Ron Edwards

I am an American-born resident of Sweden, living in Norrköping. My publishing and discourse is acknowledged as revolutionary in the history of table-top role-playing.

Adept Play promotes understanding and celebration of table-top role-playing in the understanding that it is a unique art form. It operates informally as an academy, including seminars and coursework. Design and publishing are included but treated as secondary outcomes rather than goals.

CELEBRATING PLAY

Learning the history and range of play
Expanding the range of techniques and topics
Discovering expression and purpose

UNDERSTANDING PLAY

The medium of listening and reincorporation
Procedures as constraint and agency
Learning to release play from control

ENJOYING DESIGN

Consider design to be an outcome of play and reflection
Consulting is available to learn playful play and to identify the utility of your game's features
Avoid the rush to publish, the project model, and subordination to other media

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TABLE-TOP ROLE-PLAYING: AN ACTIVITY AND ART FORM

Underground hobby
- For the fifty years of the activity's history, its practices and most of its publishing have been unrecognized by the larger culture.
- All other commercial media have mined and stolen their content from role-playing, from the beginning and without ceasing.
- Attempts to form an "industry" of role-playing publishing and commerce have been broken and incompetent, characterized by an astounding failure rate for product and companies.

Grassroots publishing
- No employment, certification, recognition, or acceptance is required to publish a role-playing game. Anyone can do it.
- Standards for physical format, venue for distribution, and commerce do not exist. A game is published in the fashion its creator desires.
- Standards for content, game procedures, and the purpose of the activity do not exist. A given game presents its own unique profile for all of these.

There are only two critical concerns for a role-playing publisher
- Is my game designed to my own satisfaction? *Because very few of them are*
- Is my game going to be a financial disaster? *Because most of them are*

The process of design is play
- If you are a role-player, you are probably designing without realizing it

The commercial product project model does not work
- If you are developing a product, then you have probably stopped designing a game
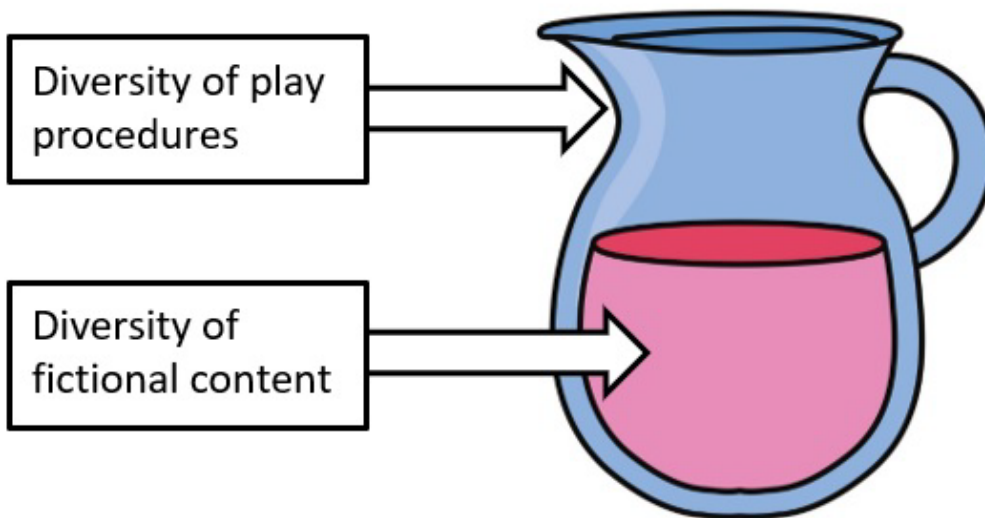
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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
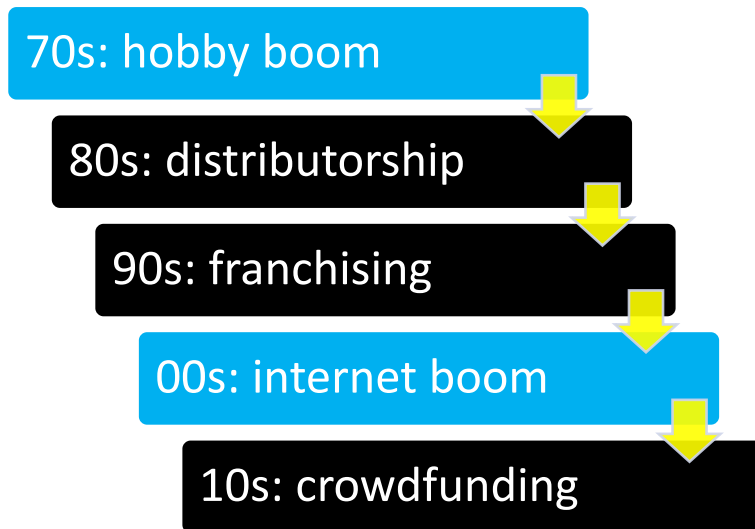
The pitcher: the range of procedural design
- Organization of persons
- Relationship to a text and culture of play
- Determining activities

The fluid: the range of content
- The medium can hold anything

Diversity of play procedures →

Diversity of fictional content →

ROLE-PLAYING PUBLISHING HISTORY

70s: hobby boom

80s: distributorship

90s: franchising

00s: internet boom

10s: crowdfunding

Each boom: about 7 years
- Increased diversity in design and content
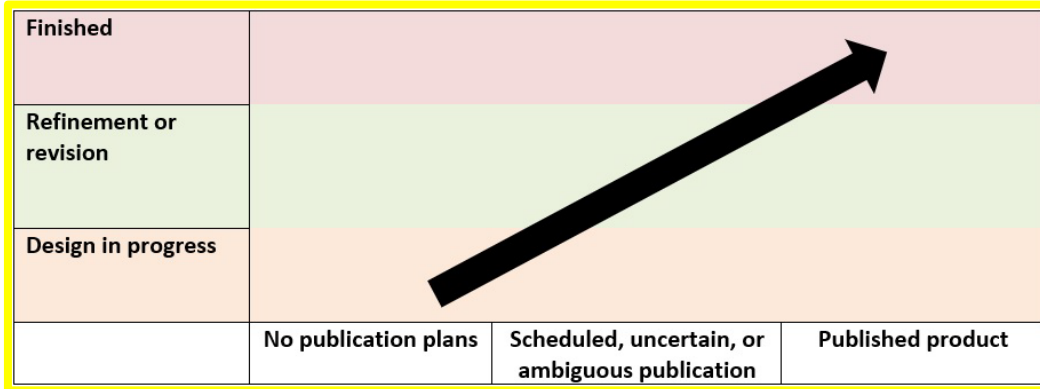- Mining by other media

Each restriction
- Limited, repetitive content
- Availability chokepoints
- Decreased visibility of design diversity
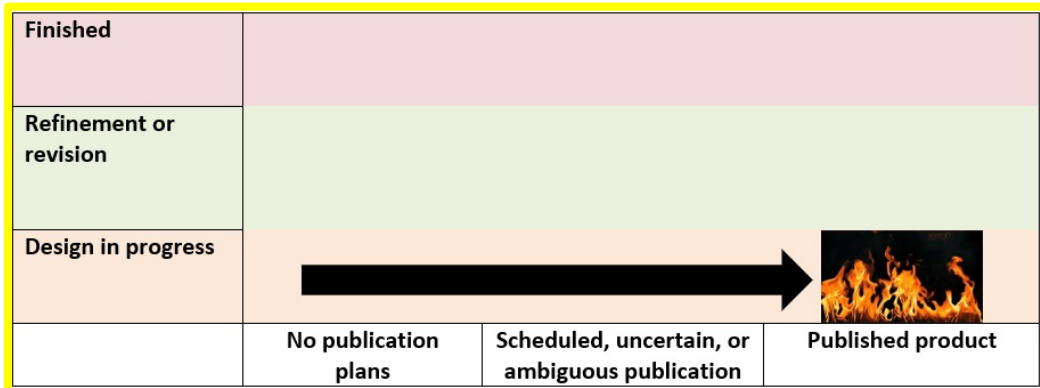
The road to assimilation
- Subordination to other media
- Capture via distribution and promotional chokepoints
- User base = customer base = consumerism
- Incomplete satisfaction = sequential purchase
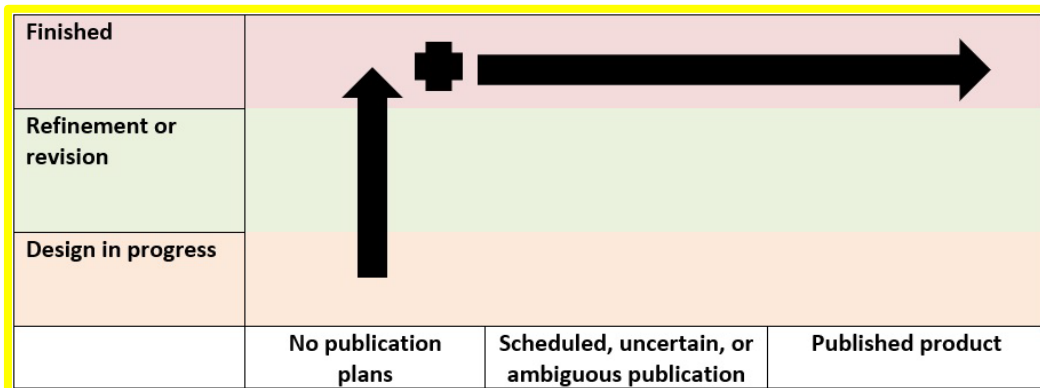- Professionalization of creativity

NOT GOING TO HAPPEN

	No publication plans	Scheduled, uncertain, or ambiguous publication	Published product
Finished			
Refinement or revision			
Design in progress			

HELL IS REAL

	No publication plans	Scheduled, uncertain, or ambiguous publication	Published product
Finished			
Refinement or revision			
Design in progress			

MANAGING THE DISORDER

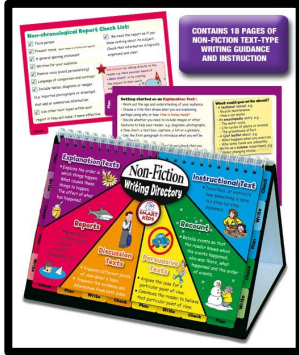|	No publication plans	Scheduled, uncertain, or ambiguous publication	Published product
Finished			
Refinement or revision			
Design in progress			

Design now: play, change, play, change
Save for later: writing, layout, format, presentation
Save for later: pitching, inclusion with pop culture, social media buzz, target market, item as promotion, writing as production
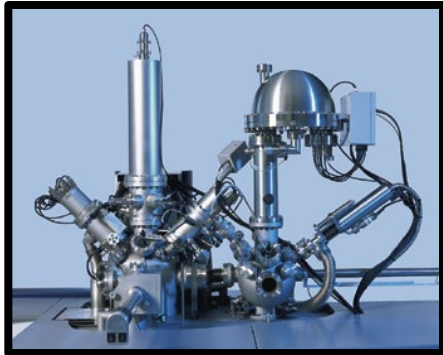
DISTRACTION

Writing is not design: you must have something to communicate first

- Beautifying and explaining, high on your own supply
- Deadlines, production value, promises

Sunk cost stops effective design, both yours and theirs
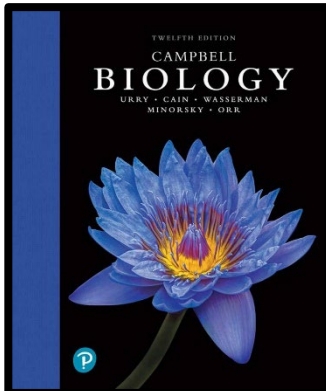
WIDGETRY

Using a widget is not play

- Reproducible results, guaranteed results
- Idiot-proof, stress-tested
- Clear instructions for every contingency

A musical instrument is not a widget

SCATTERED PURPOSE

Science textbooks try to do all three and consistently fail

- Instruction: learning what to do when you don't know anything
- Explanation: why it is this way, and how we know it is this way
- Reference: every possible detail and possibility, "completeness"

Role-playing texts are the same

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NOT THE SAME THINGS

PLAYTESTING

Goals: single purpose, single context

- Reproducible results
- Idiot-proofing
- No different from other products

Targeted users: selling inclusion

- Users of the other products
- Entitled, socially active
- Co-opt them into advertisers

Stress-test: hostile use and mis-use

- Mathematics: the axiom of determinacy
- Seeking breakage

PLAYFUL PLAY

Goals: whatever anyone wants to do with it

- Social, leisure, voluntary activity

For anyone who might like it

- Value added through distinctive properties
- Results vary by user
- Inclusion occurs via use, away from direction and promotion

Enjoyment: discovering range of limitations, deciding which serve the design

- Mathematics: the axiom of choice
- Seeking utility

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