit more detail on direction, where they need to go, how they need to find the answer.

I thought it was all about the phantom killer, so when we started going on the Texas Ranger part, the reason we got so behind is because the whole time I was saying, why, I thought we were doing the phantom killer. The whole thing about the phantom killer really threw me off.

I do agree with that. At the beginning I was looking at it and thought it was just going to be just about Gonzauillas. I didn't know where to go. If I didn't have a base knowledge of the museum already, I wouldn't have known which cases to go to, which galleries to go to. I was thinking if maybe there was a hint on which gallery to go to, maybe if the clues were numbered, that sort of thing, you would know the

order in which you are supposed to do all of this stuff. The idea of it I think would be very fun though. It just seemed a little bit confusing for me. And again, I have a knowledge of the museum, and I went to the wrong case. I went to a different Gonzaullas case. Gonzaullas is all over the museum. So, without knowing which gallery to go to, I think it would be a little confusing for some of the visitors. And not having it, maybe in a logical order, or a sequential, you're going in one gallery, and then the gallery next to it, instead of the gallery here and then all the way to the Hall of Fame and back. That might be a little more helpful.

You've got to understand we study who our audience is, and a vast majority is elderly. And if you're asking them to not only visit the museum, this might not be the first thing they pick up. They're going to be walking around so you need to do it in a way where it maximizes their experience and they're not going to get tired.

Heather: That's kind of why we're targeting it to college age.

You can't really go and say only college students will do this. And if you are thinking this is something that the museum might want to use at another time, we need it to be adaptable. And so having it go from one gallery to one gallery. It's a lot easier and better for us and our needs, and those of our audience needs.

Or on the flip side you get a 12 or 13 year old whose doing it with their parents, they're not going to want to. They're going to want to look at some of the stuff and not necessarily want to go from the Hall of Fame back up to Garrison. Or they haven't started in that general area, they're coming in and it's time for the movie and they're going to go down to the Hall of Fame and they're going to be completely out of order. Again if we go back to the numbering, if they were

numbered people would know. Oh I'm on the 3rd step and I should be on the 1st step.

I think the numbering and the directive is all good. I think the conflict here is your audience. And I think, I've heard 3 different audiences. And to create one thing that successfully hits 3 audiences is pretty impossible. So, it was my understanding that Heather's approach to this was at capturing a new audience. And that's why I brought young peeps with me. From what I understand, from what I've read recently, it is that sort of confusion and multi-tasking thing that they like. I like linear. So, I'm thinking that to do a one-size-fits-all, I agree, I don't think it would be successful with people my age. I think that the target audience is a problem. I think you would almost need 3 different ones to reach an older population, a family population, and young peeps populations.

This summer Heather and I played the game that they have at Smithsonian American Art, that is written up as the best one and how that is what most museums have based most of them off of. And I think this was very similar to what they have done there. And that was your point, to make it attract a different audience from what you would normally get. What might seem confusing, jumping around from gallery to gallery, I think is also aimed to help people see things they might not normally see and see them in a different pattern. I don't think it is supposed to be like a normal museum visit where you go naturally through the galleries. I think the point is to take you different places. That's the goal.

To make sure you hit every gallery kind of thing.

In my opinion, I'm not sure if this will make sense, but if it goes sequentially, it is not necessarily like a game, because you'll figure it out eventually. And the whole idea is to be going around and you're not quite sure where the next clue is, but if you know it is going to be in the next gallery because they all fall that way there's not as much.

It's more of a classic scavenger hunt then, which we've all used for a million years. Where you know you go from here to here to here.

But there is the trick of, most of our visitors, 90% of them are 1st time. We have 4 Thompsons, you're supposed to go find a Thompson, but do you know where. There is a point at which most people when they see the 3rd Thompson and its not the right one, will probably want to give up. To have some kind of direction, find it in this gallery, is not necessarily a bad thing either.

I think that this owes a lot to, I have a lot of background in video games, and what this goes back into, and it's very close, I think all it needs really is narrative with it, to describe what is the goal. We have a lot of clues, but what is the story you are trying to tell me. If you tell me what story I am trying to be told, then I kind of know ahead of time what to look for. If you tell me we are going to tell you about a famous Texas Ranger and give a little bit of history, and little clues like that, it makes it flow a lot smoother. And then I think also with the clues thing, give a secondary activity that is not directly related to a crossword puzzle or something. Let's say a box of things, and at the bottom of the things, you dig them out, and there's your clue at the bottom and it explicitly tells you the answers, if someone has failed and can't figure out the answer, they won't get frustrated and quit. That's a very hard

thing to balance in video games, you want it to be challenging so they are engaged, but you don't want it to be so difficult that they give up.

I am a first time visitor. The map was super helpful because you were like they talked about this, and you look here, criminal weapons are here, and we're going to talk about different cases they've dealt with here, so you know what room you're going to go to because of this. At least I did.

One way you could do that was if you had the map, like tell the story of Gonzaullas through the map, show how he traveled through Texas and make the map overlay with the map of the museum, so its almost like you're traveling with him throughout Texas.

I feel like if you get really stuck, you can offer to go up to the front and get clue sheets to help them. You could offer them a sheet that says here are extra clues if you are getting stuck and you don't know what room. Sometimes I was just like I don't know this answer.

I think a clue sheet would be really important for younger visitors, for families. Where the mom doesn't really want to run around with her child all the time, having that extra clue sheet for someone who is younger trying to do it, the clue sheet makes it an easier difficulty level, so you're doing 2 things at one time. Having an easier and more difficult version.

Even then you could go back and you said that you have mostly older visitors, what about an explicitly narrative text. That isn't necessarily a game, but it goes through the story and it explicitly tells them. They get the same story that everyone else does, but if they don't want to participate in a game, they can just read it.

Also, I didn't notice the book until the 2nd time we were in the Pop Culture Gallery. I think you need to have the book prominent, by itself, not next to a wall, out in the open with a sign that says "Lone Star Caper Reference Manual."

I feel like I didn't know you had to use the book or look it up on your smart phone.

Heather: Yea, I found out watching some of you guys, that some of my text labels need help.

The wording makes you not, I was like oh, the book is optional, I can figure it out on my own. And we couldn't.

I'm not sure what the first part of the fingerprinting and the shady white tall guy has to do with Gonzaullas.

And I think what someone talked about, with the narrative would be helpful. Because that's just one little venture that we did. I think if the goal is being about Gonzaullas is clear, that is just part of what you did.

Heather: Apparently I really need to work on my narrative. Because part of the premise is that something is going to be stolen from the museum.

And I think that is where the blog came in, and I read the blog and I read it last night. And there were extra and new things on there. I think if you had something like a poster board that had what the blog had on it, so people would understand that there is this back-story behind it, for those of us who read the blog understood. The note from the janitor was on the blog, but it wasn't in here and wasn't seen by anyone who didn't read the blog. So I think if you had something at

the beginning that said this is what you've missed if you haven't read the blog or if you just came in and didn't even know that this existed, this is what you missed.

I will say that I have been here many times and I saw stuff I had never seen before, so there you go. It made me look.

I'd like to echo that too. I've been here several times and brought family through, I was looking at cases in a new way. It made me look at the exhibits differently.

I think that the basis for it can be reduced. I think so much is knowing the story you want to tell, and what you really want to direct them to. The steps just need to be cleaned up a little bit. You could make it up as you go. You could say ok I'm going to focus on this today, direct them from A to B. You just need to know what to go to.

After they sketch what they think is going to be stolen, is there any reward, any kind of finality/completion. Or is it you just sketch and you're done? Do they bring it back to you and they get something? That is one thing I was wondering about.

We can use our pencils from the gift shop. But it doesn't really tell you at the end where to go.

Yea I was going to ask that. If there is something at the end that says "you're finished." Take this to headquarters.

I have an idea that involves technology. Is that if at the end of it, they would find a website and only the people who finish it would get to add their name to it,

Deputy Rangers or something. Or add your picture even. That way they can feel like they're special.

I think that we have kind of a lame scavenger hunt, and you get a pencil, but it's because most of the people who do it are 8 years old and they really want a pencil. It's different motivation and different reward, that you need to figure out for that audience. From what I've been told, it's more about you claiming a space, or that you declare that you have done this, or you write it on the wall. That's more of the reward as opposed to some sort of pencil.

A lot of programs like Foursquare work like that. It's all an Internet award, it's virtual, it's not tangible. But people seek it because they want it. So it doesn't have to be something. Especially with the audience.

Maybe connect it to the museum's Facebook page. Maybe they could put the picture up in a album on your Facebook page. People could like it, get likes on your Facebook page.

Put a picture of yourself next to it, and that's how you know you finished. People could stand in front of it so they wouldn't really know what it was. They would have to come find it. I found it, but I'm not going to tell you what it is.

Heather: Any other general comments? I have questions. Who actually looked at the blog before? (only a few didn't) I kind of have questions about that. What did you guys think of it? Why or why were you not motivated to figure out the clues?

I got about half way through decoding it, but then I had to work on something else. But I like code breaking stuff.

We played an ARG it had a double conversion, it was in French, then to a second clue. (Referring to a ARG played elsewhere.) So it did create a stumbling block for me when I didn't know French, when you convert it sometimes, but maybe if you convert it and secondary convert it. Maybe have something if you can't figure it out click here.

Heather: I ended up giving them a clue.

The ciphering link was very helpful. I tried to decode it on my own, and failed after Dear Mr. whatever.

We decoded the French, but it was still random, so we didn't know what it was saying.

The cipher was easy enough because it was only 1, using the keyboard, so it was easy once you knew what the cipher was. But I would not have thought that is was from the computer. It never crossed my mind until I clicked on the link.

Heather: What about anybody else who looked at the blog?

I just didn't have time to do it. I was kind of concerned that people wouldn't do it. Going to the audience of high school or middle school aged kids and parents taking there kids here. They probably wouldn't take the time to sit down and translate/cipher that. I don't know though. I'm seeing this with new eyes. Some people really liked it and really enjoyed it, so now I'm thinking its maybe just my eye are 38 and not 22.

I think if it was shorter, it would be less intimidating, then people would be more likely. I started it and didn't finish it because of time, but I think it would be less intimidating if there was not as much length to it.

I think you might also want, if you're going to something directed towards a group, say you're going to bring a school group and they have an interest in cryptography, then introduce it into something like that. That way it is more applicable, then general publics going to see that and.

You can always give them the option of decoding the first message or not decoding. They have that option, they do it, or they can just have the note and begin the scavenger hunt.

Heather: When they get here?

When they get here say you have the option of decoding the first message or just giving it to you. Some people might like it, I'm not into that stuff so I would be frustrated and not want to do that. So I would just want the message right out of the bat. Other people were really into it.

I think it just has an audience.

That's actually a very good idea. My concern when I looked at the blog, is that it didn't say that it is part of a game. And the first thing you see is "Homeland Security." Are people going to think this is real?

Heather: Yea, we've had that comment a few times.

You could always say the staff of the Texas Ranger Museum has received this message and they need you're help.

Having that to me implies that Homeland Security randomly searches

Heather: Oh yea, we're getting rid of the whole Homeland Security part. I've had a few emails about that already.

My only concern is that it doesn't tell you that you need to come here.

Heather: My grand scheme that didn't work was, I was hoping that people would decode it. Then I would put the next clue with the post-it not up. Now that we've connected this thing, come here on this day and time and we're going to figure it out. Is kind of how I was hoping it was going to go. But obviously I have to do it differently. And the whole, it doesn't say it's a game thing, that's kind of the whole point of what Alternate Reality Games are. You are supposed to commit to thinking it's real, or pretending it's real. You're not supposed to necessarily go at it like it's a game, but you know it's a game type thing. It's different. You don't want to overtly say, come play our game.

I think you can kind of get that since the title is Lone Star Caper. You don't really, I didn't think that was real.

So that you post on the blog I guess was my question, on the blog does it say this date and time?

Heather: Yes, that was the hope. I may have to figure out how to redo that part of it. I'm still trying to figure out how to get people here.

Could you add some clues out there perhaps? Maybe giving some additional hints or even providing an option for revealing part of the encrypted message. So you've got the fully encrypted message, but then you could have maybe tantalizing little clues revealing a single word and that if you want a little more help. I don't know.

Heather: You mean on the blog?

On the blog perhaps. Maybe you could have the click here option to see the whole thing decoded, but you could do something between full decoded and fully decrypted.

Progressively as the day gets closer you reveal a little bit more.

So those who are really into it, they have some time and the opportunity to decode it. But for those who get frustrated with it, you're kind of giving some hints or some clues. I kind of like the idea of building up.

Then you get the people to commit. They come back to see what's the most recent thing that this blog's posted. Then you don't have the singular event and have to wait a week to go to the physical location. You keep them interested.

Heather: I tried to do that. I kept posting new things, but I have no clue who saw what or what happened.

I think that's a good idea, to slowly reveal more of the decoded message to try to get people to come. I know a lot of companies are doing that with sales and stuff. The price goes down everyday until its gone. It keeps people coming back. I know its kind of the opposite of that almost, its still a good way to get peoples' attention.

I mean it's just like modern movie trailers. They do the little sneak peak thing and then they reveal more as it goes on. Then you can add the narrative as it goes on through the blog as well. You could start that narrative.

Is all of this going through the blog? Is that how you intend to get people into it?

Heather: That was my hope.

What we did at the one we played at TAM, they did an active one. There was a moderator. Someone was aware and they were changing things throughout the game. There was a Facebook page, there was someone monitoring an e-mail account. So what they said, once you decode this, you get an email. Then you e-mail thing and get a clue from the e-mail. And the e-mail has a link to the Facebook page. And you click on the Facebook page and then you read something. So you're bouncing back and forth online and reality.

I know it's fun, throughout the whole situation, it gets you involved.

The response of the email made it seem real. It's like wow, that came back to me.

Heather: The only problem with that is technology here. I don't have a smart phone, which is kind of ironic. I can't do that and there is not necessarily computers and things I can use here to do things. And I'm also having to consider having something in paper for every single online entity I have. I have to have 2 versions of everything.

That's kind of what I was thinking about when you have the purely narrative version of the game. You could target people who have a smart phone by saying, if you have a smart phone, play this way. Or if you're a young child, play this way.

You could just use old-fashion calling to a voicemail box. You call a number and there's a message that tells you where to go.

Is it something that you're writing, in your grand scheme, is this something when you get your thesis written out, is this something that can be discussed maybe.

Not maybe implemented in ours because of the lack of funds and money. But having a discussion take place in your writing that says maybe this can happen.

That is part of the process with this. With this one of the central questions to Heather's research is how feasible is something like this for smaller museums. It's great and wonderful if you're the Smithsonian and you have Smithsonian resources. But what if you're a smaller museum and you hear about this great thing called an Alternate Reality Game. Can you implement it? This whole issue with technology, what do you do if you don't have the technology. That's going to be part of her write up, to address how the game went, but also making recommendations.

This has a great potential to be a good conversation starter. People from small museums read your paper and they go, that's a really interesting concept. Use it as a resource to gain money or support.

Well I think a lot of help is the fact that you are clearly stating some of the challenges, and until you try this. And this is what we do with our projects, that's the whole point of them. We try one of these things and figure out if it is feasible, what are good alternatives, what are some recommendations. Don't try this, or for gosh sake remember to do this. So it can serve as a model for people who are interested in exploring it. So they don't have to go through all of the pitfalls.

We go off to like AAM or TAM and hear about these great programs that museums are doing and then you get back to your small museum. Now what do I do, they have resources that I don't have. Heather's really keeping that in mind as she's developing this. So one of her chapters will really focus on how do you go about implementing this and what are the challenges that you may have to address.

This is an entirely online thing. I'm not as plugged in. So I guess I'm missing it. All of it's going to be revealed online or half of it, and you have to come in and finish it?

Heather: Yea kind of. The online gets you started.

Would you be offering any paper versions for people who just randomly walk-in and aren't aware.

Heather: I think I'm going to have to.

Because I would have never guessed in a million years to check online for something like this.

I have a question. Are you planning on sending this out to high schools? Are there groups you're going to send this to so they come on that day?

Heather: That's what I'm having trouble figuring out. I'm hoping to chalk all over Baylor and put up flyers in maybe different places around Waco.

Chalking is a really good idea, it will get peoples' attention.

Heather: The thing I am having the most trouble with is trying to figure out how to launch it.

Can you put the link on the Texas Ranger website? "Lone Star Caper." Because before people go to a museum they go visit the website. So what is this crazy thing over here, you click on it, and it sends you to the blog. A direct link out to the blog. People are going out on the Internet before they go somewhere.

Do you all have twitter? You could be tweeting about this.

How many Facebook fans do you guys have?

About 500. I don't know how many are local.

People who are kind of interested in that, an audience you could go to.

People who are all over Facebook are the people who are more tech-savvy.

Who are going to be interested in doing the blog and the decoding and all of that stuff. You're doing it March 16th? So you start

Heather: My blog is going live on March 4th

So on March 4th have someone go out on the Texas Ranger website, saying this happened. So you have the lead up that we were talking about earlier, that draws people in but it's all through Facebook, so you get people who are tech-savvy and want to do things like that.

You can use Foursquare to see how many people are checking in here. Then you can get an idea for how prevalent smart phones would be in the museum without having to do any kind of surveying. If you have a lot of people checking in, you can assume a lot of people are using their smart phones throughout.

Then if you use Facebook to promote it, you don't just have to do our website. There are Waco fan groups and things like that where you can post to general fans of Waco, and say, by the way since you're local, this is going to go on. It doesn't just have to be our fans, because we are statewide representative museum. A lot of our fans are not necessarily local. That would be one way of getting your local audience.

You could do the same thing too with the museum studies Facebook page and also with Baylor's Facebook page. They have fans pages too, so you can post to that as well.

Get the computer science majors.

If you want to make it kind of more fun. The one that we did, they created an account for the actual thief on Facebook, and he was posting stuff. So you could post some clues. So it seemed like you were actually snooping into this person's files. There is actually a video game that was created that was entirely through text messaging, calling a voice mail box, and checking a website. It was live and there were thousands of players. It was like a spy game and everybody could be part of it. It was a little too intense for me.

Heather: What about your experience playing the game? I know some of the direction was confusing.

I think sometimes it is difficult to be so clumped together with so many people. I don't know how to divert that or if you could start people in different areas. I know it would make your work more complex to start in different places.

Hopefully you wouldn't have a situation where everyone arrives at the exact place and time.

Or just stagger the start time and have something else to do while other people start.

Kind of like those movie times where one starts at 11:10 and the other starts at 12. They arrive at different times.

If she has that problem with so many people here, we'll be ok.

I think one way to address that is to make it more non-linear. The goal of the game was not necessarily that you have to follow these steps correctly. You could follow the steps in any order and still find the answer. That would solve it so that they're just clues, they're not numbered clues, and those clues will direct you to

an answer. Some people may be able to find the answer in one clue, and others might need more clues.

There were a few times that we were running behind and we would just see where the next group was. So I like the idea of non-linear. That all the clues will ultimately lead you to the end, that you don't have to follow them in the same order.

I got confused at the last clue before you go and take the picture.

Heather: Yea, everybody did.

Because there wasn't the narrative about Gonzaullas, there was kind of, but it wasn't emphasized. So we kept looking. It talks about those two guys were around. I think making the narrative more clue will change it so much.

I had a little bit of inside information, and my initial response when I read your clue was, that's kind of interesting, we must be looking for someone named Thompson, I thought we were going to be looking for Gonzaullas. You sent us to the Thompson machine gun, and I'm thinking oh, Thompson was my first thought.

The clues are not direct to the answer. You are giving the clues to tell you a little bit more about what you're trying to find.

Well I have to say that we sort of did a run through a couple of weeks ago, and I'm at least 15 years older than your target audience. I was a little confused, but my friend walked me through. I guess I'm just not used to the idea of playing a game partly online and when you looked at the blog and the cipher I wasn't sure. Do I need to Google search for the next part of the clues. It was unclear to me what maybe makes sense to y'all, in your 20s. It doesn't make sense to us who are older. It makes sense to y'all, its how you like to play games I guess. The rest of us in our

30s don't quite get it. And again with the audience, I know we've talked about different audiences. There is absolutely nothing wrong with selecting one audience to go after. Just because a majority of our visitors are 40s, 50s, 60s and up, I'm not discouraging it at all, we can absolutely pick an audience and go after the audience, that would be great to get a younger crew.

And that is the intent that it is too attract a different audience that has never been here before, then you have to do something that appeals to them, not thinking about what appeals to us. Clearly, you've got that covered. Those people come. And they're likely not to come because of this, it wouldn't be their motivation, but they're still going to come.

And I think, dealing with the older population that comes here, they, like my Grandmother, has a Facebook now and a smart phone. Slowly but surely she's figuring everything out and getting online and she e-mails me instead of calling me now. As we move forward in technology, people will catch up, and I think that it is starting to do that. And you do have some people in older generations that are super tech-savvy. My grandmother would be interested in this, but my other grandmother doesn't know how to turn on a computer. You have the two different audiences and I think that you could get some of the older generations to be on board with this, especially the older men that are super tech-savvy and want their iPads and everything like that. You see them at Starbucks on their iPads.

I thinks that's a good point. As you were saying that, I'm mentally flashing on some older family members, and there are some in there that don't want anything to

do with technology and there are others that are just scary excited to use this technology.

I'm on the outside. I think that it's true in that there are a lot of folk from my generation, since I'm another 15 years on top of some. That grew up in the cusp of the video game age. (Static, I can't hear a bunch of what she says). The changing video game thing and are very tech-savvy that would be more than happy. All of my friends, the minute the new technology comes out, they have to have it. I'm the one without the smart phone or the iPad. So I think there is even though you gear it towards the out of high school into college age, we're going to catch a lot of other people in that. And everything you've been saying will help that, with the narrative, its going to catch someone's attention if they're impressed in that kind of thing its going to catch their attention.

My smart phone is one month old and it takes me 5 minutes to put it on silent. I'm learning though.

When I went to the blog, I loved the cipher. I do cryptograms all of the time, so that was a no brainer for me. It was nice to have the link there to go get a clue if you needed it, but for me it was, I can do something other than my work.

I really liked that you had the crossword puzzle in there, because I like crossword puzzles. That is a very universal thing that crosses generations. I have a feeling if you have that pile sitting in the gallery, people are just going to take them and do them even if they aren't starting the game, and then maybe they will want to play the game.

I think the crossword puzzle was an excellent addition to the project. Because I know you were additionally thinking more clues and moving from clue to clue. And throwing this in really added another layer to the overall experience.

It really made you read the text labels. You read them all.

And that room is kind of text heavy, there's a lot of panels. So you're in a case and there are panels and you say I have to read all of them to figure out which one it is. So I read all of the panels in every case. Which normally I'm a horrible museums studies student, I don't read text panels.

Let's face it, that's why we do scavenger hunts. That's how we get the kids to read, at least a text label.

I didn't even know that Bonnie and Clyde were in Waco.

Well and I read text labels, and I've been here several times with family members, and I read text labels that I don't think I've ever read. So you made me read things and notice things.

And you enjoy reading them because you have to find the answer.

There was one that we couldn't figure out, the one about the minutemen, we had trouble with that. So I went to every single label looking for Paul Revere, trying to find it. It ended up being the last one in the corner.

We were talking about in some of the cases kind of overlap each other in that room when you're doing the crossword puzzle, and that can be a little frustrating in that you don't know which case to go to. And I think that kind of adds to the game, as well because you say ok, it's not in that case, the date range is correct.

And people want to win.

Which case do I need? Where else might I be in this room? This was a great addition.

Heather: My other question/concern is what do you think about the amount of time it took you? Too long too short? Does there need to be more content?

I think it is fine, because if it's way long, they would lose interest. And if it's too short, it's a let down. And I think when you add in that narrative, that's going to make it a little longer, it will get people more vested in the game. I think it will be just right with that.

And I think when you add the narrative and you talk more about Gonzaullas, to get people more involved in it. If you talk about how worried the staff is that they're going to lose one of their most prized artifacts, just get people more vested. Talk about how important it is that they solve the puzzle. That makes people want to be in it.

That's the reality factor. If you have people on the floor that work in the museums and they're involved in the game too, it makes it a little more realistic.

And because it's not linear, like room-to-room, you do have that time where people get stuck, but it's not too long of a time to figure out where you're going. It's just the right amount of struggle.

Your clues are pretty straight forward so it was pretty easy at some point for me. And I'm really good at these sort of things.

It's always why you do these run-throughs. It's because you think its real clear because you've been studying this and you've been doing it. And watching other people be confused, you realize very apparently what needs to be refined.

That's why you do this. You obviously learned a lot. And it's better for some of us to struggle, then a visitor doing this.

And you can take advantage of the fact that we have an additional Gonzaullas case in Taub Hall. Maybe it could lead you to it.

I didn't pay attention to the clue to go to the Hall of Fame, so we went there since we had already seen that one Gonzaullas case when we were walking through to go to the media room. So we knew that that was there, so when we went to Gonzaullas, we went straight to that case without paying attention. So there could be something on that case, saying this is the right guy, saying these artifacts are safe because there is extra security on this case. So they would know to go to the other Gonzaullas case in the Hall of Fame room.

Which again, makes people go through more of the museum.

They know they're on the right track, it's just not the right case.

And that ties in with what he said earlier about imposing the story of Gonzaullas onto the map and weaving that together. If you do that, even if you didn't know there was a case in Taub Hall, you would know that there is a case about him out there. So you have something there that says no, not quite.

People might actually learn more about Gonzaullas that way. Learn something that isn't in the game.

Heather: Any other comments? This has been very helpful.

In a horrible sort of way, I know. She has this look. This is good. This is what you want.

And you've got such a nice group here. You've got people who are really familiar with the museum, and others who are not, and those who are familiar with ARGs, and us oldsters.

It might be helpful for your work to quickly go around the room, and you don't have to identify yourself by last name. But maybe say name, visit, age. So that you kind of have an idea of who this group was in terms of demographic.

First time visitor, 23

First time visitor, 24, Facebook user, Tweeter, grad student

First time visitor, 22

Work here, 38

Collections assistant, 26

Collections manager, 39

Repeat visitor, 40 something

30

26, 3rd time visitor

Multiple visitor, 50 something, definitely the oldest member of the group

Marketing person for the museum, 28

First time visitor, 25

So, that was good. We have 20 somethings, 30 somethings, 40 somethings, and just barely a 50 something. That's 4 decades, that's pretty good.