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Libraries, Makerspaces and Wargaming

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MLIS 9704 Librarianship & Evolving Technologies

Final Paper: Libraries, Makerspaces and Wargaming.

For my final project, I wanted to speak about a passion I discovered over the course of the pandemic that I think libraries can absolutely help to promote, wargaming and miniature painting. Like many other hobbies, miniature painting did extremely well over the course of the pandemic, with British manufacturer Games Workshop, the creators of Warhammer 40,000 and Warhammer: Age of Sigmar, having a revenue of nearly 400 million British pounds. Miniature painting and wargaming have seen a massive increase in popularity in recent years, and I believe that libraries can position themselves as an excellent supporter of these communities.

Miniature painting and 3-D printing go hand in hand, and the 3-D printing of miniatures is both easily doable and sustainable for public libraries, considering the technology often available to them. Libraries also provide a space for communities to gather, though with tabletop wargames that is a bit of a tricky proposition due to the area often required to play. This essay seeks to tackle the idea of libraries as spaces for miniature painters and tabletop wargamers, and whether libraries can and should support this type of community. Issues include space, 3-D printing technology, time, and copyright. While some of these aspects are covered by other

institutions such as local game stores, the library absolutely could move into this space as a mostly-free alternative. This paper also seeks to address the question around 3-D printing and price for library patrons, which is quite important for anyone seeking to create models within makerspaces.

Coming out of the pandemic, people have reignited their desire for a third place outside of the home or work/school. Arguably one of the library's most important functions is as a physical place, and the lack of access during the pandemic only served to heighten our awareness of this. As an ALA article eloquently puts it, libraries are one of the last pure forms of community space.¹ They offer access to content that would otherwise be locked away behind paywalls, as well as access to technology that might otherwise be beyond the means of many. Interestingly, tabletop wargaming already has spaces, sometimes wholly dedicated to it. However, these spaces are typically in local game stores and are often rented space, which adds another financial barrier to entry. Local game stores host games because they not only want a place for players to gather, but they also must still pay their rent and pay employees. Because they have a financial motive, playing in a local game store can be a different experience compared to playing in a completely neutral place such as at home, as it is often in their best interest to try and push sales onto the player.² Libraries could open their doors to host games with almost non-existent investment. Hosting tabletop games is almost entirely an issue of physical space, as many tabletop wargames require a table size well in excess of what most people have at home. The current edition of Warhammer 40,000, one of the largest and most

¹ Woods

² There's a Games Workshop location in White Oaks Mall in London. If you walk in, you'll know what I'm talking about.

popular tabletop wargames, as well as Warhammer: Age of Sigmar is typically played on a 44" x 60" surface, while the Second World War tabletop game Bolt Action is played on an even larger surface, typically 48" x 72".³ This is a significant space for most players to have access to, and can be a major barrier to playing tabletop wargames. Finally, painting space is the easiest to come by, but one of the most important. Painting can be a great community-building activity, and some hobby shops and local game stores host communal painting sessions. Once again libraries can absolutely host this type of activity to help foster community by acting as a free third space to partake in hobbies. And because miniature painters typically have their own paints and tools, again the requirement on the library are minimal.

Makerspaces, 3-D printing, and miniature painting are often considered adjacent hobbies by many. With the increase in affordable 3-D printing technology over the last few years, the acceptance for printing models in the wargaming community has increased dramatically. As a result, there has been increased demand for both printers and the files to produce models. Libraries can and do fill this need through use of their available 3-D printers. Maker communities are very similar to modelling communities, with significant overlap with creating and customizing models, often known as "kitbashing". The modelling community is very disparate, so defining any of their spaces as makerspaces would be very difficult, if only because they do not typically have spaces where they gather in most communities. The library could step in as a space for people who enjoy modelling and printing models to meet and partake in their hobby. Makerspaces already host a wide assortment of learning, and modelling

³ Warlord Games "Bolt Action for 40k Players"

would easily fit into that type of space.⁴ It also opens up 3-D printing to more people, as printers are not only costly, but also require significant space and technical expertise to use and maintain. Printers that use resin are also more difficult than filament printers because of the toxic fumes they release during operation, requiring significant ventilation. The library taking on the cost of acquisition and maintenance makes access much easier for the average person. Libraries also host access to tools, and so could make available modelling tools such as files, knives, pliers, and clippers.

However, there are several considerations for libraries to make if they were to consider promoting modelling, painting, and tabletop wargaming. Probably the most serious among them is copyright. Games Workshop has a rather peculiar set of intellectual property guidelines, in which they explicitly encourage fan-created hobby books, fiction, magazines, artwork, and websites, but do not allow for the creation of imitation or counterfeit models, fan-made films and games.⁵ This sort of makes sense due to Games Workshop's focus on model production as their primary line of business, and they acknowledge the balancing act they undergo trying to keep their game community-focused, while simultaneously ensuring their own survival and profitability. This policy has led to significant controversy among fans of Warhammer and other Games Workshop properties, as well as the cancellation of several popular fan-made series. Libraries may have to be somewhat careful in navigating the creation of models within makerspaces if they are interested in hosting the wargaming community. The potential legal ramifications are unclear, since many recasts and digital files of Games Workshop and other

⁴ Bagley

⁵ Games Workshop Intellectual Property Guidelines

copyrighted materials are openly distributed online without being taken down, but enforcement does occasionally occur. Libraries are unlikely to face legal consequences as a result of this kind of behaviour but would nonetheless be better off with the understanding that the creation of copyrighted materials can and does occur within makerspaces. Libraries would need to get informed properly about this and do a risk assessment concerning the misuse of makerspaces to infringe on copyrighted materials.

Time is also a consideration for libraries, as tabletop wargames often take a significant amount of time to play. Alongside the space often required to play these games, some libraries who do not have the space to spare or have significant time demands on their spaces may find that such an outreach idea may not be suitable for them. Wargames often run for several hours, which means that some libraries may not be able to host on weekdays due to the library's operational hours, and weekends may entail greater demand for limited space. Despite this, there is the potential for libraries to welcome tabletop wargames due to the low bar for entry on the library side. Players will already have models and terrain, and direct library supervision is not required like a library program would be. Libraries could also team up with community members and local game stores whose retail locations might not have the space to host games or events to paint collectively.

What do libraries stand to gain from stewarding miniature painting and wargaming communities? With the rise in popularity of tabletop games over the last few years, it is an activity that appeals to many ages, with Games Workshop products being advertised for ages twelve and up. Wargames and miniature painting are activities that creates and builds community that otherwise is restricted to mostly paid spaces. In addition, it is a highly visible

activity within a library that creates interest. Seeing someone else painting models or playing a tabletop wargame generates interest, and many people can attest their interest in the hobby to being introduced by a friend or stopping by a hobby store and seeing other community members playing or painting. It is for this reason that Games Workshop actually has physical locations, unlike many other similar competitors in the miniature production industry. They run introductory games for potential new players to try and drum up new business and foster their community. Libraries could easily appeal to these same demographics as a non-retail place to build community and play games. Some libraries already run Dungeons and Dragons and other such tabletop role-playing games, and although tabletop wargames are more intensive in terms of materials, the requirements are typically on the players as opposed to the institution. As such it would be relatively easy for libraries to host both tabletop wargames as well as miniature painting within their community spaces. The other major potential gain for libraries is increased visibility, interest, and use of makerspaces. Having a community who is interested in creating and using artistic and technical talents for something outside of the academic sphere may appeals to people who may not learn in traditional ways.⁶ Libraries embrace hobbies as a form of learning, and the inclusion of miniature creation and painting is no different.

Overall, libraries and tabletop wargames have not traditionally been associated, but with the rising popularity of these games and miniature painting libraries have the opportunity to provide a space for these communities. They traditionally exist within small local game shops and official stores, spaces that are primarily driven towards selling more product to players, and

⁶ Wohlwend, p.22

libraries have both the space and means to provide a different third space for these communities. Wargaming and modelling hobbies also go well with the ever-popular makerspaces found in many libraries, giving access to advanced technology to those who would otherwise be unable to for financial or practical reasons. Libraries have the ability to embrace the miniature painting and tabletop wargaming community, and it would be in their best interest to do so if possible. Wargaming is a wonderful and creative hobby which has had a resurgence following the pandemic, and would be easy for libraries to champion if they so choose. There are still several concerns for libraries which would have to be addressed, such as the relation between copyright and the maker community, as well as space and time constraints related to hosting games. Regardless, public libraries should consider working with local partners to promote miniature painting and wargaming.

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Reflection

I enjoyed writing this paper significantly. Wargaming and miniature painting have become instrumental (read: absolute obsession) in my life over the last few years. Over the pandemic, painting models was how I spent a good amount of my downtime, especially when I was not able to go out and see others. I would love to see wargaming become more mainstream, and to an extent it has become much more popular than ever before. I believe Henry Cavill is rumored to be directing and starring in something using the Warhammer 40,000 property. Along those lines, I would love to see libraries champion miniature painting and wargames, as it is a hobby that has brought me so much enjoyment over these past few years, and I have adored the community that it builds. I have gotten my friends into miniature painting, and I would love to see community members out in libraries painting and playing. Even as I sat here writing this essay, I was thinking about how I wanted to try out new painting techniques on my latest batch of models and getting together to play some games with my buddies.

As to this paper specifically, I had to lean on a lot of non-academic sources, due to the lack of authoritative sources on wargaming (shocking, I know). In addition, I am not a lawyer and some aspects of copyright law evade me still, so I left that section fairly general, not at all aided by the fact that enforcement of copyright infringement on miniatures is fairly inconsistent. Otherwise, I thoroughly enjoyed writing this final paper more than others, as wargaming is truly a passion of mine. To prove a point, attached is an image of my absolute favourite model I have ever painted, the C'tan Shard of the Void Dragon. I'd estimate around ten to fifteen hours spent painting this model over a period of a few weeks, and it still remains one of my favourite centerpiece models. (Cultist and Sharpie for scale)

