Introduction to the *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports*

David P. Hedlund  
Division of Sport Management, St. John’s University, Jamaica, NY, USA

Welcome to the inaugural article published in the *Journal of Electronic Gaming and Esports* (JEGE). It is my honor to have been selected as the founding editor-in-chief of JEGE. As the 27th title in the Human Kinetics’ portfolio of scholarly journals, JEGE joins a family of highly successful journal publications. JEGE is not the sole esports publication within the Human Kinetics’ library, as Hedlund et al. (2021) edited and co-authored the only English-language textbook in the topical area to-date, *Esports Business Management* (EBM). JEGE and EBM will collaborate, and we will endeavor to make selected articles from JEGE available to EBM readers. Esports and electronic gaming are incredibly diverse in their orientation, and many existing journals such as the *Journal of Sport Management* and *International Journal of Sport Communication* have previously published exceptional research on the topics. However, there are very few journals with a specific focus on esports and electronic gaming, and none with the publisher backing that JEGE has achieved. JEGE strives to become the leading publication and outlet for research on esports, electronic gaming, video games, emerging gaming technology, and numerous peripheral areas listed later in this article.

Because research in the areas of esports and electronic gaming have developed into standalone and legitimate research domains, JEGE now seeks to create new opportunities for researchers and scholars to publish domain-specific research, while opening up new opportunities for emerging research areas. One common theme we have heard from those who publish in this research domain is the need for research outlets specific to the emerging esports and electronic gaming disciplines. Much of the existing research has been published in “parent disciplines” or peripheral research domains. It is now time for esports and electronic gaming to have and develop their own library of focused research publications and journals. Esports and electronic gaming scholars and researchers need a dedicated space to dive deep into these research areas and foster discourse on existing and forthcoming research.

We are grateful that a significant number of established research domains (e.g., sport management, communications, computer science, health, and medical sciences) have been inclusive of prior scholarship and research on esports and electronic gaming. We are confident many of these research areas will continue to support and provide research opportunities for esports and electronic gaming scholars. Creating a “home” for esports and electronic gaming research (and fostering these opportunities with a publisher-supported outlet) is one of the most important goals of JEGE.

The Mission of JEGE

One of the most common experiences for scholars seeking to publish esports and electronic gaming research has been the dearth of outlets and outright rejection by scholars and publications in other disciplines. In fact, for many of us who previously attempted to publish or present esports and electronic gaming research, we were often told that our research was of high quality, but it just did not “fit” in a particular publication or conference. As someone whose prior research includes sport management, marketing, and business publications, a common response I have personally received on numerous occasions can be summarized: Because esports is not a “sport,” research on it could not be included in “sport” research. More recently, esports and electronic gaming research have evolved to a point where most recognize their legitimacy as standalone and distinct disciplines. Yet at the same time, esports and electronic gaming can be both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, allowing them to be standalone or included in other research areas such as sport, recreation, entertainment, game development, health and wellness, and more. Esports is a cross-sectional phenomenon and only recently has this uniqueness become apparent. Therefore, now is an ideal time to create more esports and electronic gaming research opportunities and outlets like JEGE.

As a result, the mission of JEGE is to be the leading resource for interdisciplinary, inclusive, and impactful scholarly research that will improve our collective understanding of all aspects of electronic gaming and esports. The research scope of JEGE includes every type of esports, electronic gaming, video games, and emerging gaming media and technology research. Because of the limited existing publishing opportunities, we aim to publish innovative empirical, theoretical, review, interdisciplinary, and industry-related research on all aspects of video games; esports; gaming on personal computers mobile devices, consoles, and cloud-based platforms; haptic gaming and technology; virtual, augmented, mixed, and extended reality gaming and technology; new and emerging technology used for recreation, rehabilitation, and competition; and more. While it may seem like an easy decision to say that “We seek to publish high quality research on all topics in esports and electronic gaming,” in reality, those who worked to create JEGE debated this specific point at length, even going so far as to survey researchers and scholars on their publication needs. From concerns about the extensive variety of topics contained in the discipline to identifying experts in all of these fields, to being a journal with no single disciplinary focus (e.g., medical science, social science, business, law, etc.), in the end, we decided JEGE would be inclusive of all types of electronic gaming and esports research, rather than focused on one or two areas. This inclusivity might result in a diverse portfolio of publications in the short term, but in the longer term, more research can
be published, more collaborations can be made, and more interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research can result.

Another important aspect of the inclusive mission of JEGE is to be prepared to accommodate new and emerging topics. Evolutionary and revolutionary changes are coming to the gaming world, and JEGE strives to be ready for these changes. Being inclusive and forward-looking will allow JEGE the opportunity to be an outlet for all esports and electronic gaming topics, both those known and unknown today.

Another important mission of JEGE is to provide high-quality and timely feedback to those who submit research for publication consideration. Many of us who have attempted to publish research at one point in time or another have had research subjected to seemingly never-ending review. JEGE’s editors, editorial board members, and reviewers are committed to providing high-quality and timely reviews and feedback with significantly quicker turnaround times than many other publications. At the same time, because we are aware that sometimes publications are the cornerstone of faculty members’ attempts to earn reappointment, promotion, and tenure, we commit to doing everything we can to work efficiently with authors to quickly transform accepted research from manuscripts into published journal articles in the most efficient timeframe possible. Human Kinetics, JEGE’s publisher, is also committed to these same outcomes and has invested extensive resources into facilitating these goals.

Finally, JEGE is also committed to being proactive in serving the community. For example, whether we are working with our editors or editorial board to identify special issue topics of great importance to explore, or we are partnering with an Esports Research Network conference, the Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, or some other type of conference or event, we are committed to finding ways to work with and create opportunities for research publications with community members, groups, and associations.

The People and Process of JEGE

Much of the strength and potential of JEGE lies in the people involved. JEGE currently has one editor-in-chief, eight associate editors, 45 editorial board members, and a growing list of reviewers. Up-to-date lists of our editorial staff can be found on the JEGE website (https://journals.humankinetics.com/jege). One of the most important lessons my colleagues and I learned from publishing EBM was that there is no one person who is an expert on absolutely every aspect of esports and electronic gaming. EBM was written by 47 people, and I imagine future editions of the textbook will include even more topics and experts. When we began the process of creating and building JEGE, we took the lessons we learned while writing the textbook and sought to bring together diverse experts from around the world. In a latter section, I will detail more about the areas of expertise of those involved in JEGE.

The process of establishing JEGE did not happen overnight. It is the result of a tremendous amount of work undertaken by a global group of scholars, academics, researchers, and professionals. The Esports Research Network (https://esportsresearch.net) and a myriad of publications all fill important roles. As JEGE grows and develops, we will do our best to support other publications, conferences, scholars, researchers, industry professionals, and students, all while informing the public at-large about many of the latest research findings.

The JEGE seeks to contribute to the collective understanding of esports, video games, and other electronic gaming research subject areas that are currently in their infancy. One challenge new disciplines always face is claims of authenticity and the need for extensive and dedicated support. Questions such as (a) “Are esports and electronic gaming areas ‘real’ disciplines?” and (b) “Are there sufficient numbers of scholars and researchers who will publish in this discipline?” are commonplace. In just a few months of operations, I believe those here at JEGE can respond to both of those questions with resounding responses of “Definitely, yes.” As research is published, readers can best gauge JEGE’s success.

The Research in JEGE

Research on video games first began in the 1970s. For example, Mennie (1978) discussed the consumption of electronic video games alongside examinations of other entertainment-oriented products such as televisions, computers, radios, video cassette players, and other electronic products. In the 1980s, explorations of video games (Jones et al., 1981), players (McClure & Mears, 1984; Morlock et al., 1985), effects and impacts (Dorval & Pepin, 1986; Egli & Meyers, 1984), leisure and entertainment (Kaplan, 1983; Wigand et al., 1986), education (Chaffin et al., 1982), physiology (Carroll et al., 1984; Gwinup et al., 1983), addiction and compulsive play (Kuczynyczky, Valley, & Calhoun, 1987), legal issues (Huff & Collinson, 1987; Kramsky, 1982), game design (Larrabee & Mitchell, 1984), and social issues (Creasey & Myers, 1986) began in earnest.

From these earliest research studies, the ever-expanding video and electronic games, esports, and emerging technology (e.g., virtual, augment, mixed, and extended reality) research continues to grow at a rapid pace. For example, one of the most important tasks that an editor-in-chief has is to identify and understand colleagues’ areas of expertise. Through data collected from self-listed areas of expertise of those involved with JEGE, I have identified 35 distinct yet interrelated areas of expertise (Table 1).

Clearly, esports and electronic gaming research areas are diverse, covering areas of business and entrepreneurship, health and medical sciences, computers, social sciences, legal studies, innovation and technology, education, and much more. An important conclusion which can be drawn is that in esports and electronic gaming research, there is a place for every type of scholar and researcher. At the same time, I expect that 35 areas of research expertise for esports and electronic gaming are only the start. Undoubtedly, new areas will arise, and JEGE is ready and well positioned to accept these new areas of scholarship and researchers into the community.

The Opportunities and Future of JEGE

As the business, revenues, and participation numbers in esports and electronic gaming continue to rise, there are plentiful opportunities on the horizon. However, another challenge for us to overcome is finding experts on all of these topics. While there is a growing number of esports and video game majors, minors, and other types of programs at educational institutions around the world, especially at the undergraduate level of education, little has been done at the graduate level, and to my knowledge, there are currently no dedicated doctoral programs in the field. With limited yet growing undergraduate education in esports, electronic gaming, game

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development, and related topics, postgraduate education is an area with extensive opportunities for growth. It is also in postgraduate education where future teachers, educators, and faculty for esports, electronic gaming, and game development programs will likely be educated. As noted earlier, we are starting to see existing research domains (e.g., communications, sport management, computer science, health and wellness) supporting and engaging with students who have interest in esports and electronic gaming, but it will take time before the field has experts at all levels. While journals like JEGE do not directly affect education and hiring, we do provide a platform through which students and faculty can raise their profile in both areas. Having information literacy and being able to conduct and use research are recognized as important skills in academia (Travis, 2011). We hope to play an important role in helping students to learn research skills and prepare for future employment opportunities through activities, such as endeavoring to make selected JEGE-published research available to readers of EBM.

In summary, Human Kinetics and its staff, the reviewers, editorial board members, associate editors, and I are honored to have this opportunity to work to create and develop JEGE into a leading publication in the esports and electronic gaming research domain. While we are currently in the initial publishing stages of JEGE, our first two special issues on (a) diversity, equity, and inclusion and (b) sustainability received a combined total of 30 abstracts for consideration. JEGE is also working with both the “Esports” and the “Game and Gaming” minitracks at the 56th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-56) to provide fast-track publishing opportunities for selected research. JEGE also will do everything we can to support the Esports Research Network and its conferences and research activities. If new associations and groups arise, we too will work to support them. It is my sincerest hope JEGE will be a resource for all esports and electronic gaming researchers, scholars, and students, in addition to being a conduit with the public at large who are looking for research on important topics published by a peer-reviewed journal, indexed in the major outlets, and published in a high-quality format in a timely manner. We look forward to supporting the community, and we hope the community will put their trust and faith in us to provide an outstanding resource back to the community.

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