

One Public Humanities in Practice project I'd like help with concerns the [Department of Public & Applied Humanities](#) ([College of Humanities](#), [University of Arizona](#)). The Department was established in 2017 and that same year launched the [Bachelor of Arts in Applied Humanities](#), an undergraduate degree offered in collaboration with other colleges on campus. The degree has grown rapidly since, and as of Fall 2021 has 222 majors spread across its six curricular emphases ([Business Administration](#), [Fashion Studies](#), [Game Studies](#), [Public Health](#), [Rural Leadership & Renewal](#), and [Spatial Organization & Design Thinking](#)) and two modalities (in-person and online).

The principal challenge I'd like your assistance with has to do with external communication. Specifically, what are some strategies and techniques for describing the public humanities project that is the BA in Applied Humanities in ways that are inviting to colleagues from other institutions? I've shared the particulars of the degree on a number of occasions over the past several years in venues such as the [Modern Language Association](#) convention and the [National Humanities Alliance](#) conference. Audience responses have primarily fallen into two categories: excitement and fear. Excited listeners want to take the BA in Applied Humanities as a plug-and-play template for their own area(s) of study ("Now how do we do that with Classics?"). Fearful listeners see the degree as an existential threat ("You're competing with traditional humanities departments for students"). How would you suggest I share our discoveries and challenges such that they prompt exploration, conversation, and collaboration instead? In other words, how can I use our experiences to help move the discourse in more generative and sustainable directions, directions that instead of evoking defensiveness and dreams of quick fixes work to locate the humanities writ large where they belong: at the center of the modern university complex.

Another Public Humanities in Practice project I could use your input on is the [Learning Games Initiative Research Archive](#). The Archive is among the longest running projects of the Learning Games Initiative, a transdisciplinary, inter-institutional research group founded in 1999 to study, teach with, and build computer games. The Archive is one of the largest working research repositories of computer games and game culture in the world, with more than 250,000 artifacts distributed over the Archive's nine locations. Of particular note is our archival approach, which prioritizes preservation *through* use ([here](#)'s a brief article that outlines the basic elements of this way of seeing/doing).

Over the last two decades we've encountered a number of challenges, the most enduring of which has been communicating the archival act as a humanities project. People seem to well understand the importance of games and play to the human condition, but they often get lost or disinterested in the infrastructural side of the memory institution. It's as if science and engineering aren't also humanities disciplines, that the chemical disaggregation of a game cartridge or the physical effects of light and temperature on a game-themed comic book aren't somehow also snapshots of human ways of interpreting and making/being in the world. What are some mechanisms for humanizing the scientific elements of archiving (or even science in general)? Put differently, how might I effectively capture and communicate the physical side of the memory institution to humanities audiences?

I'm looking forward to your suggestions.

Cheers,

Judd Ruggill
University of Arizona
jruggill@email.arizona.edu