

Taking History into the World

Activity

David Wyatt

This is a plan for an ‘ideas jam’ workshop lasting 50 minutes. The session could be used with undergraduate or postgraduate history students with some existing knowledge of heritage. The ‘ideas jam’ can be done individually, by focusing on the Part 2 activity below. But it will work best encompassing Parts 1–3, and in a group setting with a class size that allows students to work in small groups of three to five.

Context and aim

This ‘ideas jam’ workshop helps students to think about how and why historians take their research out into the world. Through the activity, students will acquire some basic project development, funding application and team-building skills. The ‘ideas jam’ focuses on designing a concept for a heritage video game, and includes three activities that help students build their design into a draft funding application and project concept presentation.

Preparation

Students should prepare for the session as follows:

- Select and explore the website of a particular heritage site that is of interest. Tutors could suggest heritage sites near their university or use the website of the CAER Heritage Project (<https://www.caerheritage.org/>), discussed in David Wyatt, ‘Taking History into

the World', in Tracey Loughran (ed.), *A Practical Guide to Studying History*, 2nd edn (London: Bloomsbury, 2026).

- Using the selected website, make some notes on the historical themes associated with that heritage site, considering key sources, artefacts, buildings, monuments, time periods and narratives. Think about how information is made accessible (or not) to a public audience. How are visuals employed? What aspects of the heritage site or story would work well for a video game?
- Try to find out something about the audiences and mission of the selected heritage site/project. There is usually information in the 'About Us' section of the website, but also follow links to the heritage site's social media outputs (Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky, etc) to find out more about their recent events, activities and audiences. Consider how the heritage site communicates with and tries to engage its audiences.
- Finally, visit the National Centre for Co-ordinating Public Engagement website and explore their resources section to find out about the innovative ways that academics are taking their research out into the world. In particular, explore the 'Museum-University Partnership Initiative' section and discover examples of how universities and the heritage sector are working together: <https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/resources/collections/nccpe-partnership-tools>.

Description of activity

Introduction to the session [5 minutes]

Tutors will explain to students the aim of the workshop (to collectively 'ideas jam' a heritage video game concept by working in small project teams) and the structure of the session, and divide the group into teams. They should distribute and answer any questions on the funding application form (below) that will guide and structure your discussions.

Part 1: Building a co-creative team [15 minutes]

Each student should:

- Introduce to their team the heritage site selected in preparatory research.

- Highlight one key skill or form of expertise they bring to the project team (e.g. research skills, organization skills, creativity/art skills, digital skills, relevant historical/archaeological knowledge).

Following this, the group should collectively decide:

- Which heritage site will make the best subject for the video game, considering the historical appeal, audience and mission of the heritage site. Groups should take a democratic vote to finalize their decision. This discussion will feed directly into sections 1–3 of the funding application.
- The strengths of the team, and what roles each group member is best suited to. This discussion will feed directly into section 4 of the funding application.

Part 2: Designing the heritage video game concept [15 minutes]

Playing to the team's co-creative strengths, the group should develop its game concept by working through and completing each section of the funding form, considering the following:

- What will the game be called?
- What will the game do and why? How will it help people learn about the past/the selected heritage site? Who is the target audience?
- What resources will they need? What partners might they work with?
- What are the intended outcomes/legacies of the game?

There is only a short time for this task, but this is a speed ideas jam – groups only need a few bullet points and the bare bones of the concept. Emphasize that groups should have fun and be as imaginative as possible!

Part 3: Presenting your video game concept [15 minutes]

In this final plenary activity, each group has two minutes to present their video game concept. Students should try to communicate the energy, ideas and enthusiasm of their group's game concept. If there is time, the class should act as the collective funding committee and take a vote on which are the best three games concepts that should be awarded funding. Tutors might like to bring some chocolate gold coins or other treats as a 'funding' prize!

VIDEO GAME FUNDING APPLICATION – CO-CREATION EXERCISE
PLEASE WRITE YOUR APPLICATION ACCORDING TO THESE CRITERIA

1 PROJECT NAME

Your project name should be catchy and capture a sense of what you hope to achieve. A good project name should leap out at you!

2 OUTLINE OF PROJECT (2–3 sentences)

Summarize the proposed heritage video game in a punchy short paragraph that states what the game is, what it will do, who the audience will be and why it is significant. A good concept outline will be clear, articulate, and focused, and look innovative and exciting.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE GAME CONCEPT (2–3 bullet points)

What do you intend to achieve? How will it take historical research out into the world? How will it help people to better understand heritage? Concept objectives should be focused, clear, and realistic, and be driven by a clear project rationale.

4 RESOURCES

What do you need to deliver your project? What abilities do you have in your project team? What partners might you work with? What resources do you need to deliver your game? A good resource assessment will be clear on the roles of team members and what they bring to the team, the partners to be involved and what they will contribute, and what the project needs to acquire with the project funds.

5 IMPACT

What impact do you want the game to have on your audience? How will you measure that impact? Think about legacy. Will your game concept create a resource that people can continue to engage with? Will it teach them things or change attitudes?
