

IITG Project Outcomes Form

Name of person reporting outcomes

Edward Bever

Email

Bevere@oldwestbury.edu

IITG Project Title (truncated)

Eternal France ... College History Classes,Evaluating Geologic Mapping Tools for the Undergraduate Curriculum

IITG Project Theme

Gaming and Simulation

Do you wish your current abstract to be used?

No

If you wish to re-word the abstract to reflect updates or outcomes, you may do so in this text box (please keep it brief - less than 150 words - you can expand on this in your files and links)

This project prototyped a solitaire computer game for use in Western Civilization and European history courses. In it, students guide the development of France over historically significant periods of time: in one scenario 60 years (480-540 CE); in the other, 300 years (975-1275 CE). The game models the historical processes involved -- from population growth through cultural change -- with students making decisions reflective of the government's expanding purpose and power. The game is designed to foster students' historical understanding both implicitly, through the gameplay itself, and explicitly, through instructional exercises integrated into the course of play. The game was tested in two survey classes, and the results indicate that it has significant potential to motivate students and foster their understanding of history. However, the tests also suggest that the concept and execution require further refinement before it can be expanded to the full simulation of French history originally envisioned.

File One Upload and Brief Description

This Zip file contains a playable version of the High Middle Ages scenario of the game. It should be playable from the folder it will unzip into by clicking on the "EternalFrance1" application file (Note: NOT the "EternalFrance1.vshost" application file!).

It contains the full game which accomplishes the two critical goals of the original proposal:

1) It covers a long enough historical period for students to be able to see not only the short-term events of the development of France (like wars, diplomacy, patronage of the arts), but also the long term developments like the diffusion of new agricultural techniques, the consequent tremendous growth of the overall population, and the associated burgeoning of the urban economy and population.

2) It incorporates instructional materials to complement the gameplay, including both an historical introduction and a series of automated "worksheets" that gives the student the complementary learning activities of making the kinds of decisions that historical actors did and reflecting on events and trends as historians do.

A more accessible overview of this scenario is conveyed by the Powerpoint demo contained in the next file upload.

File One

- [EternalFranceHighMiddleAges.zip](#)

File Two Upload and Brief Description

This Zip file contains 1) a Powerpoint demo of the game (the High Middle Ages scenario discussed above), and 2)

the Assessment data of the game derived from the two survey classes in which it was tested.

File Two

- [EternalFrancePowerPointDemoAndAssessmentData.zip](#)

File Three Upload and Brief Description

This Zip file contains the shorter scenario that covers the reign of Clovis and his sons (480-540 CE). It can be downloaded, unzipped, and launched in the same manner as the scenario contained in File Upload 1.

This was the first version of the game, created in the Spring of 2012, and was used in a "dry-run" deployment of the game in one of the two adjunct sections after permission to delay the full deployment and testing until the Fall was granted. It contains much of the basic military, political, and diplomatic gameplay, but lacks the Build and Patronize features since they played a relatively limited role in the situation it depicts. The original intent was to expand it in terms of time-coverage and features to gradually expand the program to incorporate later time periods and the full range of game and instructional features envisioned for the game, but this plan was abandoned in favor of "jumping" ahead to the High Middle Ages for 2 reasons: 1) experience with students suggested that the situation was not a good introduction to the system for students because it requires a rapid series of military moves to exploit the opportunity Clovis confronted as the Roman Empire fell, which most students are familiar enough with this type of game to pull off; and 2) it is so far before the Rise of Modern Europe that a later starting point seemed desirable since one of the two classes in which the game was to be tested starts in the later Middle Ages, so this scenario wasn't useful for it.

That all said, the "dry-run" was useful in getting experience in deploying the game in classes, and the scenario actually constitutes a pretty good wargame that can be enjoyed by experienced players.

File Three

- [ClovisScenario.zip](#)

Any additional comments or resources you wish to share?

First, I don't think that the project's results at this point (see below) warrant the doing the article which was mentioned in the proposal, but I want to mention that I have arranged to present the game at the 49th annual Congress of Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University in May of 2014. I hope that this will not only enable me to disseminate the results of the project, but also give me a chance to get feedback from Medievalists about the validity of the historical model the game embodies.

Second, while I presented the preliminary "Clovis" scenario at the CIT last May, I am also planning to apply to present the fuller embodiment of the concept embodied by the "High Middle Ages" scenario at the CIT in May, 2014.

Finally, in my proposal I had said I would post a copy of the game, the source code, the assessment data, and a demo video (which has become the Powerpoint demo in Upload 2 above) in the SUNY Learning Commons as my primary method of making the results of this project available to the SUNY community. However, in looking over that site with the intention of fulfilling this, I have been unable to find any way to do this. I had assumed that the Learning Commons would include some sort of online "cloud"-like repository for materials like this, but if it does I haven't been able to find out how to access it. I will email the IITG email address separately to seek help on how to do this, or advice on how to come closest to accomplishing this if the feature just isn't there.

Do you intend to create an ongoing "Community of Practice" within the SUNY Learning Commons to continue work and dialog regarding this project?

Unsure at this time

Comments?

As the new abstract says, the Assessment data indicates that the game, while it has potential, isn't yet "ready for prime time." Basically, the student survey revealed that the weight of student opinion was slightly more positive

than negative on both the enjoyment and learning aspects of the game (both on its own terms and in comparison to doing a reading assignment), but only slightly, and the results of both the "head-to-head" competition between course sections that played the game vs. those that read a book on French history and the comments of the adjuncts bear this out.

As far as the "head-to-head" competition went, the strongest results (2.6 on a 0 -4 scale) came from students who played the game but filled out qualitative worksheet instead of the automated ones (since these, fortuitously as it turned out, weren't ready in time for the use of the game in HI2681). The next strongest results (2.3) were from the group that read an easy book on French history (HI2521) and then wrote an essay at home based on it, while the group that read a harder book and then did an in-class essay test and the group that did the automated worksheets and then wrote an essay did similarly less well (1.7 and 1.6, respectively).

These results were consistent with the assessments of the two adjuncts whose classes were used to test the game. Both of them felt that the game was a worthwhile exercise in the way it engaged students, and the one who gave the in-class essay test on the game-or-book felt that the students who did the game did significantly better than the readers, but she attributed this partly to the difficulty of the book and party to the particularly active-learning the written worksheet involved. The other adjunct is a hobby-gamer himself and asked to use the game as extra credit next semester, which I've agreed to, but the weak showing of his game students relative to the ones who wrote an essay suggests that using this as extra credit may be the best idea at the moment, so only motivate students will use it.

Finally, I have my own reservations about both 1) the historical models that the game incorporates and 2) the connection between what the student players do and what they're supposed to learn from it. The first of these is not fundamental problems in my estimation -- the gameplay needs to be "tuned" so that outcomes are more historically plausible -- but the second is more problematic. Basically, players/students get caught up in the immediate problems of ruling as their historical counterparts did, which is good in that it gives them a strong feel for what ruling involves (the most common comment seems to have been, "I had no idea being a king was so hard!"), but it's bad in that, like their historical counterparts, they aren't aware of the larger historical trends that shape the context of their decision-making, which is the main thing that this game should convey.

The long and the short of it is that I want to take this project "offline" for a while in order to see if I can come up with improvements to the game's historical models and pedagogical structure that will clearly give it a unique value as an instructional material for college history classes. If I feel that I can, then I will be comfortable setting up an ongoing 'Community of Practice' within the SUNY Learning Commons, but I am unsure at this time if that will be the case.

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